

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 11 MARCH 1976

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PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Proclamations under—

Maintenance Act 1965–1974.

Auctioneers and Agents Act Amendment Act 1975.

Justices of the Peace Act 1975.

Collections Act Amendment Act 1975.

Securities Industry Act 1975.

Companies Act Amendment Act 1975.

Voting Rights (Public Companies) Regulation Act 1975.

Orders in Council under—

Industrial Development Act 1963–1975.

Securities Industry Act 1975.

The Supreme Court Act of 1921.

District Courts Act 1967–1972.

District Courts Act 1967–1974.

Magistrates Courts Act 1921–1975.

Queensland Law Society Act 1952–1974.

Companies Act 1961–1975.

Property Law Act 1974–1975.

Real Property Act 1861–1974.

Collections Act 1966–1975.

The Reciprocal Enforcement of Judgments Act of 1959.

Justices Act 1886–1975.

Public Curator Act 1915–1974.

Regulations under—

Inspection of Machinery Act 1951–1974.

Securities Industry Act 1975.

Companies Act 1961–1975.

Legal Assistance Act 1965–1975.

Justices of the Peace Act 1975.

Rule under the Coroners Act 1958–1972.

Reports of the Law Reform Commission on—

(i) The Law Relating to Evidence.

(ii) The Law of Succession and other Allied Considerations in relation to Illegitimate Persons.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

1. EXPANSION AT “EVENTIDES”; CHARTERS TOWERS

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

(1) In view of the acute shortage of accommodation in “Eventide” homes throughout the State, is his department considering an expansion of ward accommodation in these hospitals?

(2) If so, does he consider that the Charters Towers “Eventide” home is in an ideal situation for expansion at minimal cost and minimal increase in staff, particularly in view of the unemployment situation in Charters Towers where 400

THURSDAY, 11 MARCH 1976

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

GOVERNMENT DEPUTY WHIP

Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah—Premier): I have to inform the House that the honourable member for Windsor, Mr. R. E. Moore, has been elected Government Deputy Whip.

people are registered as unemployed, which is some 20 per cent of the local work-force?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) I refer the honourable member to my letter of 2 March 1976 to him wherein I advised that a committee had been set up within the Department of Health to consider all aspects covering accommodation for the aged in Queensland and that further accommodation at "Eventide" would be considered following receipt of the recommendations submitted by this committee. The honourable member may be assured that the needs of Charters Towers will receive very full consideration in any review of the over-all requirements of the State for this type of accommodation.

2. RURAL CO-OPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY LIMITED, RESORT CORPORATION OF QUEENSLAND PTY. LTD., CONDOMINE COUNTRY ESTATE PTY. LTD., AND DARLING DOWNS SOFTWOODS PTY. LTD.

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

(1) What are the names and addresses of the directors of Rural Co-operative Development Society Limited, Resort Corporation of Queensland Pty. Ltd., Condomine Country Estate Pty. Ltd. and Darling Downs Softwoods Pty. Ltd., what is the paid up capital of each company and when were they registered?

(2) Did any of these persons have any connection with Queensland Groceries Ltd. or the Queensland Syndication Management Pty. Ltd. group of companies which were the subject of reports to this Parliament some three years ago by Mr. P. D. Connolly, Q.C. and, if so, what was the connection?

(3) Have any of the persons named any criminal records or are any of them known associates of persons connected with a leading Sydney crime syndicate?

(4) In view of his statement of 3 October 1974 expressing concern at the known entry of standover men and criminals into Queensland companies and his assertion that the sweeping changes in the administration of company law in Queensland and the restructuring of the Corporate Affairs Commissioner's Office would give greater protection for the investing public and the ordinary citizen, will he arrange for a full judicial inquiry into the affairs of the four companies?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) All companies named in paragraph (1) are presently under investigation by the officers of the Commissioner for Corporate Affairs and, as soon as inquiries have been completed, this information will be made available through the appropriate channels.

3. SECRET TAPE RECORDINGS BY THURINGOWA SHIRE COUNCILLOR

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

Has his attention been drawn to the published fact that an A.L.P. councillor of the Thuringowa Shire admitted that he makes secret tape recordings of all conversations which take place in his home between himself and people who interview him on council business and, if so, is this a breach of the Invasion of Privacy Act or any other legislation, and can action be taken either by the Crown or the unfortunate person interviewing the councillor, who is so spied upon without his knowledge or consent?

Answer:—

I am not aware of the circumstances. I have nothing to add to the answer given by my colleague the Honourable the Minister for Local Government to an identical question except that reference is made to section 45 of the Act which puts limitations on the power of a party to a conversation to communicate any record of that conversation. The honourable member is referred to the particular section, and in particular to subsection 2, which authorises limited disclosure for the particular purposes mentioned therein.

4. FILM CENSORSHIP

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

(1) With regard to the future of our society, does he share the shame which I feel as a member of this Parliament in our Christian, civilized State of Queensland, where screenings of films such as "The Story of O" are shown to the general public, who believe by innuendo that such screenings have our support?

(2) If it is not currently possible to ban such films, will he give consideration to the introduction of a special "P" rating, indicating pornography for perverts?

Answers:—

(1) Yes, and I refer to this later in my answer. The legal position is that the Films Board of Review recently examined the film in question and determined that it was objectionable. An order prohibiting distribution of this film in Queensland will be issued today.

(2) The classification of films is given by the Commonwealth censor under the Censorship of Films Act 1947-1973. Under that Act, the only classifications available at the present time are—G—For General Exhibition; NRC—Not Recommended for Children; M—For Mature Audiences; and R—For Restricted Exhibition. This whole

question of the classification of films by the Commonwealth censor under the existing legislation is to my mind most unsatisfactory and I deprecate the fact that the inference can be drawn that my Government supports the exhibition of R-rated films. The prevalence of such films, particularly in suburban drive-ins, is to my mind a blot on our society. Our young people are being placed in an entertainment environment which I am personally convinced is designed for two purposes: firstly, commercial gain for the producers and purveyors of these immoral and depraved entertainment vehicles and, secondly and more importantly, the corruption of our young people in an endeavour to break down the structure of western civilised society in this country by making a perverted mockery of such corner-stones of that society as marriage, respect for others and respect for lawful authority.

Mr. Burns: You keep squealing about this; why don't you do something about it?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: It was the honourable member's colleagues in the Federal sphere who broke them all down.

Mr. Burns: Why don't you get the law changed? You're a sham.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I warn the Leader of the Opposition and every other honourable member that there will be no cross-firing whilst a Minister is on his feet.

Mr. Burns: He's not fair dinkum.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will not argue with the Chair. I warn him that if he behaves in that manner I shall have to deal with him.

5. FEMALE DENTAL THERAPISTS

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

(1) How many Queensland girls were sent to New Zealand for training as dental therapists?

(2) How many of them have graduated and have been appointed to dental services in Queensland?

(3) If none have been appointed, what are the reasons?

(4) How many girls who have graduated in Queensland have been appointed to positions?

Answers:—

(1) A number of young Australian women have been sent to New Zealand over recent years for training as school dental therapists on the initiative of the Commonwealth Department of Health, not the Queensland Health Department. It is understood that approximately 13 of these students were Queensland residents. Sub-

sequently, the Commonwealth Department of Health sought from these Australian students the State in which they would prefer to be employed after graduation. It is understood that 10 students expressed a preference to be employed after graduation in Queensland.

(2 and 3) Of the 10 Students who expressed preference to be employed in Queensland, four have been appointed, two have accepted positions elsewhere, and three who graduated in February 1976 are expected to take up positions in April 1976. One of the 10 students mentioned will not graduate until August 1976.

Mr. Burns: They're on the dole, and you spent \$7,000—

Dr. EDWARDS: It was not this Government that paid their subsidies; it was the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I have warned all honourable members that there will be no cross-firing whilst a Minister is on his feet. I ask for the co-operation of all honourable members, including the Leader of the Opposition, in that respect.

Dr. EDWARDS: As he has indicated, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition does not understand the situation, and for this reason I am giving the correct answer.

Answers (contd.)—

(4) All of the 22 final year students who graduated earlier this year under the Queensland training programme have been appointed as school dental therapists.

6. MEANS TEST, DENTAL HOSPITAL PATIENTS

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

(1) As workers have been advised that the new means test applying to dental hospital patients requires that the person's income be less than \$83.30 after a deduction of \$6 for a wife and \$3 for each child, plus \$10 for rental or house repayments, is he aware that this excludes many workers from further treatment?

(2) If these figures as supplied to applicants are true, will he order a reconsideration of the means test with a view to providing additional families with free dental treatment?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) I am aware that persons who do not meet the requirements of the means test would be ineligible for treatment. The dental clinic service was established primarily for those persons in the low-income bracket, pensioners, indigents and those with large families. The means test takes into account the patient's income

and deductions on account of dependants, rent and certain other commitments. Hospitals boards may exercise discretion in the admission of patients in the light of particular circumstances which might prevail. The means test is currently under review.

7. NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICEMAN,
JAMBOREE HEIGHTS

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

(1) What was the result of the trial of the neighbourhood policeman concept in the Jamboree Heights area?

(2) Did the policeman concerned seek a transfer because of the work-load?

(3) Is there any plan to extend the concept to other areas?

Answers:—

(1) The matter is still being evaluated. Sufficient time has not yet elapsed in which to establish verifiable results. However, the member for the area (Hon. J. D. Herbert) has maintained a very keen interest in this project and has contributed much to the satisfactory position to date.

(2) The constable concerned indicated that conditions relating to the community police officer concept were not suitable to him.

(3) Not at this stage.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

DEATH DUTIES

Mr. BURNS: I ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer: Has he read the front-page article of "The Courier-Mail" this morning in which it is said that National Party members have decided to direct him to eliminate all death duties in the next State Budget? Will this now become the policy of the Government? If so, what steps will he take to finance it? Could it mean a reduction in services and an increase in unemployment, and does it, as the statement implies, mean an end to the cultural centre planned for Brisbane's south side?

Sir GORDON CHALK: I think I would be misleading the House if I did not say that I was astounded at what I read on the front page of "The Courier-Mail" this morning. I had no knowledge of it. I know that it is easy enough for anyone to sire a child but someone has to be experienced if he is going to be father and nurse to it.

This article has caused me considerable concern. I have had nine telephone calls since 7 o'clock, two of them from widows

who asked that this proposal be made retrospective because of the death of their husbands. That demonstrates the sort of fear created by this morning's newspaper article.

Just what did eventuate about it at any meeting, I do not know. I can, however, say that this State is regarded throughout Australia as being in the soundest position of all States of the Commonwealth. Those of us who constitute the Government have worked towards that direction. We have led Australia in the elimination of death duties; we have wiped out death duties as between spouse and spouse. That concession cost the State between \$5,000,000 and \$6,000,000 in this financial year.

I obtained some figures this morning because I thought it probable that someone would, as it were, have a go at me over this matter. In the current financial year, what the newspaper article mentions has been agreed upon would mean the loss to the State of approximately \$25,000,000 to \$26,000,000. This is at a time when the Commonwealth Government has written letter after letter to the Premier and to me asking that we curtail our expenditure on many of the projects that have been started and for which this State is committed in this financial year and will be committed in the following year. When we have a set of circumstances such as this, talk about the elimination of some \$25,000,000 to \$26,000,000 in revenue in the next Budget does neither the Government nor the community any good.

The honourable member for Carnarvon can smile, but I am serious about this. If he were in my position and taking telephone calls from unfortunate people, he would realise the seriousness of the matter. The point is this: We can take \$25,000,000 out of next year's revenue—it can be done—but only at the expense of some other department. I will quote some figures to show honourable members what I mean. An amount of \$25,000,000 could provide roughly 2,500 teachers, 3,000 policemen or 4,000 nurses. The loss of this revenue might be made up by a rise of 10 per cent in rail freight rates or 6 per cent in pay-roll tax. If decisions of that kind are made and I am asked to administer them as Treasurer of this State, I will do so. But that is exactly what it means, and all I can say is that I was astounded when I read the article and I shudder to think, as I have said, that this morning it has caused people who have lost loved ones to feel that such a decision could be made retrospective and that they would get something out of it.

Mr. Speaker, I am sorry I have taken the time of the House but I felt I had to say what I wanted to say because this State has never been in a better financial position. Let us keep it that way and let us reduce taxation steadily rather than wipe it out in large amounts thus causing unnecessary trouble in other directions.

STATE GOVERNMENT TAKE-OVER AT AURUKUN

Mr. ROW: I ask the Minister for Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement and Fisheries: Did he see in "The Courier-Mail" yesterday a report in which Senator Neville Bonner alleged that he (the Minister) had misrepresented letters from the Aurukun Council and that in fact there was not a request for the State to take over? Will he advise the House of the true facts of the whole matter?

Mr. WHARTON: I have read the report. In my ministerial statement to the House on Tuesday last, I did not refer in any way to the honourable senator. However, I am concerned about his lack of information on matters concerning Aurukun, and I should have hoped that he would have discussed these matters with either the Premier or me.

For the information of honourable members, I shall read a letter dated 13 November 1975 from the Aboriginal Council at Aurukun to the Director, Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement, 135 George Street, Brisbane. It reads—

"Dear Sir,

"The Presbyterian Church has looked after Aurukun now for a long time. The Council now feels that it is time for the Church to look after the religious side still, but the running of the Community should be looked after by the D.A.I.A.

"The Community here has now grown very large. There are many people at Aurukun who have no respect for the Council or the Manager. They think that because the Church is still looking after the Community they can do as they like because they think that B.O.E.M.A.R. is weak. The people will not listen to the Council of Aurukun or the Manager, because they have been told by B.O.E.M.A.R. that the B.O.E.M.A.R. Manager has to listen to them and to write letters to them.

"We need the strength of the D.A.I.A. to stand behind the Manager and Council, then the people will listen to us and do as they are told.

"We need a European Policeman to be stationed here, to help the Council with the training and running of the Aurukun policeforce and the Court. To make sure people come to the Court when asked, as now they often don't come or turn up for cases. Because of the kinship ties and relationships it makes it very hard for the Aboriginal police to do a good job.

"We ask you to come to Aurukun because we want to talk to you about how we feel, then you will know what the true picture of our problems is at Aurukun."

It is signed by Donald Peinkinna, Geraldine Kawangka, Fred Kerindum, Bruce Yunkaporta, and John Koowarta. As mining will not take place at Aurakun for five to eight years, and then not within 50 km of the

residential area of Aurukun township, I table that letter so that interested parties might be made aware of the position.

Whereupon the honourable gentleman laid the letter on the table.

NOTICE OF QUESTION

Mr. K. J. HOOPER (Archerfield) proceeded to give notice of a question—

Mr. KNOX: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member claims that he is reading from a letter. In accordance with the procedures of this House I move—

"That the letter the honourable member is reading from be tabled."

Hon. Sir GORDON CHALK (Lockyer—Deputy Premier and Treasurer): I second the motion.

Motion agreed to.

Honourable Members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

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

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. The document will be tabled—

Mr. HOUSTON:—when he has finished reading it.

Honourable Members interjected.

Mr. KNOX: I rise to a point of order. A motion has been passed by the House that the letter be tabled. It is the privilege of honourable members to see that document and I ask the honourable member to table the letter immediately.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member is still giving notice of his question. What he is reading is part of his question.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: I'll go slow now.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will go a lot slower if he does not behave himself.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER continuing to give notice of question—

Mr. Knox: That's not a letter. You misled the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member to table it.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: I will round the question off.

Mr. SPEAKER: The honourable member will round it off now.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER continuing to give notice of question—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I understood that the honourable member was going to round it off; it is a square question.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: I am on the last paragraph.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will table the question.

Mr. KNOX: I rise to a point of order. I am sorry to bring this matter to your attention, but the House has passed a resolution that a letter—not the question—which the honourable member claimed he was quoting from be tabled. The honourable member has not yet tabled that letter. Members of this House would like to examine it.

Mr. Houston: It has been destroyed.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member for Archerfield to table the document as decided by the House.

Sir Gordon Chalk: He said a letter.

Mr. SPEAKER: The letter.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: With due respect Mr. Speaker, I will table it, but I never mentioned a letter.

Mr. SPEAKER: There will be no retraction. The honourable member will table the letter immediately.

Government Members interjected.

Mr. Knox: You're a dingo.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. The honourable member will table the documents immediately.

Government Members: He hasn't got the letter.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: I shall table all the paper work I have on it.

Sir Gordon Chalk: He misled the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: The honourable member misled the House. The honourable member will hand me the documents—all of them.

Sir Gordon Chalk: Don't pull some out; what's in your other hand?

Mr. SPEAKER: Let me have them all together.

Sir Gordon Chalk: He misled the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: The honourable member said in his question that he had in his possession a letter. It has not been tabled.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: I didn't state that I had a letter. That is the only paper work I have got.

Sir Gordon Chalk: Well, he lied to the House. He said he had a letter.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! If the honourable members for Bulimba and Cairns do not behave themselves, I will deal with them. The honourable member for Archerfield stated

that he had a letter. He misled the House and he also misled me by virtue of that fact. If that be the case, and he is not prepared to table the documents that he said he had in his possession, I will rule his question out of order.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: You read the question.

Mr. Knox: Who are you trying to protect? We don't want any protection; we want the evidence.

Sir Gordon Chalk: We want the evidence.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member having misled the House, I shall disallow the question. The honourable member will either table the letter he stated he had or apologise to the House for having misled it.

Sir Gordon Chalk: Now we've got you.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: You read my question.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I am not reading any question; I am just repeating what the honourable member stated in this House. If he does not do that, I will disallow the question and he will apologise to the House for misleading it.

Mr. Knox: What are you going to do?

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: I do not feel that I should apologise.

NAMING OF MEMBER

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I name the honourable member for disregarding the authority of the Chair, and I ask the Premier to deal with him.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah—Premier) (11.34 a.m.): This is one of the most extraordinary situations in my 29 years here in that a member indicated that he had certain documents in his possession and now says that he has not got them. This is quite clearly a case of misleading the House. If the honourable member is not prepared to apologise to the House, I think he has to be dealt with by the House. As he has indicated very clearly that he will not apologise to the House and that he has not the document that he indicated he did have, I have no alternative to moving—

“That the honourable member for Archerfield be suspended from the service of the House until Tuesday next.”

Question put; and the House divided—
In division—

Mr. Houston: Well, let Ministers table all the papers they refer to.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Houston: Well, they should.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I now warn the honourable member for Bulimba, too.

AYES, 61

Ahern	Kaus
Akers	Kippin
Alison	Knox
Bertoni	Lamond
Bird	Lamont
Bjelke-Petersen	Lane
Byrne	Lee
Camn	Lester
Campbell	Lickiss
Chalk	Lindsay
Chinchen	Lockwood
Cory	Lowes
Crawford	McKechnie
Deeral	Moore
Doumany	Muller
Edwards	Newbery
Elliott	Porter
Frawley	Row
Gibbs	Scott-Young
Glasson	Simpson
Gunn	Small
Gygar	Sullivan
Hales	Tenni
Hartwig	Tomkins
Herbert	Turner
Hewitt, N. T. E.	Warner
Hewitt, W. D.	Wharton
Hinze	
Hodges	<i>Tellers:</i>
Hooper, K. W.	Greenwood
Hooper, M. D.	Powell
Katter	

NOES, 9

Burns	Marginson
Casey	
Dean	<i>Tellers:</i>
Hooper, K. J.	Jensen
Houston	Wright
Jones	

Resolved in the affirmative.

Whereupon the honourable member for Archerfield withdrew from the Chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

RAILWAY CATTLE-TRUCKING YARDS, MARYBOROUGH

Mr. ALISON: I ask the Minister for Transport: When will the railway cattle-trucking yards at Ferry Street, Maryborough, be removed to Oakhurst, and what consideration has been given to the proposal that the Railway Department confer with the Maryborough City Council with a view to having trucking yards included in the showground sports complex to be constructed in Bundaberg Road?

Mr. K. W. HOOPER: I thank the honourable member for advising me that he was going to ask this question. I refer him to his letter to me of 12 December 1975 concerning an alternative proposal for the establishment of cattle yards at the new showground site. I should like to advise him that it has been decided to establish the yards at the original site at Oakhurst. All stops are out and tenders are being called in this financial year.

ALLEGATIONS AT WOMEN'S CONFERENCE, BRUSSELS

Mr. GIBBS: I ask the Premier: Has his attention been drawn to allegations made at a women's conference in Brussels that an Aboriginal woman was forced to strip at the Brisbane Watchhouse? Will he order an investigation if these claims are true?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: My attention has been drawn to the statement made by Miss Chilly. I should like to point out to the House that both the Minister for Police and the Acting Commissioner of Police (Mr. Gulbransen) have refuted her allegations. I should also like to point out that she is a well-known black militant, and her claims have to be viewed in that light. She also claimed at this overseas conference that Aborigines in Queensland were forced to work as slave labour in the cane fields, that black women were forcibly sterilised and that rape of black women was common among policemen.

There is, of course, no need for me to tell the House how completely ridiculous and untrue those statements are. They are nothing but a pack of lies.

QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT SUBMISSIONS TO ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Mr. LANE: I ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer: Has this State yet been approached by the Federal Government to make a submission to the Administrative Review Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Henry Bland, which is currently concerned with possible duplication of services by Commonwealth and State Departments? If so, has the submission yet been made? Are the Australian Assistance Plan and legal aid services amongst those items contained in the submission?

Sir GORDON CHALK: Several approaches have been made by the Commonwealth Government at various levels both to the Premier and me in relation to general spending, requirements for future projects and duplication by Commonwealth and State departments. I know that the Premier has written to the Prime Minister, and I have written to the Federal Treasurer on these matters indicating that there is need for closer collaboration between the Commonwealth and the State so that some of the unnecessary duplication can be overcome. The honourable member mentioned one or two instances. From a State point of view we have indicated to the Commonwealth that we believe that quite a lot of what I have referred to as unnecessary duplication can be eliminated. I say to the honourable member that the matter is in hand and I hope that the representations this State and other States will make will ultimately eliminate some of the unnecessary expenditure that was created by the Whitlam Government.

INQUIRY INTO POLICE FORCE

Mr. M. D. HOOPER: I ask the Premier: Has his attention been drawn to statements by two unnamed barristers and Senator Mal Colston that the Queensland Government has no intention of holding an inquiry into allegations of graft and corruption in the Queensland Police Force? Will he repeat his confirmation that an inquiry will be held?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I did see the statement by Senator Colston. I do not think anybody takes very much notice of him. I was also interested to read of two supposedly prominent members of the Bar Association making such allegations. I take it, as we all would, that they were probably the ones who stood as Labor Party candidates in the last election. That would be quite obvious! It is remarkable that these people are crying out for an inquiry into the police and so on, yet when the police conduct an inquiry into their corrupt affairs, they scream to high heaven and ask that the police be called off. They are not very consistent. We saw the Leader of the Opposition with his arms around Mr. Whitlam up in the City Square, praising, supporting and backing him. When it came to the question of the Iraqi money affairs, did one hear a word from the Leader of the Opposition asking for an inquiry into it? Of course he did not ask for an inquiry!

The Government is determined to preserve the good name of more than 3,000 honest policemen in this State, and we will not allow the A.L.P. to prejudice the trials of the seven policemen who are at present on charges. The Government will take the proper and correct course, even though the A.L.P. does not care about justice. All I can say to the honourable member for Townsville West is that when all the legal obligations have been met, an inquiry will proceed as has already been outlined, and that, of course, has always been the position.

ANTI-NOISE LEGISLATION

Mr. M. D. HOOPER: I preface my question to the Minister for Local Government and Main Roads by saying that about 12 months ago the Townsville City Council sought approval from the Department of Local Government to introduce a by-law to effectively control noise nuisance, particularly in residential areas. At that time the council was told by the Minister's department that anti-noise legislation would soon be introduced into Parliament so that local authorities throughout the State of Queensland could have uniform by-laws. I now ask: As the Townsville City Council is anxious to have effective by-laws to control noise nuisance, does the Minister intend to initiate this type of legislation in Queensland?

Mr. HINZE: The Government is very proud that it intends to introduce during this session the necessary noise-abatement legislation that has already been introduced in Victoria and New South Wales. One of the top officers of my department has been in those States in the past few weeks, and within the next couple of weeks this Parliament will have the opportunity of debating what I believe society is demanding—that we do something about excess noise in the State of Queensland.

UPGRADING OF MT. ISA-CLONCURRY RAILWAY LINE

Mr. BERTONI: I ask the Minister for Transport: Has the latest derailment, 20 miles south of Mt. Isa, been brought to the Minister's notice? As it is the fifth derailment this year, does this point to the unsafe condition of the rail link between Mt. Isa and Cloncurry, and what action is being taken to upgrade this section of line?

Mr. K. W. HOOPER: I anticipated that a question of this nature would be asked, following a question that I answered in the House yesterday. Yes, I am aware of the derailment. I was notified of it yesterday.

Ten loaded "WHO" wagons on a goods train proceeding from Mt. Isa to Townsville were derailed at 934 km on the Rifle Creek-Woonigan section at 2.50 a.m. on Wednesday, 10 March 1976. Because of the proximity of a cutting and a culvert, the restoration of traffic has been prolonged but the line is expected to be cleared by 2 p.m. today.

The cause of the accident has not yet been established but could be attributable to other than track conditions. A senior engineering officer is proceeding from Brisbane and will investigate the cause in conjunction with Northern Division engineering officers.

The relaying of the section Mt. Isa to Duchess (with 82 lb. rail in substitution for 60 lb. rail) has been scheduled for this financial year and work is planned to commence in April.

ENROLMENT OF CHILDREN AT FERNY HILLS PRE-SCHOOL

Mr. AKERS: I ask the Minister for Education and Cultural Activities: Will he assure the House that there will not be a repetition of the football-scrum procedure of enrolling children in a State pre-school that was necessary at Ferny Hills Pre-school yesterday?

Mr. BIRD: I am at a loss to understand why there was any necessity for that scrum. The decision to call applications and to have all the parents line up there would be that of the principal of the school. As I said, I am at a loss to understand why it occurred. I pay the highest compliment to the honourable member for Pine Rivers and all

those people who attended a meeting to which I was invited to discuss pre-school education in that area. Because of lack of funds we are limited in our construction of pre-school centres not in any particular area, but throughout the State.

I was very pleased to attend the meeting in Pine Rivers where the people indicated that they were prepared to help themselves. I came away from that meeting full of confidence and very much inspired by the attitude of the people in the Ferny Hills area. The reason for the scrum, I do not know. We will endeavour to ensure that that type of thing does not happen in the future.

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

CLEAN WATERS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION

Hon. R. J. HINZE (South Coast—Minister for Local Government and Main Roads) I move—

“That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider introducing a Bill to amend the Clean Waters Act 1971 in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

CLEAN AIR ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION

Hon. R. J. HINZE (South Coast—Minister for Local Government and Main Roads) I move—

“That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider introducing a Bill to amend the Clean Air Act 1963–1972 in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

FORESTRY ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. K. B. TOMKINS (Roma—Minister for Lands, Forestry, National Parks and Wildlife Service) (12.6 p.m.): I move—

“That a Bill be introduced to amend the Forestry Act 1959–1975 in certain particulars.”

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

Of particular significance is the introduction of a new section—Section 31A—which shall restrict the use of the expression “National Park”.

Honourable members will no doubt recall that, some time ago, two organisations calling themselves the Aborigines Historic Places Trust and the Cape York Conservation Council launched a national advertising and Press campaign to obtain funds to acquire part of the Crocodile cattle station west of Cooktown with the expressed intention of establishing a “Quinkan National Park”.

“National Park” is a term familiar to us all and is used extensively throughout the world. Here in Queensland, the expression is generally accepted in referring to an area of land or water which has been set apart and declared as a national park under the Forestry Act, the administration of which Act has rested with the Conservator of Forests.

Honourable members will recall that enabling legislation entitled the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1975 was assented to on 15 May 1975. This Act established the National Parks and Wildlife Service and transferred all of the powers vested in the Conservator of Forests in relation to national parks to the Director of that Service but did not otherwise alter the context of the Forestry Act. This situation will prevail until comprehensive legislation dealing specifically with the objects and purposes of the National Parks and Wildlife Service is included in the Statutes.

There are approximately 300 national parks in our State and an appreciable number of them have been provided with visitor facilities. Such areas are widely used and are recognised by the public as “national parks”. Under existing legislation, all things occurring naturally on a national park are protected from all interference and the declaration of such areas cannot be revoked except under the authority of Parliament.

Certain activities proposed by the Cape York Conservation Council were of a nature that would not normally be permitted on a national park in the generally accepted sense of that term and it became apparent that it was not the intention of the sponsoring bodies to have the Quinkan area set apart and declared as a national park under the Forestry Act. It is considered vital, in order to avoid any repetition of this action, to amend existing legislation by making provision to restrict the use, in whatever form, of the expression “national park” exclusively to those specific areas of land and water which have been set apart and declared as national parks under the Forestry Act.

This Bill also incorporates amendments to the cardinal principle of management of State forests to include the protection of watersheds therein whether or not the areas in question are timber productive. Furthermore, provision is also made for due regard to be taken of the benefits of permitting

grazing and the desirability of conserving soil and the environment as well as the protection of water quality and the application of the area to recreational purposes in accordance with the concept of multiple use in State forest management.

As part of the Department of Forestry's aim to promote a better understanding of the value of forests, it is appropriate that provision has been included in this Bill to encourage the use of State forests for recreational purposes. State Forests occurring as they do throughout the State, contain a great wealth of material of recreational interest and the department believes this resource should be available to the public for their use and enjoyment as a supplement to other outdoor recreational facilities. To this end the department has provided facilities including picnic tables, barbecues, walking tracks, water and toilets, and educational signs identifying species of local trees in various State forests for the use of visitors.

While the Department of Forestry is primarily concerned with areas of forest that are being managed for the production of timber and other forest products, it also appreciates that at times the most appropriate form of management for some areas will be to preserve stands in an undisturbed condition. In this way samples of our native vegetation will be set aside as reference areas of either scenic or scientific interest or perhaps for retention of some particularly attractive stand for aesthetic or recreational purposes. To achieve this, that is, in order to preserve representative samples of native forest conditions, provision has been made in this Bill to exempt any State forest or part thereof from the getting of forest products therefrom.

These areas of responsibility have in fact over the years been accepted by the Department of Forestry, and to ensure that these long-standing practices can continue to be legally implemented it is considered that provision in the approved principles of management should be properly contained in the Act to provide the Conservator of Forests with statutory authority to use and manage State forest areas in such manner as appears to him most appropriate to achieve the aforesaid purposes.

It is also proposed to increase the penalties. These have not been altered since inception of the Forestry Act and bear little relationship to today's money values. The penalty of \$300 or a term of imprisonment for six months for an offence prescribed by section 87 has been increased to \$1,000 or a term of imprisonment for 12 months. This is in conformity with provisions in the Fauna Conservation Act for a similar offence.

The minimum and maximum penalties of \$10 and \$200 for a general offence will increase to \$100 and \$500 respectively, while those of \$20 and \$400 for a forest offence will increase to \$200 and \$1,000 respectively.

The pecuniary penalties for an offence against the regulations have also been increased. The general maximum fine will increase from \$200 to \$500, while the maximum penalty for a prescribed offence involving a national park will rise from \$400 to \$1,000 and, in the case of a continuing offence, the daily maximum penalty has been increased from \$20 to \$200.

Clauses 3 and 4 are procedural amendments to the provisions of the Act which will require proposals for the setting apart of timber reserves as national parks to be referred by the Director of National Parks and Wildlife Service to the Conservator of Forests for concurrence, in addition to any other heads of departments of the Government of the State whose interests might be affected.

The Bill also provides in clauses 2 and 5 for minor machinery amendments to sections 27 and 30 of the Forestry Act to achieve uniformity in the use of terms.

I commend the Bill for favourable consideration.

Mr. JENSEN (Bundaberg) (12.13 p.m.): The Minister has outlined the reason for these minor amendments, as he calls them. He says that the main object is the restriction of the use of the expression "national park".

Yesterday in answer to a question from me about national parks he said—

"An area gazetted as national park cannot be subjected to logging, mining or other forms of industrial or commercial enterprise save that—(a) tourist development may be allowed where this will assist in the proper public enjoyment of the park".

The Premier spoke about making the whole of the Great Dividing Range a national park. I would like to know how that statement dovetails into the theme of this Act. It would follow that all mining and forestry development in the area of the Great Dividing Range would be completely finished. If the Premier makes public statements such as that, indicating that he is going to do these things, when in fact he is not or he has no valid reason for saying so, somebody in this House should counter those exaggerations and accuse him of making wild and extravagant statements.

The Bill has been introduced by the Minister for special purposes. He mentioned that on 15 May 1975 the enabling legislation was assented to. He went on to say—

"This situation will prevail until comprehensive legislation dealing specifically with the objects and purposes of the National Parks and Wildlife Service is included in the Statutes."

What is meant by that? Does the Minister intend to amend the Act at some time in the future? He said he is dealing specifically with objects and purposes and that it is comprehensive legislation. It appears that the

whole of this legislation is not comprehensive and that he will have to amend it again in regard to some small matters dealing with national parks.

The Minister dealt with State forests and their use for recreational purposes. He spoke of the provision of toilets and of walking areas and other facilities for people who want that type of recreation. He said that these areas will be opened up for further recreational purposes. What are the other recreational purposes? Will skate-board riding and mini-bike riding be permitted in forestry areas in the parts of the land that are available?

Mr. Burns: Down the tracks.

Mr. JENSEN: Down the tracks. They, too, are recreational purposes. The word "recreation" covers many aspects including walking and horse-riding. However, the Minister referred only to recreational facilities. There already exist recreational facilities for those who like bush-walking and other forms of exercise but many other sporting activities that could be conducted in forest areas could not go on in national parks without resultant destruction to the natural vegetation in the parks.

There is not much more in the Bill, apart from substantial increases in penalties. This proposal is warranted in view of the destruction that occurs in national parks today. The small penalties of \$10 and \$100 are out of line with the destruction caused in national parks by certain elements in the community.

The Minister has introduced the Bill to preserve the name "national parks", and to ensure that they are used in the correct manner and that wildlife and vegetation are not destroyed. For that reason he has provided substantial increases in penalties.

The Opposition will look at the Bill when it is printed.

Mr. LANE (Merthyr) (12.18 p.m.): I welcome the opportunity to say a few words about national parks generally and those that may be established in the vicinity of Brisbane more specifically. I refer to the national parks that those of us who live in the dense residential areas of the city look forward to using. We need to get out with our families and see something of the natural habitat and bushland so that we can appreciate how marvellous the great outdoors is.

The major proposal that has an effect on the Greater Brisbane Area is the national park which is to be established between Mt. Coot-tha and Mt. Nebo. This great park will be established following Liberal initiative at a conference of the Liberal Party held in the Ryan Division in 1971 and is something which has been greeted with great acclaim by the people of Brisbane. The initiative taken by Sir Douglas Tooth, the former Minister for Health, who represented the area adjacent to the proposed park, was

adopted in principle by the Queensland Government some years ago. We all look forward to its establishment.

I understand that, in the jargon of the land and forestry administrators, what is proposed is a multi-use park. As this particular Bill sets out the terms to be used in respect of parklands, I think that it is proper that the debate today should include the names given to some of the multi-purpose parks such as that intended to be established at Mt. Coot-tha. When I say that its establishment is intended, I mean that it is intended by the Government. Unfortunately, however, it is not intended by the Labor city council, which has been the major opponent to this great multi-use national park at Mt. Coot-tha ever since the idea was first put forward. The present acting and temporary Lord Mayor of this city, a gentleman named Walsh—who will be out of work in a few weeks' time—has been one of the major opponents of the proposal to establish this great park.

The proposal is for a great park in which the natural undergrowth, trees and vegetation will be preserved. It will include forestry development and will be a place to which the public will have access. There will be picnic grounds and walking trails, so that within a few miles of their doorsteps people will be able to have picnics and barbecues and otherwise enjoy themselves. People will be able to find out what Australia is really like.

Mr. Byrne: Why would you say that the Lord Mayor is opposing this proposal?

Mr. LANE: Because it is not an initiative of his but one of the Liberal Party and this Government. Anything he cannot take credit for, he opposes. But that is, of course, the natural result of the philosophy and approach to government of members of the Opposition in this place and the Labor city council.

As the Minister explains, the Bill seeks, as it were, to express the words "national park" in layman's language. The Minister has explained that a national park is accepted in this State as being an area of land or water that has been set apart and declared as a national park under the Forestry Act, and is under the administration of the Conservator of Forests. Those of us who are well acquainted with forestry and land matters have understood national parks to be something more than that. We have seen them as parks for people as well as for forestry. If the term "national park" is to relate specifically to forestry and the like, it is quite proper to provide for a new type of park known as a multi-use national park.

I know that the Minister is particularly interested in the establishment of the Mt. Coot-tha—Mt. Nebo park. This legislation is, I understand, a temporary measure that will prevail until comprehensive legislation dealing specifically with the objects and purposes of national parks and wildlife services is brought

down. It is our hope that at that time the Government will, if necessary, use a little muscle against the Brisbane City Council. I personally was pleased to see the Premier throw down the gauntlet several weeks ago to the temporary Lord Mayor and say, "We will ensure that the national park at Mt. Coot-tha is established, despite the Labor Brisbane City Council."

The Government has a fine record in the provision of national parks, and there are at present approximately 300 throughout the State. But the one that is important to the 800,000 people in the metropolitan area is the great park based on Mt. Coot-tha and extending west to Mt. Nebo. The Government supports its establishment; the Labor City Council opposes it and has stood in its way. After 27 March, however, there will be no obstacles in the way of the establishment of that park, as there will be a Liberal City Council in this city.

Mr. BYRNE (Belmont) (12.25 p.m.): I rise to speak briefly on this Bill amending the Forestry Act. I wish to point out that it is most important that this Government realise now that forests and national parks are most important areas in relation to the conservation and preservation of the environment for future generations. It is also most important that we realise that, from the point of view of recreational purposes, in these areas, all types of recreation need to be taken into account.

The provision relating to picnic areas and walking areas is indeed most commendable and most laudable. However, I think it is also important, with the changing attitudes of people towards recreation in the 20th Century, for us to appreciate the importance of establishing certain forest areas where members of clubs such as the Four-wheel Drive Club and people with trail bikes and mini-bikes are able to go. These areas should be outside the city area and away from the suburbs so that they do not create the noise which causes enormous emotional disturbance to people. This would enable some people to enjoy this form of recreation without disturbing others. I think it is important that these vehicles be not prohibited from forest areas. Certain forest areas could be set aside for these purposes, not so that they can be destroyed but rather that they can be used successfully for recreation.

I do question one thing the Minister said in his introductory remarks. He said that it is necessary to increase penalties because of changing money values. I find it difficult to see why it is necessary to increase a term of imprisonment just because there have been changes in the value of money through inflation.

Mr. Moore: Inflation in time; it is a new concept.

Mr. BYRNE: No, there is no inflation in time. I think that it is important when we see the Bill to look at why it makes provision for increased penalties. I hope the Minister will explain that to us.

In conclusion, I just want to say that I hope we continue the expansion of national parks and the facilities which exist within them. In our forward planning we should look at the use of recreation vehicles in such parks. Legislation introduced last year provided for the establishment of various areas which could not be used for public purposes or by recreation vehicles, but I think it is important that areas be set aside for the use of such recreation vehicles.

Mr. SIMPSON (Cooroora) (12.28 p.m.): It gives me pleasure to support this Bill to amend the Forestry Act 1959-1975. As I see it, the Bill validates a lot of actions that have been carried out in forestry areas over a number of years. The Forestry department has set aside and protected certain beauty spots and they have been used with a great deal of enjoyment by the public. In the future these areas will be officially recognised.

The Bill will broaden the recreation activities able to be conducted in forest areas. In recent times people riding motor-bikes have been looking for areas in which they may carry out recreational activities. I think these activities should be conducted in areas under the control of the Forestry Department so that these people can be carefully watched to see that they do not cause damage which could lead to erosion. This will enable people to enjoy themselves and is preferable to turning away people who might then vent their spite in other directions.

I think the provision relating to the protection of watersheds is a forward move. This will mean that, in the planning of forest areas, attention will have to be paid to things other than trees. The restriction on the use of the name "national park" to areas for the purpose of a true national park in this State is, I think, a move necessary to stop commercialisation.

If implemented correctly, the proposed provisions will bring forestry more into line with the view that the public now has of it. People regard forests as beautiful areas that are available for their enjoyment. They do not understand that in some instances a line has been drawn quite arbitrarily between a national park and a forestry reserve and they have crossed it, and I do not believe that that is really very important.

However, the updating of the Act in this way is necessary, and I commend the Minister for bringing the proposals before the Committee.

Mr. HARTWIG (Callide) (12.31 p.m.): I support the proposed amendments to the Forestry Act 1959-1975 because they are necessary for the proper implementation of the provisions of the Act.

The term "national park", as we know it, indicates to people that an area of land has been set aside for various purposes. One of the main purposes is to enable people to visit the area and see and enjoy the natural beauty. Therefore, that natural beauty must be retained at all costs.

As a member of the parliamentary committee of the Minister for Lands, Forestry, National Parks and Wildlife Service, it was my privilege recently to accompany him on a visit to southern States. Members of the committee visited the Ferntree Gully area, which is only 20 miles from the heart of Melbourne, and most of us were very impressed by the facilities available there—barbecues, shelter sheds, water laid on and facilities for bush walks. Sealed roads led to various lookouts and picnic areas in the Dandenong Ranges, which comprise the area known as the Ferntree Gully National Park.

Members of the committee also flew from Melbourne to Cooma and visited the Kosciusko area, which I believe is the largest national park in New South Wales, if not in the world. It contains 1,000,000 acres. There we saw the way in which beauty can be retained with proper protection.

We also visited the Royal National Park and Ku-ring-gai Chase around the Hawkesbury River. Again, the access roads through those parks enable people to see the beauty of the shrubs, wild flowers and other vegetation and to enjoy the views from various vantage points. It was very interesting indeed to me to see what had been done there.

In Queensland, under the programme now being embarked upon by the Minister, work will be undertaken to ensure that the national parks in this State are used by the public for the purposes to which I have referred. However, as a result of my experiences in both New South Wales and Victoria, I wish to stress one point. About 500,000 cars a year visit the Ferntree Gully area, each paying a fee of \$2.50. That money, together with the amount allocated by the State Government, is used to provide and maintain improvements within the national park. In my opinion, if people have to pay for access to national parks, they take better care of them and have more pride in them.

I hope that in the future members of the public will be able to enjoy facilities such as barbecues, water laid on and shelter sheds in Queensland's national parks. That will be much better than sitting on a log in the bush, and it will also reduce the possibility of fires being started. In southern States in particular—the danger is less in Queensland—bush fires are a constant threat to the beauty of national parks. I refer particularly to our own flora and fauna. I do not think one could see anything more beautiful anywhere than our native wattle trees when

they are in bloom. Our koala bears, too, must be protected. Many city people do not get much opportunity to view our native fauna and flora.

The emphasis must be on better facilities in national parks. It is not good enough to merely declare an area a national park and then forget about it. Unless a national park receives sufficient attention, it can harbour noxious weeds and animals such as dingoes and foxes, which neighbouring areas view with concern. National parks have to be developed. I have heard it said that a road should not be built through a national park. How could people view a national park extending over 1,000 to 2,000 acres if there was no road through it? A suitable road should be properly surveyed so that there will be the least possible interference with the ecology and the environment.

I noted with interest the conservation of soil in relation to water quality. My property at Tellebang adjoined a local forest that was reserved for timber purposes. That area has the greatest rainfall in the district, which indicates that the preservation of timber and vegetation has an effect on rainfall. That is a very important factor to be remembered in many areas of the State that are not blessed with adequate rainfall.

The Minister has indicated his interest by venturing into various areas to see what other people and other Governments are doing. I commend the Bill and I commend the Minister's purpose and his interest.

Mr. CASEY (Mackay) (12.37 p.m.): I understood from the Minister's introduction of the Bill that one of its purposes is to strengthen sections of the Act to prevent people from using the term "national park" willy-nilly. I don't know whether the new provisions would cover a particular incident that is of grave importance to the Forestry Department. In recent days in this Chamber and in recent months in Queensland we have heard about the perpetration of one of the greatest land swindles and frauds that Queensland has seen in many a long day. I refer to the actions of a company known as Resort Corporation of Queensland Pty. Ltd. It has sold a tremendous number of blocks of land in the Cape Palmerston area near Mackay. I will not touch on the way that company was tied up with Rural Co-operative Development Society Limited and a couple of the other companies in the Toowoomba-Darling Downs area, or the fact that the over-all project was one gigantic swindle operated by certain people from other areas. What I do want to take further in the Chamber today is one of the things that Resort Corporation did in the selling of the land. People were taken to the area and shown virgin land. A few tracks were blazed over which a Land Rover could travel. People were taken to a high point where they were told, "This is where your allotment is going to be and all that area there is the Mt. Funnel-Cape Palmerston National Park." As yet there is no such

national park in Queensland. Such a national park has not been gazetted. The company went even further. I give just one instance of the type of advertisement used by Resort Corporation. Clearly within an advertisement, it stated—

“Over 5 miles of golden beaches adjacent to 14 000 acres Mt. Funnell-Cape Palmerston National Park.”

As I said, there is no such thing at present. The people who had a grazing lease on a portion of land substantially larger than this area put a proposal to the Lands Department under which they were prepared to give to the department a large area of land to be called the Mt. Funnell-Cape Palmerston National Park in exchange for their being able to freehold balance portions of this land over which they held a lease. At that stage the proposition looked quite good. I admire the intention of these persons and I know, from conversations with the Minister on other matters in Queensland, that a number of people in the State are interested in preserving certain portions of land and are quite prepared to give land, on their decease or even before then, to be classified as national park land to be kept for all time for the people of Queensland.

In this instance, a real estate developer from Brisbane entered into an option to purchase this land from the lessees subject to its being freeholded in the way they envisaged. The developer in turn, sold 75 per cent of his option to a company, which happened to be the company that was being structured, in part, by persons associated with southern criminals and others, and it then moved in and perpetrated this gigantic fraud on the people.

Mr. Tomkins: Which shire area are you talking about?

Mr. CASEY: In the main, it is in the Broadsound Shire.

The company was able to do this by cutting across or breaching a number of other Queensland Acts such as the Auctioneers and Agents Act and the co-operatives Acts. Even a housing society is involved, but I do not want to raise questions on a matter with reference to which the honourable member for Archerfield was suspended from the House this morning. The whole exercise was carried out on the basis of the spurious advertising that they were able to use. In it they described this area as a national park.

A Bill of this nature should control such advertising so that developers would be prevented not only from calling an area a national park when it is not but also from advertising it as such. That would prevent their deceiving people into spending their hard-earned savings in the belief that they would acquire an allotment of land adjacent to a national park area. It is certainly an attraction to someone looking for a place of retirement, or an area for a week-end holiday home, close to a beach, if it also adjoins a national park.

The Mt. Funnell-Cape Palmerston area, as the Minister for Tourism and Marine Services knows, is one of the most attractive areas in Queensland, with its beautiful, undeveloped beaches. These sharpies or shrewdies took advantage of the people because they were able to step around so many of our Queensland Acts, including, it appears, the Forestry Act. This development cannot be compared with the Moreton Bay island developments. So far as I am aware, the proposed national park is still part of the grazing lease. It has not been gazetted, nor will it be until the freeholding conditions imposed on the property by the Lands Department are met. Nothing further will be done in the area until the environmental impact study called for by the local authority (which is supported by the Lands Department) has been properly carried out and studied. The National Parks and Wildlife Service will certainly ensure that this area is of value as a national park before it is accepted to become the responsibility of the State for all time.

It might well be that the environmental impact study will reveal that certain other sections of the Mt. Funnell-Cape Palmerston area would be far better as national park than the areas that the developers are allegedly interested in giving. In one proposal it looks good that they are going to give something away as a basis for accepting terms laid down by the Lands Department. However, when they use this type of advertising and, by deliberate falsification, fraudulently take people's money from them, we have to look at every possible avenue to punish these people or anybody else who might in the future have an idea of doing this.

I mention one other point in relation to the proposal I have raised. I note that in his comments the Minister referred to provisions being made for the people to enjoy Queensland's national parks. I support that strongly. It is not a bit of good our setting areas of land aside as national parks unless the people of the State are able to enjoy them and to see the beauties of nature as they are. Last year I drew the Minister's attention to problems encountered in some of the isolated areas of our State where national parks are situated. From publicity in the newspapers, I know that the Minister himself has recently been to one in the Carnarvon area. I stand to be corrected by the Minister on this, but I understand that parts of that national park are specifically set aside as camping reserves. People can set themselves up in the camping reserve, but their living conditions do not have to meet the stringent requirements laid down for the preservation of the national park area itself. In other words, in these isolated areas, a lawn could be maintained and concrete slabs put down for showering or washing.

In my opinion we have in the Whitsunday Island area off our Queensland coast the most beautiful national park in Australia—and, perhaps, in the world. A number of

leases have been obtained within that area for the establishment of tourist resorts so that people may travel to them, enjoy a holiday living in the resort and then journey into the national park area that constitutes the balance of the islands—whether it be by walking on the same island or by cruising to an adjoining island for a day trip, having a look around the beautiful Whitsunday wonder world.

Because of the high cost of flying to these resorts and staying at them, more and more these days tourists desire to travel in their own vehicles, leave them in a beach area and secure a permit to camp on the islands. That is all right, because the average person who is a camper or bush-walker is experienced and knows how to look after the environment of the area where he camps.

However, the moneymakers have moved into this field, too. A lot of advertisements have appeared for full coach and bus tours on the basis of, "Come and stay on your own on a lovely uninhabited island." As the tendency grew, we witnessed people flocking to Airlie Beach from the south on buses, being whisked for a week over to one of the islands in the Whitsunday Group supposedly to their uninhabited island. Those islands are national parks. Certainly, the proprietor who was selling the package deal was obtaining his permits from the National Parks and Wildlife Service to take campers to an island beach, supposedly complying with the requirements of the Forestry Act. That was being done week after week. One day I paid a surprise visit to one of those islands—Henning Island. The deterioration round the camping area was immediately obvious. The fellow running the tours was there. The brochure advertised that there were proper toilet facilities. The toilet facility was an old plastic pan sitting up behind a tree. There was no sign reading "Ladies" or "Gents". Whichever one they got to first was the one they used.

Mr. Moore: No notice saying "Girls to the left and men to the right"?

Mr. CASEY: These days it is a little difficult to tell the difference when somebody is sitting on a toilet seat. That was the type I saw there. No proper facilities were provided.

It is a beautiful area and I do not want to deny campers—even in groups—the right to go into the area. But it is essential that we look at all of our national parks in isolated areas and endeavour to set aside camping reserves within them, with proper camping facilities. It does not matter if the department itself does this work and charges a small fee for the use of the facilities by people who are given a permit to camp there. I support that idea strongly because I think it is by far the best method. The department could do this in isolated areas such as the Whitsunday area, where people could

pay a fee which would entitle them to use the showers, toilet facilities and camp-fire facilities provided.

The same thing could be done on islands farther north that are national parks and on some of the other isolated national park areas in Queensland. I strongly urge the Minister to have a further look at this problem. This proposal would allow a little development within national parks and the people could use the facilities there. Under the camping regulations, the local authorities could police other matters, such as litter, and they could do it more easily than officers of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Mr. WARNER (Toowoomba South) (12.52 p.m.): I rise to support the Bill. One of its most important aims is to encourage the use of State forests for recreational purposes. The resources of these unique areas should be available to the people for their use and enjoyment at all times. Although many forests in Queensland already have beautiful areas set aside for picnicking, etc., where barbeques, seats and other facilities have been provided, there is a need for many more.

Like the previous speaker I visited several parks in New South Wales and was impressed with the way they are administered. I believe that, unless we make all points of our parks accessible to the public, it is very little use creating them. We must watch this aspect closely. Most of the parks have good roads to focal points. Parking bays are established in the parks, but they will accommodate only a limited number of cars and people are not allowed to park elsewhere. Close to those areas, which are points of beauty and areas of interest, tables and chairs and even gas barbecues have been provided. Special amenities are provided in these parks for the general public.

This concept of a park is a must for areas adjoining cities and towns such as Brisbane and Toowoomba. We must look forward, as I am sure we do, to the areas that are expanding. Nobody could accuse the Government of not keeping this idea in the forefront of its considerations.

The establishment of parks in which particularly attractive stands of native forests are preserved for recreational purposes is a very important purpose of the Bill. Not many week-ends ago I tried to take several Toowoomba schoolboys on a picnic. All of the parks I found around Toowoomba were completely fenced off by private properties and I had to go 25 miles to find a spot where the boys could swim in a creek. It is not that there are not many places around Toowoomba; there are hundreds of beautiful park areas that could be used by people from Toowoomba and nearby towns. The sooner we have areas that can be set aside for this type of enjoyment where we can see forests in an undisturbed condition, the better it will be.

The Bill exempts State forests, or parts thereof, from the cutting of trees for timber and other purposes in order to preserve samples of native forest conditions. I believe that much larger tracts of undisturbed land should be set aside each year for future generations. I do not believe that we should even attempt to provide facilities in them. They should be set aside completely for future generations. I am sure that, with the thinking of the Government and the present Minister, this will come about. Such areas have to be managed properly. This became very apparent on our tour of the other States. Each park will also have its own problems, but there is no doubt in my mind that this objective can be achieved. This legislation goes one step further in providing the Conservator of Forests with statutory authority to use and manage State forest areas in the most appropriate way. I commend the Bill.

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (12.56 p.m.): I thank the Minister for providing me with a copy of his introductory speech. On page 8 he referred to clauses 3 and 4 as procedural amendments. He said—

“... the setting aside of timber reserves as national parks to be referred by the Director of National Parks and Wildlife Service to the Conservator of Forests for concurrence in addition to any other heads of departments of the Government of the State whose interests might be affected.”

Provisions of this nature worry me, because I think that one of the things that we should do when setting up national parks is make sure that we give proper authority to the people in charge of them. Section 24 (3) of the Forestry Act provides—

“No recommendation for the setting apart of any such lands situated on a goldfield or mineral field shall be made without the approval of the Minister for Mines...”

In other words, in that area the Minister for Mines has to approve the setting aside of land as a national park. In relation to the preservation of national parks, the Forestry Act provides—

“... the Governor in Council may from time to time on the recommendation of the Conservator of Forests by Order in Council set apart and declare as a National Park any Crown land or Timber Reserve which he considers to be of scenic, scientific or historic interest.”

The procedure is that if the Conservator of Forests considers any area should be set aside as a National Park, he should then refer the matter to the Land Administration Commission for advice as to whether it concurs with the making by the Conservator of Forests of a recommendation that the land be so set apart, and where the interests of other departments of the Government of the State are affected by the proposal, the Conservator of Forests must ascertain the

views of the department on the proposal and give consideration to those views. To me, that reverses the procedure.

Mr. Ahern: It's only fair that they should know.

Mr. BURNS: That is so. I know that each party has as part of its policy the setting aside of a certain percentage of the lands of the State as national parks. Once that percentage has been decided, I think that overriding authority should then reside in the Director of National Parks and Wildlife Service. I think that the information that he receives should be given as advice. I do not believe that the Minister for Mines (or any other Minister) should, because of a section in the Act, override those recommendations. It must finally be a Cabinet decision on his advice.

I accept that if from a land-use point of view the greatest value of the area lies in mining, there should be a discussion between the Ministers concerned over the use to which the land is to be put. Action should always be taken only on proper land-use and planning advice. One of the greatest problems in the administration of national parks is conflict of interest, with various departments claiming that they should control the land or use it for a specific purpose. I therefore believe that the setting aside of land should be done on a strict land-use basis and that the Director of National Parks, or the Minister in charge, should have overriding control.

Mr. Ahern: It is a Cabinet responsibility, really.

Mr. BURNS: Minister's recommendations are very seldom rejected by Cabinet. The only Minister whose recommendations have not been accepted during the time in which I have been in this Assembly has been the Minister for Police. I have not heard of any others.

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

Mr. BURNS: Before the luncheon adjournment I was talking about the need to preserve our environment and pointing out at the same time that there was a need to give due consideration to the needs of employment, industry, home-building and so on. I was making the point that it was important that the Director of the National Parks and Wildlife Service is given sufficient teeth under the legislation so that other departments will not be able to override his decisions or recommendations. If they could, we would be setting aside as national parks only those areas that no-one else found any use for. I think even in this Bill we recognise that there is a need to set aside areas of land and timber although they could be of some other value to the community. We set them aside for future generations so that the young people in the community will be able to see areas such as the Wallum and

other timber, wilderness and research areas. The knowledge they gain from such areas will benefit them over the years.

I support the Minister on the provision to increase penalties. I took the trouble to have a look at section 87 of the Act and found that it covers some rather drastic actions against the environment. Section 87 reads in part—

“A person shall not—

- (i) Forge or counterfeit any license, permit, certificate, or other authority granted under and for the purposes of this Act; or
- (ii) Utter, or make use of any such license, permit, certificate or other authority so forged or counterfeited; or
- (iii) Counterfeit or unlawfully fix to any forest products any mark used by and appropriated by the use of forest officers, or unlawfully alter, remove, disfigure, or obliterate any mark placed upon any forest products by any forest officer; or . . .
- (v) Unlawfully alter, obliterate, deface, pull up, remove, or destroy any boundary mark or any notice which has been posted in any place for the purposes of this Act; or
- (vi) Personate any person named in any license, permit, certificate, or other authority granted under and for the purposes of this Act;”.

So I believe that fines of the order of \$10 or \$300 are well out of kilter with today's values, and that persons who act like that deserve to be treated harshly; but mere increases in penalties are not enough. Something more is needed. I think there is a need for an education programme so that people can be made more aware. With today's cars and caravans, more and more people can move around the countryside and enter national parks. I remember as a lad going up to Mt. Nebo and other forest areas. We used to get a permit from the Forestry Department to go into some of the gullies and collect ferns. It was very difficult for an ordinary person to determine where the boundaries were and whether he was in a national park area or not.

I compliment the National Parks Association. They send out those little roneoed books that we receive every month. They write about national parks I have never heard of and they give the history of the parks and how to get to them. That is a very good idea. I think the department could do a lot more to educate children and the general public as well, perhaps to the extent of assisting the National Parks Association. From their balance sheet published in one of their booklets I noticed that in one year the donations they received totalled less than \$1,000, so it is obvious that they operate on a limited budget. The aim of the association is to assist the officers of the department to promote the better use

and better knowledge of national parks and to educate the public to protect the environment. If this is so, the organisation is worthy of our fullest support. I have no objection to the size of the penalties but I do believe we need something more. We need to increase the likelihood of catching offenders. We also need a better education programme to make people aware of the problems.

I turn now to the scientific areas mentioned by the Minister. I wonder whether he has read the report of the survey of the major islands of Moreton Bay conducted in 1972. I often wonder what happened as a result of the letter written by Mr. Harvey of the Department of Primary Industries on 5 May 1971 in which he made a submission on behalf of the department to the Co-ordinator-General. He wrote about the preservation of vegetation areas, as he called them, and reference areas. He said—

“Moreton Island is considered to contain a number of unique plant communities, and it is the view of this Department that every effort should be made to preserve examples (reference areas) of certain undisturbed habitats or ecosystems for posterity.

“Moreton Island has a land area of some 44,000 acres and it is our view that three reference areas, representing the major land divisions on which particular vegetation communities occur, be retained in an undisturbed state. As shown on Fig. 1, the first of these reference areas bisects the northern tip of the island, the second bisects the centre of the island in the vicinity of Mt. Tempest and joins the existing National Park, while the third virtually occupies the sand mass extending southwards from the Big Sandhills to Reeders Point.”

He went on to say—

“Further discussions would be desirable concerning the actual size of each reference area and their precise location, and this could well be the subject of negotiation between the Government Botanist and the Department of Lands. Dedication as National Parks may be considered desirable if our proposals are acceptable.”

In his introductory remarks, the Minister spoke of reference areas of either scenic or scientific interest or the retention of some particularly attractive stand for recreational purposes. I wondered whether any such areas had been considered on Moreton Island, which is an island of great importance to the people of Brisbane. As Dr. Harvey's recommendations were made in 1971, I wondered whether the areas he mentioned had already been the subject of mining leases, or authorities to prospect.

I come back to the question raised by the honourable member for Bundaberg. It is true that the Premier, after he made the statement that large areas of the Great Dividing Range would be declared national parks, said that he was not very sure whether

or not mining would be allowed there. In fact, the headline in the "Telegraph" of 28 April 1975 said, "Joh's Parks may be mined".

The article said—

"Mining and other industries may be allowed in new conservation areas proposed by the Premier, Mr. Bjelke-Petersen.

"Mr. Bjelke-Petersen said today he could not say at this stage whether industry would be allowed to operate in the areas."

Later it said —

"Mr. Bjelke-Petersen said today he did not want to say for instance that there would be no oil exploration or mining."

I express my concern that perhaps that might happen in the present national park area on Moreton Island. It is passing strange—and the Minister is aware of this—that a beautiful national park such as the small one on Moreton Island does not reach the water's edge. In fact, one has to walk through mining leases or someone else's territory to reach the national park. This national park could be under threat now from mining, because there are leases over large areas of the island, and it may be that some of the wilderness areas or research areas that Dr. Harvey recommended in 1971 be set aside could be under a similar threat. If no provision is made in this Bill, I hope it will be made in the all-encompassing Bill that the Minister has said he will introduce later to protect such areas.

On the questions of the desirability of conserving soil, the environment and the protection of water quality, I was speaking recently to an engineer from the Brisbane City Council. I am pleased that the honourable member for Merthyr raised this morning the question of the Mt. Coot-tha park. I am sure that he has not been to Mt. Coot-tha park for a while. If he had, he would know that some lovely areas have been set aside by the Labour council. If he liked to go there with his family on a Sunday afternoon, he would find that amongst the trees there are some beautiful settings in which people can park off the side of the road. The area is used very extensively. It is true that it is not part of the planned area that the Government wishes to take in, encompassing Mt. Nebo, Mt. Glorious, and so on, and that there are some disputes between Government and council; however, I do not think one should detract in any way from the other. As I said earlier, the Brisbane City Council's Mt. Coot-tha park is an area that is widely used and I, for one, appreciate it greatly.

The army was in the area not very long ago, and sewerage engineers from the council told me—I am not an expert on it—that the E. Coli levels in the Enoggera Dam had risen amazingly. I understand that these readings are associated with sewage disposal into water-courses. If this continued, the citizens of Brisbane could face a health threat from

contaminated water. Although the Army was there for only a short time on manoeuvres, the readings showed a substantial rise.

The point I am making is that I accept the proposition that, even though it might not be in the Government's national park, we ought to make certain that water quality is protected.

Finally, on the question of State forests being used for recreational purposes, I support the remarks of the honourable member for Bundaberg. I do not know what is to be done about young men and women riding trail bikes. It is a cause of major argument in the city that people are allowed to buy a bike for their son or daughter when there are very few areas in which they can ride them. If they do ride them in suburban areas, they drive people crazy with the noise, especially when they destroy the peace and quiet at the week-end.

I often wonder about the fire breaks that one sees as one drives through the Beerwah State pine forest. I drive to Donnybrook over the sand roads in that area, and the possibility has occurred to me that the fire breaks could be used by trail bike riders if they were patrolled by a ranger or some other system of control were implemented. There would have to be proper control, otherwise a situation would arise similar to that in some of the national parks in America, where one sees more cars than one sees in the streets. There does not seem to me to be any reason why some of these areas could not be set aside to allow young lads to let off a bit of steam. As you know, Mr. Hewitt, in some of the areas the trees are so thick that they would never be able to ride off the trails into the forest itself.

I should like a clearer explanation of the way we are going to restrain the use of the term "national park". Does it mean that any of the existing national parks will no longer be termed "national parks", or are all areas presently referred to as "national parks" acceptable under the Forestry Act?

Mr. Tomkins: Every one that is presently a national park under the Act will be left that way. What we are legislating against is the use of the term "national park" by persons for private purposes.

Mr. BURNS: So that in the future we will be provided with lists by the department of those national parks covered by the Forestry Act?

Mr. Tomkins: Yes.

Mr. BURNS: I thank the Minister. I await the Bill with interest so that I may read in detail clauses applying to recreational areas, wilderness areas and research areas.

Mr. ROW (Hinchinbrook) (2.26 p.m.): I am in the fortunate position of having a very large area of national park in my electorate. I refer, of course, to Hinchinbrook Island, the largest and highest island off

the Queensland coast. That island has been preserved as a national park for many years. Because I have enjoyed and can therefore appreciate the advantage of that feature, it behoves me to compliment the Minister and his staff on the proposed amendments to the Forestry Act.

I have rubbed shoulders with the Cape York Conservation Council. That group was active in my electorate for a considerable period. I attended public meetings called by that organisation. It was clear to me that while members of that organisation were well meaning in many respects, they were motivated in directions that might have led them outside what is our proper concept of conservation activities in national parks. I am pleased that the Minister did mention that organisation and the fact that generally speaking its intentions were not quite what the Government considered to be proper. I am pleased also to learn that the department is contemplating the necessary steps to bring into being the concept of conservation which I believe the people of the State are mainly interested in.

In his opening remarks the Minister indicated that he and his staff are prepared to recognise the benefits that can accrue from allowing certain activities in national parks. He referred particularly to limited grazing activity and the application of certain areas to recreational purposes. It is necessary that some degree of utilisation of national parks be permitted in the interests of attracting additional population, either permanent or itinerant, to the sparsely populated areas of the State. In my electorate we have a population ratio of under three persons per square mile. This is insufficient to sustain the area in anticipation of future development. Anything we can do to encourage a population increase in such areas is of great benefit.

When national parks are declared we always seem to have a small problem with minor necessary adjustments. I am speaking now of boundary areas and the problem that arises with drainage in the wet tropics. I apologise for becoming a little parochial here. On occasions the declaration of the type of national park I am accustomed to dealing with cuts across the completion of some drainage scheme or adjustment to land settlement. I hope that the Minister will allow a certain degree of flexibility, with minor adjustments to boundaries, in order to avoid animosity between the Forestry Department and the local people who necessarily have to expand their activities from time to time, particularly in agricultural drainage. From time to time access to property and certain other features have to be adjusted.

I am very pleased to note the exemption or part-exemption in respect of the obtaining of forest products in declared areas. The

Leader of the Opposition asked how harvesting of these various products will be controlled. Many parts of our national parks, particularly those on the Great Dividing Range in the tropics that contain the most spectacular of our forest timber, are inaccessible, and this tends to give greater protection for timber and other natural resources. And the additional surveillance of the department, which is designed to preserve natural features, should mean that we will not have any great worry in this context.

I said that I had in my electorate the largest island national park adjacent to the Australian coast. I am pleased to note that, in recent times, the Department of Forestry set aside an area containing estuaries, mangrove swamps and creeks, commonly known as the Hinchinbrook Channel. It is situated between the mainland and the main Hinchinbrook Island, and is now dedicated as a national park for the purposes of ecology preservation. The people in my electorate are particularly favoured in having this area set aside. In recent weeks the department was fortunate in being able to acquire in my electorate, to the north of the Hinchinbrook Island complex, another area on the mainland that is eminently suitable for conservation and preservation. We could not be much better endowed than we are. I hope that the energy of the National Parks and Wildlife Service is directed towards these areas in order to justify the trouble taken in preserving them.

A great deal of co-operation will be required between the Minister's department and other Government departments in developing the necessary ancillary services to make these areas accessible to the local population and the tourists, whom we would like to see come from overseas and the southern States, so that all may benefit. Effective liaison will be necessary between the Minister's Department, the Department of Harbours and Marine, the Local Government Department and the Main Roads Department. Several areas of public interest have been created without very much being done to promote access or transport. A good deal of concern has been expressed about the impediment to progress caused by the difficulty in getting marine craft licensed to carry people to these places. We also have difficulty in obtaining proper harbour facilities and other accommodation for marine craft. All these things must be developed contiguously with the idea of using and preserving our national parks areas. To that end I hope that the Minister and his department will make some attempt at liaison with the other departments that I feel ought to be involved. I do not want to take up any more of the Committee's time. Other speakers have covered most of the topics that I would have thought were worthy of consideration. I congratulate the Minister on his presentation of the proposals and commend them to the Committee.

Dr. SCOTT-YOUNG (Townsville) (2.35 p.m.): I am very pleased to note from the Minister's introductory remarks that an effort is being made to restrict the use of the expression "national park". Previously the term was a vague one. Few people, let alone the public at large, have a clear idea of what is defined by that term. I believe the term "national park" should be further defined to distinguish areas set aside along the coast from those established inland. The coastal and inland areas are completely different in their importance. It is about the national parks in coastal areas that I wish to speak.

Up the coast from Townsville we have the beautiful Hinchinbrook Island and Hinchinbrook Channel, as has just been mentioned by the honourable member. That area is rapidly becoming known throughout the world as a tourist attraction. Within seven miles of Townsville is Magnetic Island, 70 per cent of which is national park. That huge tract of reserve is becoming a problem to the local tourist organisation, which fears that the area may be increased eventually to embrace Arthur Bay and Florence Bay. They are magnificent little areas which attract people for week-ends. Since the advent of the small, high-powered motor-boat, a lot of Townsville people have taken advantage of the attractions offered by those spots. People are able to get across from the mainland to the island in a matter of a few minutes. Any further increases in the area of national park on Magnetic Island will isolate those bays and restrict the enjoyment of the population of Townsville. Therefore, I would ask the Minister to ensure that, if any expansion of that national park area is considered, liaison be established with the local tourist organisation. I would suggest that officers of the Department of Tourism, the Forestry Department and the National Parks and Wildlife Service should conduct joint consultations on the matter.

Mr. Moore: Wouldn't it be true to say that Magnetic Island is virtually Townsville's playground and that people have no other swimming beaches?

Dr. SCOTT-YOUNG: That is correct. If they wish to go to the reef, they are faced with a 40-mile trip. However, around Magnetic Island are some magnificent bays with small reefs which give a greater number of people the opportunity to fish and provide their families with enjoyment.

At present there is no complaint about the national park. It has been well set out and the tracks have been excellently done. People enjoy the park. However, personally I would not like to see it extended, because around the foreshores of the island there are only small areas left for the enjoyment of people who wish to build week-enders and spend their leisure time fishing and swimming. A number of people now live on Magnetic Island.

Mr. Moore: There is the population of Townsville, for a start.

Dr. SCOTT-YOUNG: Its population has doubled and is expected to be over 100,000 in the 1980s. Consequently, considerably more people will be living on Magnetic Island.

I have nothing more to say in this debate. The Minister mentioned that account has been taken of watershed areas in national parks. That is most important. Many years ago our watersheds were jealously guarded and kept free from pollution. However, more recently there seems to have been a tendency to allow collections of water for domestic use to be used for swimming and the surrounding areas to be built upon without any regard to pollution. Most probably certain restrictions, rules and guide-lines will be laid down in the Bill to prevent this pollution and damage in our watersheds.

Mr. DEAN (Sandgate) (2.40 p.m.): I say with a fair amount of emphasis that this is a very important Bill and I am very happy to make a small contribution to it. In Australia we are only now beginning to understand the importance of forests and our natural environment and to come to terms with the whole ramifications of the forestry system in our State. From time to time we have been told that forests are part of our heritage and that the complex ecosystems are an integral part of our web of life and therefore very important. Sometimes we seek the solace of the forest areas or go there to admire their great beauty.

Australia's percentage of forestry development is one of the smallest in the world. It has only 42,500,000 hectares of forest and it is estimated that this is half of the original forest area. Forests presently cover approximately 5 per cent of Australia's total land area. By comparison, the forests in four other countries, Japan, Russia, Canada and New Zealand, cover respectively 59.9 per cent, 44.7 per cent, 32 per cent and 30.2 per cent.

I should like to pose a question to the Minister concerning a fear that I have held for a long time. We seem to tend to look only at large areas. A forest usually covers a large area but we should not consider for declaration as national parks only areas containing thousands of hectares. With the utmost respect to the local authority, which does its best with its limited finance, I have always felt that the larger park areas in the Greater Brisbane area should be declared as national parks to protect them from people who want to encroach on them and erect buildings or establish sporting fields.

I am not against sporting fields; but in my own electorate, pieces of naturally beautiful land have been desecrated by the establishment of sporting fields. If they were declared as national parks, they would be protected. At the moment, many areas in the Greater Brisbane Area, although they are Crown land, are held in trust by the council as parks for recreational purposes, which is a very broad description when it comes to the protection of those parks.

While listening to the earlier speeches, my mind went back to the great amount of damage that has occurred over the years in these areas. Fortunately the Brisbane City Council is making a great attempt to rectify some of the damage. A new botanic gardens complex is being established at Mt. Coot-tha. I have inspected the area. In fact, I took southern visitors to see it even in its initial stage of development. It is a very impressive area and, when it is finished, it will be one of the best gardens in Australia. I hope that it will be declared as a national park to give it permanent protection.

Many other honourable members and I have spoken about the Botanic Gardens opposite Parliament House. I feel that it should be part of the Parliament House complex and should be declared a national park to give it all-time protection.

From time to time we hear murmurs of things that are going to happen to the Botanic Gardens. Some people want to construct a swimming pool in the gardens and others talk of a sporting complex. It is an area of approximately 50 acres, and I think it is time that it was permanently protected from any further encroachment.

Mr. Moore: They want to give half to the Q.I.T.

Mr. DEAN: I am totally opposed to any further piecemeal development on Botanic Gardens land. Already there is too much development adjacent to Parliament House. Many years ago, when I was a member of the Brisbane City Council, I strongly objected to the building of the new city morgue. I realise that such a place is necessary, but I do not think it should have been built on part of a beautiful reach of the Brisbane River. It could have been sited elsewhere.

Mr. Houston: That was a State Government decision.

Mr. DEAN: I certainly opposed it.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! For the guidance of the Committee, I point out that that area is not a national park. I ask the honourable member not to pursue his present line.

Mr. DEAN: I was referring to that area to say that I feel it should be part of the national park system of the State.

In my area of Sandgate there is a system of lagoons. Some people make derogatory remarks about them. They are nevertheless natural lagoons and anyone who looked into their history would find that many years ago they stretched from Sandgate to Bribie Island. They were part of the ecosystem of the area. Over the years they have been interfered with to such an extent that one has been wiped out. I opposed its elimination, but I got nowhere with my protests. The lagoon system extends through the Pine

River basin to Bribie Island and it should become part of a national park reserve and be protected for posterity.

One is also reminded of the great desecration of Bribie Island that has taken place over the years. Some people are happy with its development—it has become residential and there are some beautiful homes there—but many years ago it was a natural bird sanctuary and national park area. The first destruction took place there during the war years. It gained momentum and before we knew where we were the whole area was under residential development.

I do not think that there should be any size restriction on areas of land declared as national parks. If an area is of reasonable size and can be used as a national park, it should be so declared in order to ensure that it is protected for all time.

St. Helena Island is another area that comes to mind. The bay islands were referred to by the Leader of the Opposition. However, I do not think that they can ever be mentioned too frequently. Too few people realise the beauty of Moreton Bay and its islands. They, too, should sooner or later become part of the national parks system. I have just completed reading a book by Banfield dealing with the early development of Dunk Island. It is very interesting. He paints a very vivid picture of the beauty of the island in the early days when he took up residence there. I do not know what it is like now as I have not been there for many years.

We do not seem to realise the beauty of our coastline. That is why I felt impelled to rise and give support to the Bill. I sincerely hope that the Minister, through his officers, will considerably widen the scope of the activities of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Years ago I spoke to the Minister's predecessor about my own area and I have written several letters to the present Minister on the same subject. I am sorry to say, however, that apart from acknowledgment of the correspondence I have received no satisfaction. Certainly no development has taken place. I hope that in the notes that the Minister gives to his officers will be a reminder of my submissions concerning the lagoons system in my area, which should be declared a national park.

Mr. PORTER (Toowong) (2.49 p.m.): This must be a rather delightful experience for the Minister. He has introduced a measure and not one sour note has been expressed. We are all in support of the Bill. That is a very good augury for this session.

Those who have had long experience in the field of Government administration will know that the Forestry Department has always been extremely jealous of its powers and prerogatives. At times those powers have been quite considerable. Nevertheless, although at times we might have felt that the Forestry Department has been a little too definite in what it has wanted and what

has been permitted, by and large we must admit that down through the years it has exercised very good husbandry in terms of tree-cutting, tree conservation and, one might well say, tree-farming. I know, for instance, when I inspected the Fraser Island area some time ago it was freely conceded by most keen conservationists that the work the Forestry Department had done down through the years on Fraser Island—a form of tree-farming, as it were—had certainly not done any damage to the natural environment; indeed, it probably improved it.

Still, the fact is that, whenever we open up the subject of national parks by making this sort of amendment to the Forestry Act, we do lay ourselves open to a lot of criticism because in this area it is a little like the comment that one can always make about education; no matter what we do here, no matter how many national parks we create, no matter whether we make them small or large, whatever we do is not good enough. It is an area which is always available for infinitely more than is being done.

I think all of us accept the absolute certainty that, as populations grow, so the need for more and more multi-purpose national parks will truly grow. I think that this point was well made earlier by the honourable member for Merthyr, who talked about the national park to embrace the Mt. Coot-tha area and reach up into the ranges. I do not think anybody could possibly question that, as urbanisation proceeds, it will bring a lot of social evils in its train, and one of the very real ways of combating the evils of the detritus that lies in the wake of the avalanche of big cities is to have more and more areas where people can get away from the stresses and strains of urban existence. As cities grow, people, and particularly children, tend to live more and more in concrete canyons. For instance, there must be many suburbs today where it is difficult for a boy to find a stone to throw at a telegraph pole, even if he were game to do it. The things that I used to do as a boy just are not possible these days because there are no waterholes or gullies or anything of that nature.

So people in big cities get divorced from the natural aspects of existence and I think that this has a very serious deteriorative effect on them. I have no doubt at all that the enormous growth in the rates of crime and other social traumas associated with big cities is part of this phenomenon of people being divorced from the real things of life, so that there is this absolute necessity to provide those areas where people can go to enjoy once again the serenity of nature and see the reality of life in things that grow as opposed to the artificiality of life and the tempo and the sophisticated pace of big cities. I suppose what I am trying to say is that national park areas such as the one proposed around Brisbane are particularly important to a big city. National parks

nourish the essential spirit of man. Shakespeare says that sleep ravel's up the tangled sleeve of care. I would imagine the capacity to sojourn for a time in the serenity of a national park would tend to knit up the unravelled sleeve of tension for people, too.

One thing above all is much more than certain. We already have population predictions for greater Brisbane which suggest that we will be a million people by the 1980s. I think we are about 850,000 now and we will certainly be 1,500,000, if not more, by the year 2000, so that there will be an absolutely desperate need as the years go by for people to be able to get out of Brisbane and to retreat into the quiet of nature from the stresses and strains of that type of urban living.

I never cease to be amazed at the way the Brisbane City Council tries to stymie proposals for more space of this nature. It is true that it pays lip-service to them, of course; but in this case—a proposal for a national park so vital to the city—it even wants to cut up the slopes of the foothills for private property sale, merely to make a little bit of money for the council. It is a dreadful thing.

An Honourable Member interjected.

Mr. PORTER: Yes, it is an awful business. It really is so shabby that it is almost obscene to contemplate. I have no doubt that if that type of council continues—

Mr. Moore: It will be gone on the 27th. It will be finished.

Mr. PORTER: I am pleased to hear the honourable member say that it is gone. Let me wish the members of it bon voyage. However, while that council is still in office, we have to consider it, and I would say that, judging by its record, the national park—and it must be large so that people can be in it and find in it solitude as well as serenity—would be full of motor-car tracks and trail bike tracks. Anybody in the Clem Jones style who could contemplate putting a motor road through the Botanic Gardens is capable of any diabolical scheme.

I congratulate the Minister on the determination and tenacity with which he has maintained the public interest to date, but I make a plea to him to ensure that the national park in the area that I am talking about, and about which other honourable members have spoken earlier, is maintained as a place for bush-walkers and campers, not for car drivers—a place in which one can breathe the mountain ozone, not exhaust fumes from motor-cars. If there is one reason above all others why people should be persuaded to turn thumbs down on the present motley crew in the Brisbane City Council, it is their appalling record in terms of providing adequate spaces for recreation, solitude and satisfaction needed in terms of national parks and other open spaces.

The Minister is to be commended for introducing the proposed Bill.

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (2.57 p.m.): As explained by the Minister and most honourable members who have taken part in the debate, the main purpose of the proposed legislation is to clarify the definition of what can and cannot be called national parks. I go back to the example cited by the honourable member for Mackay, who I think gave honourable members very good reasons why the legislation should be accepted by this Assembly. The development of which he spoke was one that was promoted because of its closeness to the alleged national park in that area.

I welcome the declaration of these areas; I welcome the clarification of the definition. However, while we are looking at this matter, we need also to begin removing some of the conflict that exists over the use of national parks. I refer again to the question asked of the Minister by the honourable member for Bundaberg—

“When an area is gazetted a national park, what does the gazettal imply as far as logging, mining, tourist development, etc., are concerned?”

The Minister's answer was that an area gazetted as a national park cannot be subjected to logging, mining or other forms of industrial or commercial enterprise, and he then went on to speak about tourist development, permits to graze stock, and so on.

I go back to an article in “The Courier-Mail” of 5 March 1975, which, under the headline “New national park areas”, said—

“The State Government will add a further 12,141 hectares of forest country to the national park system.”

I refer then to the last paragraph, which said—

“No logging would be permitted on the timber reserve, but the area would be subject to further mineral investigation—and possible extraction—before being committed as a national park.”

So in one instance it is said, “No, under no circumstances are we going to allow mining or mineral excavation”, yet there seems to be this ridiculous process under which, when an area is being considered as a national park, it can certainly be mined, and so on, before the actual declaration is made. I wonder whether this is simply a revelation of the Government's attitude to national parks. It realises the political advantages of having them; it realises that they have become a political football and a very important gimmick to thrash around at election time.

Mr. Gunn: You have a suspicious mind.

Mr. WRIGHT: I may have a suspicious mind, but we are starting to realise that the Government is not quite sure of its own aims, ideology and philosophy here. What could really be worse than to allow all the mineral excavation just prior to the declaration of an area as a national park? That is what has been reported. I notice

that the report published in “The Courier-Mail” on 5 March 1975 has never been refuted by the Minister, the Premier or any other person on that side of the Chamber. Therefore I take it that this can happen. I take it that, before the declaration is made, a person can do what he likes as long as it does not involve the cutting of timber.

Mr. Greenwood: Do you believe everything you read in “The Courier-Mail”?

Mr. WRIGHT: No, but I have made the point that that report was never refuted. If the report was not true, let the Minister totally refute it when he replies.

I believe we need clarification of the Government's attitude and philosophy towards national parks and of people's rights and responsibilities in this respect. I wonder whether the Government has definite plans for operating national parks. I accept the need for having green areas set aside, but it is just as important that people have the opportunity to benefit from those areas. I have heard people say, “We have to set them aside. Don't touch them. Simply designate them and leave them there.” I certainly do not believe that that is wise. We can benefit from such areas, and we should do so; but to do so properly, we have to have very strict rules of usage, and I have yet to hear these outlined by the Government. I believe my reservations are backed up by the statement made by the Premier as reported on 28 April 1975 when he came forth with his massive proposal to make the Great Dividing Range a national park. In one fell swoop he talked about setting aside a belt 1 770 km in length. What happened when the Treasurer was asked about the proposal? The newspaper report stated—

“The State Treasurer and Liberal Party Leader (Sir Gordon Chalk) said: ‘This matter is one being handled by the Premier. Apparently he intends to make some statements in relation to conservation but I am not aware what they are about.’”

I wonder how many honourable members opposite, particularly in the ministerial ranks, knew what the Premier had in mind when he made that massive, sweeping statement about setting aside such a huge area as a national park. How could the Government possibly maintain, operate, manage or care for such an area? It is no wonder the people have reservations and wonder whether it is a political gimmick.

People are entitled to have reservations. It is proposed to set aside such a huge area, and it is said that no logging will take place, and no mining will take place, but on the other hand it has been said, “You can do what you like before it is declared.” I do not believe that the Premier knew what he was saying at the time. He suddenly realised the importance of national parks, so he came out with a massive

proposal. I wonder how many Government members have really thought about this. How many of them have started to wonder how much faith can be placed in the proposals being put forward by the Government? There are many unanswered questions. Who will have the final say on these matters? If grazing is to be allowed by permit, or mining excavation is going to be allowed, is it going to be a matter for the Minister in charge of Forestry, is it going to be a matter for the Premier, is it going to be a matter for the Cabinet, or is it going to be as the Premier stated? I go back to the Premier's statement on 28 April 1975 when he was interviewed by a "Telegraph" reporter. The report stated—

"Mr. Bjelke-Petersen said today he did not want to say for instance that there would be no oil exploration or mining.

This sort of decision would be up to the new National Parks and Wildlife Service."

Who is going to make the decision? The Minister or this new group of experts in the Wildlife Service? I do not think the people know what is going to happen. I do not think we have been told enough. There are too many unknowns.

Mr. Casey: It is probably a little bit like the Country Party back-benchers' decision in caucus yesterday.

Mr. WRIGHT: I would agree wholeheartedly. That is a very good analogy.

Let me come back to the unknowns. We have had Ministers state one thing and back-benchers say something else. The honourable member for Merthyr raised a point about the Brisbane national park. Although the Premier stated that a huge area would be declared, he was not specific and the Treasurer and the Minister did not know anything about it. Let us be given some details. In reply the Minister should tell us clearly his philosophy and that of the Government on the management and usage of national parks because the people of Queensland have a right to know.

Mr. POWELL (Isis) (3.6 p.m.): I rise to support the measure introduced by the Minister today. It grieves me to hear Opposition members attacking the Minister on this forward-thinking Bill under which a number of things are to be defined which so far have not been defined. The honourable member for Rockhampton attacked the Premier's statements about national parks. The A.L.P. has adopted this attitude because it is very concerned that the Government is now taking the initiative on conservation issues. The Opposition has had the wind taken completely out of its sails and now Opposition members are squealing like stuck pigs. We have the initiative and they are not sure which way to run.

Naturally the administration of parks will be in the hands of the department constituted for that purpose. Obviously the

director of that department will advise the Minister on the way that national parks should be used and whether grazing rights should be extended into them. The Minister has the right to accept or reject the department's advice. If that were not so, we would not need a Minister, or a Public Service designed to do the work that we ask it to do.

The honourable member for Rockhampton also complained about a number of unknowns. If he were to wait to find out what the Bill is about, he would have all those unknowns answered. It is a useless exercise for Opposition members to criticise the Government's actions when they do not know what is involved, mainly because they have not taken the time to do their homework, or find out what it is all about.

Mr. Wright: Do you know what it is about?

Mr. POWELL: Yes, I do. The honourable member will find out when he has the Bill in his hand. That is the time when it is right and proper for him to know.

It is quite obvious that, once again, Opposition members are complaining bitterly simply because they are in Opposition. We should wake them up by asking them to do some homework on their own policies and publicity. This Government has taken the initiative on national parks. Queensland is leading the way and I feel sure that nobody would deny that it is about time that was done. It is certainly a good forward step.

The Bill covers many aspects of national parks in Queensland and, as everybody knows, there are a number of national parks in my electorate. My attitude to national parks is well known. Hopefully, as the National Parks and Wildlife Service is built up and as legislation is brought forward time after time to implement the remarks of the Premier and other Ministers who have spoken, the picture will become clearer and national parks will become parks that the people of Queensland can use.

Hon. K. B. TOMKINS (Roma—Minister for Lands, Forestry, National Parks and Wildlife Service) (3.9 p.m.), in reply: I thank both Government and Opposition members for their contributions on these amendments to the Forestry Act. I was very pleased to note that, virtually without exception, everybody supported what we are trying to do. Since this section came under my control, I have found tremendous interest displayed in national parks and wildlife, not only by members of Parliament but also by people in all walks of life. It certainly gives me a good deal of pleasure to note that, and it is very helpful to my department.

One or two matters raised in the debate I will reply to now, but I will reply in more detail in my second-reading speech.

This is a Bill amending the Forestry Act, but much has been said about national parks. As I indicated in my introductory remarks, we will be introducing a Bill dealing entirely with the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Mr. Wright: The member for Isis said that was included in this Bill.

Mr. TOMKINS: That will be contained in a later Bill. Preparing that legislation is a big job and will take time. As members who have followed the service would know, it was established as a result of small amending legislation, providing for national parks legislation to be dealt with under the Forestry Act. Perhaps it is a bit back to front, but the proposed Bill is a comprehensive one. My officers are working on it now, and in due course it will be brought before the Parliament.

Quite a lot was said today by the honourable member for Toowong, the honourable member for Merthyr and others about the forest park proposal for the Mt. Nebo-Mt. Glorious area. I express my disappointment at the lack of co-operation by the Brisbane City Council that we have experienced as a department and as a Government. Our proposal is for a park right at Brisbane's doorstep in an area containing some of the most beautiful country in Queensland. National parks are involved, as well as Brisbane City Council freehold land, forestry areas and water catchment areas. Our proposal, which has been fairly well canvassed, was that all those areas should be amalgamated into a forest park, set up as such by Act of Parliament. It is quite obvious that on the body set up we would want representation from various Government departments, the Brisbane City Council and other interested groups. I feel that, once enabling legislation was enacted, the statutory body set up would be able to receive funds from the State and/or Federal Government. The area is uniquely placed for recreation purposes, and I feel quite confident that substantial funds and assistance would be given. Various members of the Liberal Party—the honourable member for Ashgrove, the honourable member for Windross and others—have put proposals along these lines. It would be a great thing for Brisbane.

I have been to Sydney and seen what has been done down there. They have two huge national parks, one to the north and one to the south. The Royal National Park, which is south of Cronulla, consists of 36,000 acres and has been set up for the people of Sydney. Another one at Ku-ring-gai Chase to the north is much the same size. Having seen those facilities for the recreation of Sydney people, I am ashamed in a way to admit that Brisbane has so few facilities.

Here was a chance for a lot to be done, if there had only been a little co-operation. I repeat that it does the Brisbane City Council no credit that it did not co-operate and agree

to the terms that were set out. I am quite sure that a lot of the problems honourable members worry about could have been overcome and that the building of barbecues, rest areas and so on could have been carried out much more expeditiously than with the present divided control, under which the Brisbane City Council has the responsibility of looking after water catchment areas on freehold land and the Forestry Department looks after forest areas and small areas of national park.

The use of trail bikes was raised today. Our department is closely looking at this matter, which is also a responsibility of local government. I was rather impressed with a park I saw recently in the Australian Capital Territory. People on trail bikes are authorised to ride in forest areas. To me it appeared to be timbered country. People who enjoy that sort of recreation are able to ride on tracks throughout the park. I thought that was quite good. It got them off the streets. In fact, they are not allowed to ride trail bikes in Canberra. It is something that my department is looking at, and I believe that local authorities have to consider it, too, because more and more of these bikes are being sold. Obviously people buying them will use unauthorised areas unless—

Mr. Jensen: It is pretty hard to leave it up to the council. If it wants to put land aside for mini-bikes, it has to write to the Lands Department.

Mr. TOMKINS: It is up to the council.

Mr. Jensen: If they want a bit of land away from everybody else, they have to write to the Lands Department.

Mr. TOMKINS: The Lands Department is very co-operative in all of these matters. We look after parks and recreation. It is our responsibility to see that we do.

Mr. Jensen: You should take control from the council if it won't play ball.

Mr. TOMKINS: Does the honourable member say that I should take it from the council?

Mr. Jensen: Yes.

Mr. TOMKINS: If it will not agree, fair enough. The honourable member and I agree on that matter.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! We have established a basis of agreement. May the Minister proceed?

Mr. Houston: You will lose your endorsement if you agree with the Labor Party.

Mr. TOMKINS: I am happy to agree with anything sensible that is suggested, but not much is said by Opposition members that is sensible. The honourable member for Bundaberg passed one good remark.

Mr. Houston interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I suggest that the Minister proceed.

Mr. TOMKINS: I was pointing out how responsible the department is on parks and recreation. Recently my colleague the honourable member for Salisbury had problems with a soccer club in Salisbury. We stepped in there. I imagine the honourable member would support that move, too. The people living in a highly built-up area looked like losing the only sporting ground I could see in that area.

Dr. Edwards interjected.

Mr. TOMKINS: The local alderman has not said a word so far as I know. We had a good look at this matter and I know that the action we took has been well supported.

The honourable member for Rockhampton and other honourable members referred to the Premier's statement that we would consider declaring the Great Dividing Range a national park. What the Premier did purely and simply was to outline a concept as something for our service to work on, and we have been working on it.

Mr. Houston: He was flying a kite.

Mr. TOMKINS: Not at all. People with vision have to set up these concepts. We have been giving close attention to the Great Dividing Range. I admit that we cannot declare national parks everywhere. For example, it was suggested we establish a national park in Toowoomba, but Toowoomba is not on the Great Dividing Range. The Premier had no intention of doing that. It is a concept. He was purely and simply setting up a proposal that we have to work on, and we have been doing this. During the session last year, I indicated that our service will be declaring a huge area of national park in Cape York Peninsula. A lot of detail has to be gone into but it will be done. We are clear on where we are going.

I propose to leave the matter at that and in my second-reading speech I will reply in detail to the various speakers.

Motion (Mr. Tomkins) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

MEDICAL ACT AND OTHER ACTS (ADMINISTRATION) ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. L. R. EDWARDS (Ipswich—Minister for Health) (3.20 p.m.): I move—

“That a Bill be introduced to amend the Medical Act and Other Acts (Administration) Act 1966–1974 in certain particulars.”

The provisions of the Medical Act and Other Acts (Administration) Act 1966–1974 complement legislation for the administration of seven professional boards, which are the Medical Board of Queensland, the Dental Board of Queensland, the Nurses Board of Queensland, the Physiotherapists Board of Queensland, the Optometrists Board of Queensland, the Pharmacy Board of Queensland, and the Chiropodists Board of Queensland.

Officers of the Medical Board and other boards have been appointed by the Governor in Council from time to time as inspectors for the purposes of the various Acts. Honourable members will appreciate the need for the employment of inspectors to enforce the provisions of the Acts and to investigate and initiate action against those persons who practise in contravention of the Acts. The damage that may be done by persons who are not fully trained or qualified in a particular profession—dentistry, for instance—is a cause for concern and it is essential that the incidence of these persons in the community be controlled by the use of inspectors.

The Solicitor-General has expressed the opinion that the powers and duties of inspectors for the professional boards should be set out in legislation, as at present the Pharmacy Act 1917–1972 is the only Act that provides specific power for the appointment of inspectors. This Bill now seeks to provide the authority for the appointment of inspectors for the seven professional boards and to establish beyond doubt their powers in the performance of their duties. In other words, it brings into order all the Acts that have the same form as this one and what was specified in each Act separately. The alternative to provision of the legislative authority contained in this Bill would be to introduce a separate amending Bill for the Act governing each of the seven boards. That would be unnecessary and time consuming.

The Bill also includes provision that any person who obstructs an inspector in the performance of his duties commits an offence against the Act. An appropriate penalty is also prescribed. The authorities contained in the Bill also put beyond doubt the validity of any appointments of inspectors made by the Governor in Council prior to this amending legislation.

The Bill seeks also to delete the requirement for the register of medical practitioners, dentists, nurses, physiotherapists, optometrists, pharmacists, and chiropodists to be published annually in the Government Gazette. The various boards have departed from the practice of maintaining registers in book form. These records are now maintained by computer and computer print-outs of registered persons are supplied at regular intervals. They will also be published in book form. It is still essential that details of registered persons be published annually,

and it has been established that this publication can be effected more rapidly and expeditiously in separate form from the computer print-out than it can be published in the Gazette.

No contentious provisions are contained in the Bill. It formalises what is being done now, except for the preparation of registration lists for the various professions, and I commend it to the Committee.

Mr. MELLOY (Nudgee) (3.24 p.m.): I think the Bill is desirable if it will ensure that inspectors are provided for each of the boards. Is that so?

Dr. Edwards: The inspectors will be available for all the boards together.

Mr. MELLOY: This is one of the things that are very necessary, because in some professions there is still a tendency for back-yard operators to function. I do not think that the various boards have the requisite number of inspectors to police the various Acts, especially as they relate to paramedical operations.

I do not think there are many back-yard operators in the medical profession, but in dentistry and chiropody back-yard operators are a problem. I know this problem also exists in some of the southern States in dentistry because unregistered persons are carrying out dental work on a large scale. This applies particularly in Victoria. As a matter of fact, I think the dental board down there has given away the job of trying to cope with the number of back-yard operators; not that I want at this stage, or any stage for that matter, to denigrate the work of many dental technicians. I firmly believe that they do provide an extra service for the public, especially in Queensland where we do not have sufficient dentists to cope with the dental work that has to be carried out. The dentists are not able to cope, and I suppose this applies in the southern States.

I know that in Melbourne there are not sufficient dentists to cope with every aspect of dentistry and I think the dental technicians, if they are properly qualified, would be able to take part of the load off the dentists. If we were able to register dental technicians, I admit that a measure of policing would be required, but I think that fully qualified dental technicians are quite capable of carrying out dental prosthetic work without risk to the public. The various boards have for years had to face the problem that there have not been sufficient inspectors to police the various Acts and a certain amount of work has been done by unregistered persons. This is perhaps not desirable. I do admit that there are some dental technicians who should not be dealing with the public.

Dr. Crawford: Have the Victorian dental technicians you are talking about received some training?

Mr. MELLOY: Yes.

Dr. Crawford: They are the ones you are talking about?

Mr. MELLOY: I am talking about Queensland too. Dental work is being done in Queensland, too, by unregistered persons, but not on the scale of the work being done in Victoria. In Victoria these people are able to set themselves up in rooms of their own and work unmolested. I know them, and I think to a certain degree the dental board accepts the position simply because it cannot do anything about it.

Dr. Crawford: It has not enough inspectors to police it.

Mr. MELLOY: This could be the situation in Queensland. We do not have the personnel to police the various Acts and I think it is desirable that more inspectors should be made available to the boards. I go along with the provision of additional inspectors.

In his introductory remarks the Minister said that he was going to abolish the procedure of publishing lists of registered medical practitioners, dentists and members of various other professions in the Government Gazette and that such lists will be available in the form of a print-out from the computer system. I do not go along with this. I think the list should still be inserted in the Government Gazette, because it is then readily available to everybody. It may not be possible for everybody to secure a computer print-out, but anybody who is interested knows he can find such a list in the Government Gazette. Although the Minister might have a good reason, I do not see any point in abolishing this system. The computer system now being used in all departments is apparently beyond a lot of people. They do not know how to handle it and they think that the easiest way around it is to "let them go and we'll take the print-out." The information is still readily available to the Government Printer, and I think publication in the Government Gazette is desirable.

Dr. Edwards: The print-out will be available in the same manner.

Mr. MELLOY: Yes, but the list's distribution will not be as wide as that of the Government Gazette. The Government Gazette goes all over the State, to virtually every centre in Queensland. The computer lists certainly will be available at the central computer office, but they will not be available in towns throughout Queensland. Probably many people are interested in who are registered as doctors.

Dr. Crawford: Chemists would be, for example.

Mr. MELLOY: That is true. A chemist in Biloela or Cairns or Hughenden would not bother—

Dr. Edwards: The chemists at Biloela might not get the Government Gazette, but they can apply for the list.

Mr. MELLOY: Yes. They do not have to apply for the list at present.

Dr. Edwards: They might not get the gazette.

Mr. MELLOY: I think that the gazette would be much more readily available to them that a print-out from the computer.

Those are the two points that I wanted to make. I will reserve any further comment till a later stage of the Bill.

Dr. CRAWFORD (Wavell) (3.32 p.m.): This is a Bill of fairly minor importance because it is an administrative Bill, but I believe that a few points are worth making because the way in which medical and other Acts are administered in this State is important.

It is possible to make mistakes, and it could be that the point that the honourable member for Nudgee has made about the computer and the print-out of the Government Gazette is valid. I suppose one would have to wait and see what happened in practice, but I have no great faith in computers as they currently exist in the community. On occasions one finds oneself arguing with computers in foreign countries. For example, if one happens to buy a magazine that is printed overseas, it is not a simple matter to cancel one's subscription. Often the control of the arrangements for buying that magazine are in Chicago or some other part of the world, and if one endeavours to cancel a subscription, one often finds a year or two later than one is still arguing with a computer in Chicago. That has happened to me.

Simply because an attempt is being made to computerise medical and other records, that does not necessarily mean that they will be more efficient. I take the point made by the honourable member for Nudgee in that regard and direct it to the Minister for serious consideration before he automatically replaces the promulgation of these records through the Government Gazette.

In some respects medical boards are an anachronism because they really do not accomplish very much that is to the benefit of the patient, other than to keep a general eye on the registration and deregistration of medical and other practitioners. One does, of course, need an authority. There is no question that, from the point of view of running any organisation efficiently, there must be people in authority. Because of that, no doubt there will continue to be medical, dental and other boards in this community.

The inspectorial staff which the Minister believes is insufficient to ensure that only those who are qualified in a professional sense are allowed to practise probably does need to be expanded. However, I sound a note of warning here, also. One can

easily expand an inspectorial staff and enable inspectors to go round searching records of those who are practising legally and legitimately in a professional sense, and that is fine if the inspectorial staff inspect those things that they are supposed to inspect and do not extend their activities outside their correct venue.

Dental training, of course, has been discussed in this Chamber on many occasions. I am still not completely happy about the system of training dental therapists that has been instituted in Queensland in the last two or three years. I spoke against it in this Chamber when the Bill was introduced by the previous incumbent of the Health portfolio, and I still do not believe that an attempt should be made to train any professional person other than to a professional standard that is acceptable throughout the community. One can see why, as a matter of expediency, it is necessary to train dental therapists, who are under the theoretical direction of somebody in the Health Department, and send them to Outback Queensland to assess children's teeth, but the principle is not the correct one in a professional sense. I should like to see those dental therapists in due season back in dental school being completely trained as qualified dentists. I am sure that the Minister and the speaker for the Opposition would agree with that principle. I trust that it can be brought about, and that we do not allow the expediency of being short of dentists to preclude our training those professional people in the same way as others are trained.

One of my hobby-horses for many years, as the Minister well knows, has been the registration of medical practitioners throughout the whole of Australia. It is absolutely vital that medical practitioners and, no doubt, other professional people should be registered on a national basis. I made representations on this matter to the previous incumbent of the Health portfolio, and I have been assured that an effort was made by Queensland to do something about this, but the other States objected to it. I cannot possibly imagine why any State could object to universal registration of doctors.

Dr. Edwards: The Bill I introduced the other night is the first step towards a national reciprocal arrangement.

Dr. CRAWFORD: Yes. There are problems which are not so easy of solution. At the moment in New South Wales and Victoria there are persons registered who are not acceptable to this State. Those persons have been registered under local Acts of those other States. I had a personal representation made to me by a gentleman in Melbourne who is registered there and wishes to move into a service in Queensland. When I investigated him and asked some of his peers what the situation really was, they assured me that they would not suggest that he

be registered in Queensland. They said that if they could remove him from the register in Victoria, they would be pleased to do so. He is a gentleman who was admitted under a peculiar aspect of the Victorian Act.

If we are going to have universal registration throughout Australia, we need to look at these individual matters in great detail. I think it was in 1971 that we introduced in Queensland a new aspect of medical registration, of which the Minister's advisers would be well aware. I objected to that one, also, because it sets out that we could register people who had qualified in universities with which we do not have reciprocity, and states that, if they had acquired post-graduate diplomas in medicine, surgery, psychiatry, or what-have-you, in the United Kingdom, they could be considered for registration in this State. Only three or four people have been registered in Queensland under that particular Act.

It is to the credit of the Medical Board, and the quality of the doctors who serve on that board, that that is the quality of decisions being made at the moment. If, for some reason, a shortage occurred in a particular type of specialty, that Act could be used by people with scruples less than those of the present board members to register persons who would not really be acceptable as having attained an adequate professional standard.

I sound those notes of warning, not with any acrimony or any wish to argue with authorities in this State, but because it is important that we realise that these matters must be attended to if we are to maintain the quality of our medical and allied professions in Queensland.

It is of the greatest importance to have uniform registration throughout Australia. The Medical Board would then be earning the money it takes from various professional people each year, because it would be doing something useful. I believe that each medical board could maintain its own register of general practitioners and specialists in its State, and that each board could automatically co-ordinate with every other board throughout the land so that we would have national registration. At the moment, in effect in law, any prescription which a doctor registered in Queensland writes is illegal outside Queensland. With a National Health Service controlling so many drugs on a national basis, if anybody liked to challenge that particular point and used one of my prescriptions which had been honoured by a chemist in Victoria, I am certain that it would be found by the courts in Victoria to be an illegal procedure.

We are not registered in the other States. If a doctor wishes to be registered, he has to pay an annual registration fee in each of the States in which he wishes to be registered. That is tremendous nonsense. A doctor cannot write to a board in Sydney or Melbourne saying that he wants to be registered in a southern State. Although he may have been

practising for 20 or 30 years in Queensland, he has to present himself with a certificate to show that he is a reputable citizen. That is one of the gross anachronisms in the functioning of the present boards throughout the country.

In the United Kingdom a doctor is registered by the Central Medical Council. If he leaves the country, he is not deregistered automatically, as a doctor is in Queensland if he does not pay his registration fee. Every Christmas doctors get a little billet-doux here stating that it is the first and last registration bill, and that if it is not paid by 30 April the doctor will be automatically deregistered. What happens to the young fellow who goes overseas and forgets to leave the money or instructions for paying his registration? He has to go through the whole arrangement again.

Mr. Houston: He has to pay his union fees.

Dr. CRAWFORD: In the United Kingdom, a doctor goes on the inactive list. He stays there until he wishes to become reactivated by paying his fees. That is the sensible way to handle it. That is a practice we could well emulate in this country.

Mr. Houston: A doctor cannot practice unless he pays his fees.

Dr. CRAWFORD: He has to be legally qualified and registered.

Mr. Houston: He has to register every year.

Dr. CRAWFORD: That is right.

Mr. Houston: In other words it is compulsory unionism.

Dr. CRAWFORD: It is not unionism; it is registration with the Health Department. It is unionism, I suppose, to the extent that unions are registered with a central authority, but many of the unions—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I have no intention of allowing a debate on compulsory unionism.

Mr. Houston: Well, that is compulsory unionism.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Dr. CRAWFORD: I make the point that many unions are not registered, but they still function.

I do not wish to elaborate on those points, but I do make a plea to every member of the community to do all he can to arrange for the complete registration of all professional people throughout the country. It is vital for the correct functioning of medical practice.

Hon. L. R. EDWARDS (Ipswich—Minister for Health) (3.43 p.m.), in reply: I thank the two honourable members for their contributions. The honourable member for Nudgee spoke of a list of practitioners being much more easily available in the Government Gazette. The Government Gazette is delivered to my office, but I can never find anything in it, let alone the names of medical practitioners. I am sure that people who look at them every week, such as pharmacists out at Biloeia, put them straight into the wastepaper basket. We are trying to make a list that will be readily available for purchase by all pharmacists, doctors and anyone else who wants it. I am sure this will be a much easier way of finding doctors' names than looking for them in a Government Gazette. I appreciate what the honourable member said in his speech but I do not think he will be disappointed at what we propose to do.

The honourable member for Wavell spoke of computers. We are aware of the problems with computers. I am informed that most of the work has been done on the computerisation and preparation of accounts for registration and so forth.

Dr. Crawford: We could never stop it.

Dr. EDWARDS: The honourable member's points on computerisation were well taken. He spoke also of the problems associated with dental therapists. It is important to note that at no stage do we intend to allow dental therapists to practise outside the dental therapy programme. They will be totally restricted to what is approved by the Australian Dental Association. The dental therapists have been part of the platform of the Australian Dental Association for many years. This is being done with total consultation with, and approval of the A.D.A. There will be no dental therapists in private practice. They will be confined to hospitals.

Dr. Crawford: How far do they travel—out to Western Queensland?

Dr. EDWARDS: It is envisaged in our programme that we will have dental therapist services throughout the State; but, as the honourable member said, they are under the supervision of a dentist. That will be continued.

Dr. Crawford: Will they go, say, from Toowoomba way out into the West?

Dr. EDWARDS: In the long term they will certainly be going out into the West, but that is many years away.

The honourable member for Wavell mentioned the matter of national registration. For the benefit of those members who were not here the other evening when I introduced the Medical Act Amendment Bill, I repeat what I said then—that Queensland has led the rest of Australia in the registration of medical specialists especially, and the various

registration boards in all States have now agreed upon a uniform list of qualifications necessary for the recognition of a specialist.

So it is starting, and we are hopeful that these qualifications, as well as primary qualifications, will be published in schedules. As the honourable member for Wavell has mentioned, Queensland is certainly well aware of the need for national registration, provided the standards for registration of graduates in Queensland are not lowered, and the point mentioned about the possible registration in other States and not being able to register here is something that we cherish very dearly.

I thank all honourable members for their contributions.

Motion (Dr. Edwards) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

Bill presented and, on motion of Dr. Edwards, read a first time.

HOSPITALS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. L. R. EDWARDS (Ipswich—Minister for Health) (3.48 p.m.): I move—

“That a Bill be introduced to amend the Hospitals Act 1936–1971 in certain particulars.”

The proposed amendments deal mainly with administrative aspects and seek to clarify certain sections which are open to interpretation and to amend other provisions to meet current requirements.

In the past the North Brisbane, South Brisbane, Chermiside and Redcliffe Hospitals Boards were administered by one manager. Owing to the increasing workload on this officer, two assistant managers were appointed some two-and-a-half years ago to attend to the internal administration of the South Brisbane and the Chermiside and Redcliffe Hospitals Boards.

Following further examination of administrative practices and the various developments to be undertaken at the metropolitan hospitals and at Redcliffe, it was considered that the responsibility had become too much for one manager to administer effectively and individual managers were appointed to the North Brisbane, South Brisbane, Chermiside and Redcliffe Hospitals Boards in April last year.

Within the framework of administrative control that exists in the metropolitan area, the central accounting bureau plays an important role, bearing responsibility for the day-to-day financial transactions of the metropolitan and Redcliffe Hospitals Boards, compilation of all staff pays and control of expenditure on capital works.

With the appointment of individual managers, it is now considered that the time has come when the Redcliffe Hospitals Board should assume full responsibility for all functions associated with the operation of the hospital under its control. This Bill therefore makes provision for the central accounting bureau to be relieved of responsibility for the Redcliffe Hospitals Board.

In the past clerical employees of the Redcliffe Hospitals Board have, for seniority purposes, been given relativity with clerical staff of the other metropolitan hospitals in respect of classified clerical positions occurring at any of the metropolitan or Redcliffe hospitals.

As a further extension of the establishment of the Redcliffe Hospitals Board as an entity separate from the metropolitan network, this Bill removes the relativity between clerical staff at the Redcliffe Hospital and the other metropolitan hospitals. A further provision establishes the seniority of the staff that elect to stay at the Redcliffe Hospital and also establishes without doubt the seniority of those staff who transfer to the metropolitan hospitals before this Act comes into effect or those staff presently in the metropolitan hospitals who have had previous service at Redcliffe.

Provision has also been made in the Bill for the inclusion in the functions of the central accounting bureau, by Order in Council, any other hospital board established in the metropolitan area, such as Mt. Gravatt, if it is considered desirable at that time. Similarly provision has been made to extend to employees of any such board created in the metropolitan area relativity with employees of the other metropolitan hospitals for promotional purposes.

From time to time, moneys are received from the Commonwealth Government for distribution to hospital boards for various purposes, for instance, relief of unemployment, expenditure under the Hospital Development Programme and construction of hospitals in areas of large indigenous population under the Aboriginal Advancement Programme.

This financial year, the State Government has also provided substantial funds for hospital boards' building programmes through its Hospital Rebuilding Fund. The Auditor-General has advised that the existing funds established by hospital boards in accordance with the provisions of the Act are not suitable for administration of these moneys from Commonwealth and State sources.

Whilst arrangements of a temporary nature have been made to avoid delay in distribution of funds, it is desirable that a new fund be established. This Bill includes provision for the establishment of such a fund, to be called the Special Purposes Fund, and establishes also procedures in respect of the operation of the fund. The establishment of the Special Purposes Fund has the concurrence of the Auditor-General and the Treasury.

It has been past practice for the State Government to meet the operating deficit of the Mater Public Hospital at South Brisbane. On the introduction of the hospital programme of Medibank in Queensland, the Mater Public Hospital was accepted as a recognised hospital by the Commonwealth. It is necessary that this hospital now operates in the same manner as State hospitals in order that uniformity is maintained in accounting practices for Medibank cost-sharing arrangements. It is therefore proposed that the Mater authorities transmit to my department, for credit of the Hospital Administration Trust Fund, all receipts for Commonwealth daily bed payments, patients' payments (the Mater Public Hospital includes some intermediate beds) and other receipts that are relative to the operating costs of the public hospital. Advances will be made to the Mater authorities, on the same basis as to State hospitals, from the Hospital Administration Trust Fund to meet the operating costs of the Mater Public Hospital.

This Bill provides the necessary authority for the extension of the Hospital Administration Trust Fund to include receipts from and payments to the Mater. Scope exists also to extend similar arrangements to other hospitals in Queensland, should the need ever arise, without further amendment of the Act. This proposal has been examined and has received Treasury approval.

The terms of Cabinet's decision concerning retirement or non-appointment of members of boards and committees on attaining the age of 70 years have been extended to this Act. This Bill also seeks to remove the requirement of the Act in respect of disqualification of members of the board who are concerned or participate in any profit from a contract with the board. This requirement is no longer considered a valid reason for disqualification, particularly as adequate protection exists in other sections of the Act to ensure that a member does not vote on any matter in which he or any organisation with which he is associated has a pecuniary interest.

A further provision of the Act is applicable to additional board members appointed or new boards created during a triennium and seeks to ensure that all boards are totally reconstituted, for ease of administration, at the end of each triennium. At present, under the terms of the Act, a member holds office for three years from date of appointment except where a vacancy occurs through death or retirement of a member, in which case the Governor in Council may appoint a suitable person to fill such vacancy to the completion of the triennium.

The Act presently prescribes that medical and other training schools may be approved by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the senate of the University of Queensland. As a medical school has been proposed for establishment in Townsville and a further medical school could eventually

in conjunction with development of the University at Mt. Gravatt, provision is made in this Bill to enable any approval to be on the basis of the recommendation of the senate of the relevant university.

The Bill seeks also to establish beyond doubt the power of a hospital board to provide facilities for training of nurses and nurse aides unrelated to any course at a university and to relate the facilities of an approved training hospital in medicine, dentistry or ancillary course to the particular university for which it is the approved hospital.

The sections of the Act relative to offences by employees are amended by this Bill to include, for the purposes of such sections, the medical superintendent and the nursing superintendent. In its present form, the Act does not extend to action against these officers and suitable provision is considered desirable and necessary.

Provisions of the Third Schedule to the Act, in respect of appeal procedures, have been amended to adjust inaccuracies that occurred in designation of the officer responsible for the conduct of the appeal board as the manager in lieu of the secretary when the Act was last amended. Provisions of the schedule have been extended to allow for payment of mileage allowance to witnesses attending a hearing of the appeal board.

Other provisions in the Bill clarify procedures for appointment of inspectors of hospitals, extend limitation on the calling of tenders in respect of contracts of a minor nature and extend to hospitals boards similar provisions to the State Public Service in respect of working of overtime by officers on senior classifications. Provision is also included for transfer of patients from a hospital to another hospital or a nursing home conducted by a hospitals board.

In conclusion, I would advise honourable members that the Bill is not of a contentious nature and would seek their co-operation in its speedy passage through Parliament.

I commend the motion to the Committee.

Mr. MELLOY (Nudgee) (3.57 p.m.): The Bill seems—superficially, anyway—to be in the nature of a machinery measure. There are, however, quite a few aspects of it that could well be examined when it becomes available to us.

I am concerned about the rights of staff members of various hospital boards, particularly in relation to transfers and retention of seniority. Apparently changes are envisaged by the Minister and I think that on the second reading he could give us a clearer picture of what he proposes.

There is also the matter of the funds that are now available to hospitals and the establishment of the new fund for the use of Commonwealth grants. I should like the

Minister to make it clear that what he proposes in no way contravenes the conditions governing the 50 per cent contribution to the maintenance costs of hospitals under the new hospitals agreement with the Commonwealth Government. This new finance has been a tremendous boost to the State. I hope that the establishment of this fund will not in any way destroy the intent of the Commonwealth contribution to hospitals in this State. The basis of the agreement was that the Commonwealth Government would give to the State 50 per cent of the cost of maintenance of hospitals. When a considerable amount of money is received, there is always a tendency for some of it to be used for purposes for which it was not intended. I think the Minister should make it clear that there will be no administrative misuse of the funds that have now become available.

The Minister said that the moneys made available to the Mater Hospital will be remitted to the new fund. I should like the Minister to make it clear that this is being done with the full approval of the Mater Hospital and the Commonwealth Government. The assumption of responsibility for the use of the money in the new fund is a serious matter. I do not know whether the Mater Hospital authorities are happy about remission of their money to the new fund. They might be. Perhaps the Minister could let us know, because the money is being made available to them and they are being asked to remit it to the central fund and it is then paid back to them for various projects. I think the Minister could enlarge on that and assure the House that this provision has been agreed to by everybody concerned.

I turn now to the matter of the qualifications of those who sit on hospital boards and the disclosure of their interests in any company which might seek to contract to the board. Apparently the old provision is to be repealed. The new provision means that persons who have an interest in such a company will not be allowed to vote. I do not even know whether it happens now in every case, but will board members have to declare their interests in any company which submits a tender? Although they might declare their interest in a company and not have a vote, they still have a great influence on the decision of the Board. We all know how chummy these board meetings can be at times and it is still possible for a member to exercise his influence on the board even though he does not have a vote. I hope that the Minister is satisfied that the new provision is adequate. There are several provisions in the Bill that I want to look at. I know the Minister is well intentioned and says the amendments are desirable, but we will have a close look at them, anyway.

Dr. CRAWFORD (Wavell) (4.2 p.m.): This is an important Bill, and, although it covers the various administrative aspects which have been stressed by the Minister, it does open

up the Hospitals Act for discussion. It could be the basis of a revision of the Hospitals Act, which is something for which I have been pressing in this Parliament for more years than I care to remember. However, we are dealing with these amendments and not with a general revision of the entire Hospitals Act. There were some points in the Minister's speech which bear some emphasis at this stage. The first is the breaking up of these hospital boards into local boards for the various local hospitals, and a provision specifically allows the Redcliffe Hospitals Board to work in a more autonomous fashion than it does at the moment.

There is an optimum level for any hospital organisation, just as there is an optimum level for a school or any other type of organisation where a number of people are gathered together, and 500 or 600 beds is about the optimum level for a hospital. I have lost count of how many beds there are at the Royal Brisbane Hospital, but added all together it becomes a monolithic architectural monstrosity which is a very grave disadvantage to those who are trying to administer it and certainly a place in which the treatment of the individual patient is carried out under the gravest difficulties.

So it is correct in principle to remove the control of the Redcliffe Hospitals Board from the same board that controls the Royal Brisbane, Princess Alexandra and other hospitals. I would like to see in this State no hospital with a greater number of beds than, say, 600, allowing such hospitals as much autonomy as possible under a budget. We have a system which has existed for years by which control is theoretically vested in the local hospitals board, but in practice these boards are very limited in the amount and scope of decisions they can make in spite of the fact that in theory they are running their own affairs. I trust that we will not have on the Redcliffe Hospitals Board the same citizens as we have on the other boards, as happens now. I trust that they will be completely separate boards with completely separate personnel.

Mr. Jones: Do you think we could improve the representation?

Dr. CRAWFORD: I will deal with that in a moment.

Mr. Marginson: Do you think they are rubber stamps?

Dr. CRAWFORD: They can be. The board in Ipswich probably is not, but boards certainly can be rubber stamps, and they are in some areas of the State.

The establishment of a central accounting bureau is in theory a sound idea, to compile staff pays and to make the over-all organisation of routine—and I stress the word "routine"—money matters as accurate and as easy as possible for the boards to

administer. However, again there are dangers, and the remarks that I made about computerisation could also apply to the central accounting bureau. It is not possible under such a system to give a reward to a particularly meritorious employee. One finds situations in which a clerk, a nurse or some other particular person in a hospital deserves special treatment because of his or her devotion to duty or because he or she displays greater efficiency than his or her peers. If a central accounting bureau is set up and allowed to run all the affairs of the system, there is no way in which such a person can be rewarded. I am a great believer in attempting to reward individual effort, initiative or expertise if a person is prepared to put a little bit extra into his or her practice, professional or otherwise.

I believe also that hospitals should run with the greatest possible financial autonomy. In this State we do not have any real financial autonomy in any of our hospitals; we never have had.

The great hospitals of the world run as financially autonomous institutions. Admittedly in some instances Governments are providing moneys, but the great hospitals around the world—in America and in the United Kingdom—do run very largely under their own boards of management and their own governors, with their budgets set out on an annual basis and with the greatest possible allowance being made for the decisions of the boards in financial matters.

Over the years, we have seen the situation in Queensland under which major hospitals, particularly in Brisbane—the Brisbane General as it was years ago—spend furiously during May and June each year on paint because they have to get rid of—and I use that phrase electively—certain money before 30 June. That is completely unacceptable in the latter part of the 20th Century. The hospital board should be allowed to retain that money for its own use. It should be able to spend the money when it is to the greatest advantage to the hospital to do so, without some stupid Public Service regulation saying, "If you don't spend it by 30 June, you don't retain it." That has applied throughout the whole of Queensland. That is a stupid situation, and such a situation is only the tip of the iceberg in regard to the over-all spending of the hospital concerned. Until a hospital board is allowed to spend the money under its own jurisdiction, very stupid decisions are made in situations of that type.

I repeat that the great hospitals of the world work on financial autonomy, under which they make real decisions about how they are going to spend the allowed funds. There must be budgeting, and there must be central control—nobody is denying that—but the boards should be allowed to spend their financial resources to the greatest advantage as they see it in the local scene. That applies particularly to the Cairns Hospital, the Townsville Hospital and other hospitals

outside Brisbane, where local people know how the money should be spent because of their local expertise and local knowledge.

Dr. Edwards: You know that the hospital budgets are not prepared by the Health Department but are prepared by the local boards?

Dr. CRAWFORD: Yes, I am well aware of that; but I am sure the Minister will admit that the way in which they have been administered over the years has left much to be desired.

The Minister has stated that this financial year the State Government has provided substantial funds for hospital boards' building programmes. This will need to be administered efficiently. On that point I have only to draw the attention of honourable members to a certain structure at the Royal Brisbane Hospital where construction is between five and seven years behind time. No doubt someone can explain why that sort of thing occurs, but I believe that the bogging down of such a building programme for any reason, administrative or otherwise, is unacceptable in our community. It is possible to organise hospital building, school building, road building and so on so that that sort of thing does not occur. I stress the fact that that disastrous situation at the Royal Brisbane Hospital should not occur at this time in our community. It should not be permitted to occur if administration is running efficiently. Certainly it should not be permitted to occur in the future.

The Special Purposes Fund has been mentioned by the Minister. I would ask if he would indicate just how it is intended that this should work. Again it may interfere with hospital autonomy. I should like to hear what the Minister's advisers have to say about exactly how that fund will work in practice. The Minister has not elaborated on the details, but maybe he intends to do so in his second-reading speech.

I am interested in the concept of Medibank and the assistance it is going to give to the Mater Public Hospital. Medibank is a fait accompli, and we have to accept the fact that we have Medibank in our community. I believe that Medibank moneys could be used to engender new funds for the private hospital system throughout the State. Certainly if Medibank funds could be applied to the Mater Hospital in Brisbane, which has a very large number of intermediate and private beds throughout its organisation, the same principle could be applied to other parts of the system, especially in the assistance of private hospitals, some of which are finding themselves in financial difficulties as a result of escalating costs.

With its intermediate and private beds the Mater does raise the whole issue of whether we, as a Government, under the direction of the Health Department organisation in this State, are prepared to accept that intermediate

and private patients can be classed as second-rate citizens. There is a tendency for that to happen in the community. These people must bear the cost of the inflationary spiral in hospital administration. We have to take very active steps, particularly as a Government that believes in private enterprise, to stop ourselves accepting the almost automatic mental state that private and intermediate patients are not important. They are a very important part of the entire structure of the hospital system in the State.

I am in no way decrying the necessity to administer public hospitals and public beds efficiently. The greatest efficiency of medical practice in general in any community occurs when there is a first-class public system running side by side with a first-class intermediate and private system. In this State we have neglected quite drastically in the last few years the intermediate beds in public hospitals. It is impossible at this time in this city to acquire an intermediate bed in a public hospital quickly. For years it has been difficult; it is now becoming more and more difficult. There are various reasons for this, one of them being that we do not place the correct priority on the acquiring and retaining of sufficient intermediate beds relative to public beds in the system.

There is an anomaly in Cabinet's decision about the age group. The Minister mentioned that members of boards and committees will retire at the age of 70 years. In effect the practice in the system at the moment is for the general full-time staff, both clerical and medical, to retire from hospital boards at 65 years of age, except for consultants, physician surgeons and so on, who retire at 60 years. I take it that the members of hospital boards have that extra 10 years of mental capacity over the entire consultant staff in the State.

Mr. Marginson: There are provisos.

Dr. CRAWFORD: Yes, but this is being written into the Act by the amendments we are discussing today. I believe these matters should be ironed out. If there is to be an age limit on staff retirement, at least it should be across the board and at the same general level. I do not believe that people should be retired at 60. The honourable member for Surfers Paradise is not with us at the moment, but I know many people aged 40 or 50 who are a lot less mentally acute than he is. Putting an age limit on the retirement of a group of people has that disadvantage.

I turn now to the provisions for the appointment of board members. The method of appointment of members to hospital boards needs to be reviewed completely. The honourable member for Cairns referred to this

briefly. I have very strong feelings on how hospital boards should be run, and the type of people who should be appointed to them. I have said publicly on many occasions, but it is worth repeating, that I do not believe doctors should run hospital boards. I believe hospital boards should be so constituted that the medical advice given to them—and plenty of advice should be given to all hospital boards—should be considered carefully and, in most cases, accepted by the board.

Medical advisers who are prepared to spend hours helping to plan hospitals and helping to plan individual units in them are not there because they are inexperienced or their advice is inferior to that of people who do not practise medicine. They are there because they are prepared to give their expertise and time (and risk the narrowing of their coronary arteries, I hasten to add) to provide expert advice for the hospital boards. Never in Queensland have we adopted that simple principle. We have appointed people to hospital boards without any particular qualifications. We appoint doctors to hospital boards as long as they are not members of the active staff of those hospitals. The active staff members of any hospital—and this has been proved throughout the world—have the interest of the hospital at heart specifically because they are active in the hospital.

I repeat that, under no circumstances, do I want those doctors running the hospitals, but I want them sitting on hospital boards and, under most circumstances, I want their advice to be taken after consultation. The best planning of hospitals throughout the world—and particularly in the other States of Australia—is carried out by expert planners, expert architects, expert builders and expert administrators, who take and accept the medical advice of the doctors serving on the hospital boards.

Mr. Marginson: Most boards have doctors on them.

Dr. CRAWFORD: Under the regulations to the Act, a board is allowed to appoint a doctor so long as he is not an employee of the board. In this State there seems to be a continuance of a very outdated and completely discredited viewpoint that if a doctor happens to be working in a hospital and serving on the board, he will act to the detriment of the board because he is an employee. Nowhere in the world that I know of does this ridiculous viewpoint still apply, but it is mandatory throughout the service in Queensland.

It will be necessary within the life of this Parliament, if possible, to review how hospital boards are appointed. I repeat that, because doctors are not trained administrators, I do not want to see them running hospital boards. They are not trained in any way to handle that part of the organisation, but they are trained to know how theatres should run, how various medical aspects are best used in hospitals to be both economical and efficient. And being trained, they know how they wish to see things run. Traditionally, over the years, we have not accepted that advice and, in the process, that has been very much to the detriment of our hospital system.

Mr. Marginson: You do not want them to be managers.

Dr. CRAWFORD: I do not want them to be managers. If anybody wants to be a manager, he should do what the honourable member for Wolston did, that is, undertake a hospital administration management course. I think I am correct in saying that the honourable member for Wolston was the first person in Queensland to have a hospital administration diploma. Again, that is a disgrace to the administration. Over the years neither the honourable member's side of the political fence nor mine has admitted the importance of hospital administrators knowing how to administer hospitals because they have been trained to do so.

I turn now to the mileage allowance to be granted to doctors and other witnesses giving expert advice to hospital boards. This amendment is long overdue. It is a matter that needed to be attended to. Previously doctors and others who gave expert advice had to pay their own travelling and other expenses. The proposal is well and truly overdue.

Finally, on the matter of overtime incurred by officers of senior classification, I would like the Minister to give us an exact definition of the officers who will be able to claim overtime, what the senior classifications are and what the salaries are. In other words, in general, to whom is the provision to apply?

Over all, these provisions are necessary. In many cases the amendments are long overdue; but I believe they represent the beginning of the revision of the entire Hospitals Act so that hospitals in this State can be run as efficiently as hospitals in other parts of Australia and in other parts of the world.

Mr. CASEY (Mackay) (4.21 p.m.): At the outset, I extend my congratulations to the Minister on the way in which he has so assiduously approached his task in the Health Department. I refer particularly to the manner in which he has busied himself in visiting hospitals not only in the metropolitan area but also in the far-flung parts of the State, moving around and having a good look at just what has been happening with our health and hospital services for a long time. Because of his work, the Minister has already been given a nickname in the country areas. He is known as "Fluoride", because his main task has been to stop years of "Tooth" decay.

It is most pleasing to see the amendments that the Minister has mentioned. Some of them relate to hospital boards. I believe it is essential for us to consider the very essence of hospital boards—their purpose and why they were established. Supposedly, rather than have the Health Department in Brisbane run everything, boards were set up so that local people who knew the special problems of their own areas could help in the administration of Queensland hospitals. As with regional boards, drainage boards, river trusts and other semi-governmental authorities, they should have been pushing for remedies to their local problems, but unfortunately many of our hospital boards have not done that.

The Bill makes provision for the splitting of the North Brisbane Hospitals Board to allow for a board at Redcliffe. On that point—in a number of other areas in the State people see a need for the splitting of hospital boards. Referring specifically to my own area—the people of Sarina are very keen to establish their own hospital board. The situation in Sarina is different from that in a number of other small hospitals in the State. The people of Sarina rely heavily on the Mackay Hospitals Board, not only for additional medical services but also for administrative services to keep their hospital functioning. I realise, of course, that a decision on that matter might cause considerable problems for the Minister.

I raise now a matter that does concern me. A hospital board claims that if an area has an urgent problem, the department will not do anything about it. Members ask questions of the Minister about what should or should not be happening. The answer we normally receive is that the matter is the responsibility of the particular hospital board. It is time that some of our hospital boards were completely reorganised.

I go along with the suggestion put forward by the honourable member for Wavell. In fact, by the sound of it, he is becoming socially democratic. In an earlier debate he advocated compulsory unionism and in this debate he was advocating the great Labor principle of worker participation in board decisions. It is a pity that he has left the Chamber, because if he were

here he might not entirely agree with me. However, I believe that was the concept he was advocating.

Mr. Moore: Are you a good Labor man or an Independent?

Mr. CASEY: I am a good Labor man. I have never been anything else. I have never denied being a Labor man. Every honourable member knows that.

The Mackay Hospitals Board would be a classic example of what I am talking about. As a result of a little decadence on the part of the board down through the years, it is unquestionable—I do not think anyone would deny it—the buildings at the Mackay Hospital are the worst of those at large provincial hospitals.

A few years ago, after I made a bit of noise in Parliament on the matter, new tiles were laid on the floor of the main ward. Although the main building is of 1921 vintage, it is expected to provide 1976 medical services. Furthermore, although some of the ancillary buildings at the Mackay Hospital are the original buildings constructed in 1874, they are still in use.

During the past 10 years there has been an increase in the development of the Mackay area with a resultant considerable amount of additional work at the Mackay Hospital. I have taken my statistics from the board's annual report. In that 10-year period the number of in-patients has increased on a yearly average basis by 60 per cent; the number of outpatients has increased by 70 per cent, from 10,000 to 27,000; the prescriptions handled by the dispensary have increased by the same figure; and the laboratory work at the hospital has increased by 330 per cent.

Certainly during that period some reconstruction work has been done. A new maternity ward was built, but the hospital board, which participated in the planning of it—it dragged on for so long—finds now that it completely underestimated the size of the maternity ward. Both the staff and the people of Mackay and district have to put up with this situation. Much of the blame for what has gone on can be laid directly on the shoulders of the Mackay Hospitals Board. If a board is not pushing for something in its own area, the Health Department will not be too keen to do so, because over the past 10 to 15 years it has had problems with its priorities for hospital buildings.

The latest information I have is that in January the board said that a start would be made on a new building proposal in June of this year. However, back in April 1975 in this House the Minister said in answer to a question asked by me that he had been advised by the board that there was no undue delay in the planning of the hospital. In a letter written to me in June last year, the board said there had been no undue delay in the planning of the new hospital complex at Mackay. At the July meeting

it indicated that tenders would be called in December. Then, at the January meeting, it said tenders will be called in June 1976. It is continually going backwards.

The matter goes beyond that. In February 1970 the then Minister for Health, in answer to a question asked by me, admitted in the House that approval in principle was given for the planning of stage 2 of the building of the Mackay Hospital complex. This involves a three-storey building containing about 140 beds. In February 1970 it was definitely approved, and the architects were to get on with the work in November 1971. It is now March 1976, but the architects still have not reached the final planning stage so that they can call tenders for that ward block.

But an even worse situation exists. Recently I received in my office a copy of a plan of a major five-storey structure that was previously proposed for the Mackay Hospital. The senior partner of the architectural firm that did that work is the senior partner of the architectural firm that is doing the planning for the Mackay Hospitals Board now. The original proposal was dated June 1947—30 years ago. In other words, for 30 years there has been talk about planning a new ward block at the Mackay Base Hospital. I do not know if it is any closer to fruition now than it was then. All we hear about are further and further delays.

I think that somewhere along the line there has been insufficient pressure and movement by both the board and the Health Department. Some board members have been involved in the planning work for 20 years, and if the members of the Mackay Hospitals Board felt that the blame lies with the Health Department and if they had any guts and sense of decency they would resign en masse. On the other hand, if they have been dilly-dallying for 15 years in trying to get planning under way for a new hospital, the Minister should sack the board and get other board members who will be more co-operative and will get on with the job in the interests of the people of Mackay and district.

Dr. Edwards: You are asking me to sack the board?

Mr. CASEY: I suggest that the Minister should look very hard at this problem. I realise that these decisions were made by previous Ministers for Health. I said at the outset that I feel the present Minister for Health has done a good job in moving around to look at some of the problems of hospitals. However, I want him to look in greater depth at the Mackay Hospital and at the continual lack of a proper building programme in that area. If the Minister feels that there has been undue delay on the part of the board and that it has not done the right thing in the interests of the people, he should sack the board. By the same token, if the board places the blame squarely on the Health Department and if such an

accusation can be substantiated, the board—if its members have any guts—should resign as a body. I think I have made the situation pretty clear.

The people of Mackay are the ones who have missed out all along the line. More than 30 years ago a proposal was put forward for a decent hospital, yet they are still forced to use buildings that are 50 to 60 years old.

The provision of staff also needs attention. The board cannot even employ a gardener to try to make things a little more bright and cheery around the hospital. If he could do nothing else he could at least start clipping some of the trees to prevent leaves from constantly blowing into the wards in this rambling type of hospital. It would also be nice to have a few flower beds to brighten up the place for the patients who have to look at gloomy grey walls and peeling paint. Some patients are unfortunate enough to happen to pick up a glossy magazine containing photographs depicting the hospital services that are provided in some other areas of the State and elsewhere in the Commonwealth. They certainly need something to cheer them up—and a few flowers would not hurt.

This is a very serious problem for the people of Mackay. I urge the Minister to look in depth at the lack of proper building work in the hospital and the need for some people to be shaken out of their lethargy and told to get on with the job.

Mr. GUNN (Somerset) (4.35 p.m.): Firstly, I associate myself with the remarks of the honourable member for Mackay and congratulate the Minister on the way he is conducting his portfolio. It is only natural that we would expect a man of his calibre and experience to throw himself into the job in the way he has done. His visits to the various hospitals throughout Queensland should be applauded by every member of this Chamber. They give him a first-hand knowledge of what is going on and of the problems in these areas.

Of course, hospitals throughout Queensland are of immense importance. Nothing plays a greater role in decentralisation than the hospitals in various country centres. It would be almost impossible to induce people to move to areas which did not have a hospital service or in which people did not have speedy access to a good hospital service. In the various country centres which have aged-persons' homes we should encourage the establishment of geriatric wards. It is a fact that, very often, aged patients in country hospitals would be better served in special wards in aged-persons' homes. A lot of country hospitals are not designed to provide a service to them.

As to the size of hospitals, I do not think any of us would argue with the comments of the honourable member for Wavell about the size of hospitals throughout Brisbane. All

of us would admit that the Royal Brisbane Hospital is far too big. But a strange situation exists here. Nobody could honestly claim that this hospital is not efficient and does not do an excellent job; so although we are prepared to admit that these hospitals are too big, I do not think we have a strong argument against their efficiency. I know that the number of patients who pass through the Royal Brisbane Hospital is immense, and it necessarily follows that some will be discontented. The same situation arises in the tiny hospitals up in my area, and we have to accept this. But in 99.9 per cent of cases the service rendered by big hospitals—the Princess Alexandra, Royal Brisbane and Prince Charles Hospitals—is excellent and is to be commended.

I have no quibble with the North Brisbane Hospitals Board; it has done an excellent job. But at the same time I think it is a step in the right direction to grant autonomy to the Redcliffe Hospitals Board.

One other thing I would like to say about hospitals boards is that the age of board members is an important factor. I do not believe that we should keep an older man on a hospital board for many, many years. It is absolutely essential to have an infusion of new members with new ideas into hospitals boards throughout Queensland. I would not condemn the job done by a person who remains on a board until the age of 80, as has happened in the past, but I think at that age he gets in a rut and is prepared to run along with the system.

If we are not prepared to alter the system we not not prepared to improve it—and this is the point of the exercise. We should be prepared to alter it, and I think this principle is being followed at the present time by the Minister and his staff throughout Queensland. The regular changing of board members is something we should have a look at. It is pretty important also to have a medical man on a board to give advice to the other members. A person does not need to be highly qualified to be a successful board member. Among the many good members in this place are sprinklings of the legal, medical and other professions. They give us advice, which is often sought, and it is given very freely. I think this adds to the efficiency of this chamber, and the situation would be similar on a hospitals board. Almost all hospitals boards have a medical man on them—most of the boards with which I am familiar, at least—and I should say that he is an asset to the board.

I wish to refer briefly to the wonderful part that nursing aides have played throughout the State. The use of nursing aides has not only provided employment for many young girls who are not quite up to the academic standards required for the job of nursing but also played a very important part by taking away from qualified nurses some of the duties that normally are a bore and a burden to them, thus enabling them

to get on with jobs, such as training, administration, and so on, that probably have been neglected in the past.

One of the great problems facing the present Minister as well as Ministers who have preceded him in office has been the provision of medical superintendents in country hospitals. If we are not prepared to send highly qualified men into these areas, it is not much use sending anyone. It is no use sending a young person who has done a couple of years' residency in a hospital and expecting him to take over a hospital in the back country. In my opinion, medical services are just as important in country areas as they are in the Brisbane area.

Many small country hospitals are not set up for major surgery, and I should say that very few would have supplies of blood. However, it is absolutely necessary that those hospitals should play their part as best they can with the equipment available and that the more important functions be carried out in the bigger hospitals throughout the State. I was one of those who spoke and voted in favour of taking away nursing training from the smaller hospitals and bringing the nurses to the larger hospitals so that they could be given proper training with new equipment and equipment that would not be seen by them in country areas and could possibly be supplied by the Government.

Medical facilities are improving so rapidly and to such an extent that probably many doctors need yearly training in the use of equipment. One reads of the use in Brisbane of scanning machines and other equipment that has never been used before. In most areas of the State one could count on one hand the number of doctors who would be fully qualified to operate such machines.

Another matter mentioned by the Minister was the declaration of interests of board members when tenders are being considered. I believe that such a principle already applies to local authorities, harbour boards and so on, and I think that uniformity is necessary. It seems to me that the Minister is only asking that what already applies to harbour boards, shire councils and so on should also apply in this instance.

There is very little that I wish to add. Although hospitals boards have a good deal of autonomy at present, I agree with the comments made by the honourable member for Wavell about the need for flexibility in the use of funds that are made available. That flexibility might exist already in some instances, but in other instances a certain amount of money has to be spent in a certain time. In my opinion, additional flexibility should be provided not only under the proposed Bill but in all Acts as well. It seems to me to be absolutely ridiculous that there should be a rush to spend funds in a certain time when there may be hold-ups in building programmes. I am not certain that there is not that flexibility now, but I hope that there will be in the future.

I conclude by commending the Bill and congratulating the Minister on introducing it.

Mrs. KIPPIN (Mourilyan) (4.45 p.m.): I have a number of parochial problems I wish to mention, but before doing so let me say that I regret that we have to impose an age limit on board members. A number of board members will be retiring this year after the local government elections. I am sure that the Minister and all honourable members would wish to extend sincere congratulations for the work those men have done over the years. Three men will have to retire from the Atherton Hospitals Board. When this amendment to the Act was first mooted, the board asked the honourable member for Mulgrave and me whether these men could remain at least until the big improvement being brought about by the Atherton Hospitals Board programme is completed. However, when new legislation is introduced we must all fall in line.

To those men who will be leaving my hospital board I say, "Thank you very much for the wonderful work you have done over the last few years during which I have been particularly interested in hospital boards." Some of those who are retiring are much more devoted to their work and active on board matters than some of the younger members. Sometimes I wish I had a nice way of getting rid of some of the younger members. I am sure every honourable member has inactive board members. I just wish that some of them in that category would take the cue and voluntarily resign.

It must be a bit of a blow to their pride when active board members have to retire at 70 years of age. Our legislation seems to be phasing people of that age out of everything. I know that retired board members would be most welcome in organisations such as Meals on Wheels and the Blue Nurses. They could help raise funds, and would be very welcome in such organisations.

I, too, would like to thank the Minister for visiting my electorate early in his term of office. The Herberston Hospital has been a bone of contention between the Health Department and the residents of the Atherton Tableland for a number of years. When it was announced in 1972 that the Herberston Hospital was to close, there was a terrific furore. There has been a great deal of political wangling about the closure of that hospital. Just before the Federal election in 1974, representatives of the Federal Labor Government slipped up to Herberston and said, "We will give you a medical centre." Anyone with any sense knew that it was absolutely impossible to have a Federal medical centre in a small area like Herberston or elsewhere on the Tableland. After the election, people realised that it had been a political gimmick when the goods were not delivered. It was most upsetting to the Herberston people. They realised they were losing something, and then their hopes were raised

that they would be given another centre in place of the hospital; but that was not to be. It is understandable that there is still considerable feeling about the closure of the Herberston Hospital. It is a fact that the numbers of acute patients being treated at the Herberston Hospital are decreasing. Probably this is because people are realising that the standard of medical care available today just cannot be provided at small country hospitals. Of course, that is no reflection on the staff of the small country hospitals. Their staffs do a marvellous job but they do not have the equipment or the number of doctors available to provide the extra care. It is for that reason that most people in Herberston have accepted the fact that, after the Herberston Hospital has closed, they will receive adequate medical attention from Atherton.

A couple of things are very important to residents of the southern Atherton Tableland. First of all, we do have a very adequate service by a doctor. A doctor is stationed at Herberston at the moment, and we would hate to see him go. I have spoken to him, and he is more than willing to stay in Herberston. He has three towns to cover—Herberston, Ravenshoe and Mt. Garnet—and at the moment he is run off his feet. If the acute patients are taken from the Herberston Hospital to Atherton, he will have much more time to devote to the three towns which should get a medical service at least twice, or maybe three times, a week. As people do not get sick or have an accident simply because the doctor happens to be in town, that would provide a much better service.

I was pleased to note yesterday that the Minister promised to leave the medical outpatient centre at Herberston. Mt. Garnet and Ravenshoe enjoy these facilities. When the doctor can attend the centres more frequently, they will be used more often. I stress particularly that the X-ray unit at the Herberston Hospital should be left there. Herberston has two boarding schools; it is a mining centre and fairly large timber operations are carried on nearby. Quite serious injuries can be suffered in these industries. If the X-ray plant could be left at the Herberston Hospital, it would be particularly useful. Because many small operations do not really require hospitalisation I should also like to see facilities for minor operations left at the Herberston Hospital. If these two facilities could be left at Herberston, I am sure they would help us to keep our doctor.

I can understand fully the reluctance of Herberston people to lose another facility. They believe that they have been almost victimised in the last decade. Their school has lost grades 11 and 12. The magistrate and mining warden who work in Herberston no longer live there, and we no longer have adult education. The aged people's home has gone to Atherton. In a way, that was the fault of the Herberston people,

who had an excellent opportunity to organise an aged people's home when they were told that the hospital was to close down. However, a number of people who would not accept the closure of the hospital did not want anything in its place.

I beseech the Minister to give very favourable consideration to the establishment of a geriatric unit in Herberton. That would show the people that the Government has a little faith in the town. For a while Herberton was a dying town but the population is increasing and the whole outlook has improved considerably. An urgent need exists in the North for geriatric facilities. On the average the Herberton Hospital has 20 permanent geriatric patients. If the hospital closes, Atherton has little room for them and they would have to be sent to Charters Towers. Only this morning the honourable member for Flinders asked a question about more geriatric facilities at Charters Towers, which indicates that the "Eventide" at Charters Towers is fairly well committed.

Herberton has a lot going for it to warrant the establishment of a geriatric centre. It enjoys a very good climate and the hospital has 20 patients who would form a nucleus. It is fairly centrally situated, being only 12 miles from Atherton. As Herberton people have to go to Atherton for medical facilities, I see no reason why Atherton people should object to going to Herberton for their geriatric unit. An excellent bitumen road links the two towns and, in this respect, probably the people would be far better off than many of their counterparts in Brisbane. Although some of the hospital buildings at Herberton have been condemned and will have to be pulled down, one section of the hospital is very suitable for geriatric purposes. Not a great deal of money would be needed to convert it. I believe that the establishment of a geriatric unit in Herberton would help us to keep our doctor. A mother convent is situated in the area and a lot of the older sisters retire to Herberton and use our hospital facilities quite frequently. They are more than enthusiastic about the establishment of a geriatric unit not far from their convent. Once again I repeat that a geriatric unit in Herberton would give the people of that town just the lift they need at the moment. It would indeed be a blow to them if a geriatric unit were established somewhere else on the Tablelands.

Over the last year I have had a number of requests to place geriatrics in hospitals. I have been completely unsuccessful in placing anyone. The geriatric unit in Cairns has a two-year waiting list; we cannot get anyone in there. There are facilities at the Innisfail Hospital for a number of geriatric cases; but, for some reason, every time we get a new medical officer in the hospital he goes through the geriatric unit and tosses all the people out. That really causes a

lot of inconvenience and heartbreak. Eventually, as the new medical officer settles in, we manage to get the old people back in again. However, it is unsettling for them. I am sure that a number of them would be quite willing to go to Herberton, if only they were allowed in; but, with its present staffing, Herberton has as many old people as it can possibly cope with. Herberton has a new laundry wing that would be useful if the building were maintained as a geriatric unit.

As I see it, the main objection to retaining the Herberton Hospital as a geriatric unit is that it could be a fire hazard. One side of the building is at ground level. If a number of ramps and exits were put on that side, patients could be quickly cleared from the building in the event of a fire. On behalf of the Herberton people, I beseech the Minister to give sympathetic consideration to their application when he makes his decision.

Another problem involved in shifting the hospital facilities from Herberton across to Atherton is that it means extra travelling for the Mt. Garnet ambulance. A case has been submitted to the Minister on that matter, and I am sure that he will carefully consider it. I point out that very few country people go to the Herberton Hospital. After all, if anybody travels 40, 60 or even 100 miles to a hospital, he might as well travel an extra 12 miles to one that has all the facilities. I believe that, once the people in the area accept that the Herberton Hospital is to close down, they will become accustomed to travelling to Atherton.

Mr. MARGINSON (Wolston) (4.58 p.m.): Unlike the previous speaker, I need not invite the Minister to visit the hospital that services my electorate, as I know that he visits it quite regularly.

This afternoon I rise to speak about hospital boards. Members might recall that some years ago there was a strong suspicion that hospitals boards were to be dispensed with. I am not suggesting that it was last year or the year before; it was quite a number of years ago. At that time I felt that it might not be a bad idea; but, with maturity, I believe that it would have been the wrong thing to do. Many men and women have given devoted service on hospital boards, particularly the board with which I was associated, and I am somewhat saddened to hear that an age limit will be placed upon board members. After all, human nature and the human frame are such that it is not so much a question of age as of ability, vitality and a desire to devote attention to other aspects of life.

Mr. Frawley: Your own political party throws you onto the scrap-heap.

Mr. MARGINSON: It has not done so yet.

Recently this was done with the fire brigade boards. Some of the members of the board in my locality must feel a little

hurt or humiliated because of it. At this stage I am sorry to see it coming into our hospital set-up. Of the men associated with me on the Ipswich Hospitals Board, I can name two who were well over the age of 70 years and did an excellent job. At that age, men are usually retired. I came to the conclusion that, because they were retired, they could devote more time to their duties and had more time to spare for inspections of hospitals. I am not suggesting that men under that age did not, but they had to attend to their employment and were not as readily available as those in retirement or semi-retirement.

Mr. Jones: What about Sir Douglas Fraser?

Mr. MARGINSON: That is correct.

I do not oppose the declaration of interest in contracts. I thought that was fairly well protected under the Hospitals Act. Judging by what the Minister said, it would appear that a certain section will remain in the Act which will prevent any further use of the section he intends to delete.

As the Minister has mentioned Medibank, I should like to speak a little more sincerely about it. Because we are getting so much money from the Commonwealth Government for hospitals, Medibank has proved a real godsend to our hospital system in Queensland. To some extent the improvement at our local hospital is due to the Minister and I give him credit for it. I am not suggesting that he is favouring one hospital over another; but tremendous improvements are being made in Ipswich. However, improvements cannot be made without having the finance available and I believe that much is being achieved as a result of our joining Medibank.

What I do not like and am still waiting to hear something about—and if I do not, I shall ask the Premier a question about it—is the Premier's statement when joining the hospital section of Medibank that Hayden had robbed him of so many millions of dollars; Mr. Whitlam would not give the money to him and Mr. Hayden would not give it to him. I should like to know whether he has approached the present Commonwealth Government to see if it will give him the money that he alleges was stolen from this State. The loss was due wholly to his procrastination in joining the scheme, and what he did.

The honourable member for Wavell mentioned the size of hospitals. It is very important to decide the limit of a hospital. On the other hand, smaller hospitals are more costly to administer than large hospitals per patient per day. That has been my experience. I am not prepared to argue with the Minister whether there should be a maximum number of 500 or 600. On the other hand, some hospitals have had to be closed because of the little use being made

of them by the people in the district concerned. The cost of conducting and administering a hospital is terrific in comparison with the use the people make of it.

When I was secretary of a board, we administered five hospitals. At times I felt that one or two of them should have been administered by another manager. From my experience, the manager sees the hospital daily instead of once every three weeks and is better able to see the work that is necessary at the base hospital as against what I would call the subsidiary hospitals.

I am pleased to see that protection is being given to the clerical employees of various hospitals in the metropolitan area, and that their seniority is to be maintained. Those are good points. The Minister said in his concluding remarks that the Bill was not contentious. It may not be, either. I think it makes some desirable improvements in the Hospitals Act.

I want to say finally that in the Queensland Health Department there are many officers who are particularly dedicated and devoted to their work. I know how much they desire to see hospitals, particularly their building programmes, progress. There are many people concerned in the conduct of hospitals in Queensland who know very well the local issues and what is required locally. At times they feel disappointed and disheartened because they cannot get all that they want.

We will have a good look at the Bill. At present it appears to be quite a good one. I hope to have more to say on the second reading.

Mr. GIBBS (Albert) (5.7 p.m.): I rise to support the Minister on the introduction of the Bill. I start by congratulating him and his department on the job that they are doing in meeting the problems of health services throughout Queensland. I speak as a member of the Gold Coast Hospitals Board, as a member of the Minister's committee and as chairman of the Health Committee of the Gold Coast City Council. We are building a new hospital at Southport in the electorate of Surfers Paradise because it serves the majority of people in the area. The new hospital is to have 350 beds. It is to be a tower block of the latest design and no doubt it will house some of the most modern equipment that the world has to offer. I certainly hope so.

New hospitals create their own problems and this one will have side effects in providing a service for the public. One of these is the necessity for parking and in the long term this will be a real problem. The hospital at present has about 300 to 400 beds and an additional 350 are to be added. That is the number of beds for half the tower block system; another 300 beds are to be added.

The parking problem has to be considered in the long term. My advice to the Minister and the Health Department is that land

should be purchased or resumed right through to High Street. This would mean closing Little High Street and in the long term the whole parking situation would be sewn up. There are resumptions being made on the southern side of Queen Street where some flats have necessarily been taken over for staff accommodation.

Although negotiations are sometimes necessarily slow, I think they could perhaps be speeded up. In one or two cases the properties of old people aged 70 years or more are being resumed. They feel somewhat in a cleft stick, and they have to re-establish themselves elsewhere. Perhaps we should be looking a little more personally at these problems. These people come to see me in an attempt to get the resumptions completed as quickly as possible. They are not unhappy about having their homes purchased, but they would like to get the business completed a little quicker.

There are many other little things associated with the planning of a hospital. Being on the board, I have heard a lot of talk about a simple laundry chute. In a hospital which will be 12 or 13 storeys, we are still going to carry the laundry down in trolleys. I believe this question should be sorted out fairly swiftly as it is becoming quite a controversial matter even outside the board.

On the agenda for the meeting of the Gold Coast City Council tomorrow I see that we are even going to discuss a helipad at the hospital, although I believe a recommendation has been made against it on the ground that there is not enough space for a helicopter to land. It could land some short distance away from the hospital, which would overcome that problem.

I would like to talk about the make-up of hospital boards. The Southport Hospitals Board is made up of a real cross-section of the community under the chairmanship of our local magistrate, Mr. Jock Rutherford. On the board we have one medical practitioner, Dr. McLachlan, businessmen and contractors. I believe that they do a fine job. The board has had its problems in years gone by, but today we have a first-class hospital with a first-class name and that reflects credit on the staff, the board, the Health Department and the Minister. I think everybody deserves a pat on the back for the quality of the service provided by that hospital today. It is doing a wonderful job in training nurses, both male and female. It is rather significant that there seem to be more and more male nurses. I have seen them in hospitals throughout Australia and they are doing a wonderful job. I think we are going to see more and more male nurses in the hospital system.

It is good to see that the provision relating to pecuniary interests is to be deleted from the Act. I say this because during times when the building industry was at its peak there were jobs we could not get done at the Southport Hospital. We had a board member who could have carried out these minor jobs,

but he dared not do them and so the hospital suffered because of the operation of this section.

We have heard a great deal of comment about the provision relating to retirement at 70. There are many very good men of that age with great experience who are retired and can put in a lot of time on hospital boards, but I think if we look at it closely we will find that retirement at 70 is probably a very good thing. I certainly go along with it.

Seeing that Medibank has been mentioned, I would like to make some reference to it. A previous speaker said that we are still whingeing that we have not got all our money. I am not sure about that—the Minister might tell us about it—but I think Mr. Hayden tried to put a swiftee over Queensland. There is no doubt about that. There is no way in the world that this Government was going to accept a blank cheque from Mr. Hayden or anyone else. Neither this Government nor any other Government would do that. There is no way in the world that we are doing our job if we allow Queensland to be placed in that position.

Mr. Houston: You accepted a blank cheque from Fraser on his taxation proposals. No-one knows anything about that.

Mr. GIBBS: We have just heard the voice of wisdom!

Mr. Houston: You don't know anything about it. The Treasurer said so.

Mr. GIBBS: Yes, terrific. Whereas Mr. Hayden previously held his seat very easily, on 13 December he had a battle to even hold it.

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

Mr. GIBBS: I was just covering what a previous speaker said and I was going to—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I am just pointing out to the honourable member that the electoral fortunes of Mr. Hayden personally have nothing to do with the Bill. He would quite readily agree with that, I am sure.

Mr. GIBBS: Yes, I would agree with that. I was only going to mention that he won by only 240 votes. That is what Queenslanders thought of his actions over Medibank. He will be remembered for a long time because he tried to deprive Queensland of money that it justly deserved. The Premier is to be commended for not accepting easily what Mr. Hayden attempted to thrust upon him.

I conclude by congratulating the Minister for introducing many provisions that will improve the operation of the hospital system and hospital boards, and I remind him again of the need for additional parking at the Southport Hospital.

Mr. LANE (Merthyr) (5.16 p.m.): I welcome the opportunity of participating in the debate on this very important Bill. It will do much to rationalise the relationship between the Government, the various hospital boards throughout the State and the hospitals themselves.

The administration of hospitals has always been a contentious matter, and since I have been a member of this Assembly I have been disappointed to see the way in which the cheaper members of the Opposition have managed to play one board member off against another to create public alarm and make sordid political attacks on various health Ministers. I do not know what favours they have offered or what they have done to obtain information from board members at the various hospitals, but they seem to have obtained it over the years. For that reason, I have always favoured a tightening of the administration of hospitals in this State so that it would not be open to political questioning as it has been in the past.

Over the years, the most contentious place has been the Royal Brisbane Hospital, a complex which by its very size leaves itself open to all sorts of pressures and internal fighting. It has an enormous staff, and that staff is divided into a number of professions, each of which, I am sure, believes that it deserves a higher place in the power structure—a higher place in the pecking order—in the complex at Herston.

The Royal Brisbane Hospital is probably one of the largest hospitals in Australia, and successive Health Ministers have had trouble in explaining away problems that have arisen there. I was very pleased to see the former Minister for Health introduce a new approach to the administration that did away with the position of medical superintendent. Such a position is probably satisfactory in terms of part-time administration in small country and provincial hospitals, but I think it became obvious over the years that it was necessary to have at the Royal Brisbane Hospital a full-time medical administrator who would devote all his time to the administration of the complex and not endeavour to practise medicine. So when the former Minister for Health established the new order of command at the Royal Brisbane Hospital, with an executive director of medical services as the man at the top of the structure and responsible to the board and a medical superintendent for each of the three hospitals within the complex, one at the Royal Brisbane, one at the Royal Children's, and one at the Royal Women's, I thought that would do quite a deal to strengthen the administration, as, indeed, it has.

However, what also has been needed is a strengthening at board level, and I am very pleased to see that the Minister is making provision in the proposed Bill to phase out some of the older, and perhaps sleeper, members of the board, men who have not quite the energy needed to climb staircases.

The North Brisbane Hospitals Board is composed of a broad spectrum of persons representative of the community—men and women with a wide experience of life and of what is required by such an important complex in the State's capital city. Probably one of the most lively gentlemen on the board is Syd McDonald, a man who has made a great success in commerce in this city and a real live-wire in business. Sir Douglas Tooth appointed him to the board of the Royal Brisbane Hospital and he brought with him a wealth of commercial experience and a great deal of energy.

Mr. Alison interjected.

Mr. LANE: The honourable member for Maryborough points out that just by coincidence Syd McDonald happens to be the man who will be the next Lord Mayor of Brisbane.

During the period of the board's administration of that complex, a large capital works programme has been under way, the largest part of which, of course, is block 7. As I look from my electorate across to Herston, I see this enormous structure being erected within the 25 acres on which the Royal Brisbane Hospital is built. It has seemed to me that its progress has been fairly slow. When one remembers the industrial stoppages and strikes in the building trades brought about by the carelessness of trade union officials, and encouraged by the the Australian Labor Party, one has little reason to wonder why that building has grown so slowly. Despite all that, under the guidance of the former Health Minister, who probably made his name in this State by encouraging great capital works in hospital programmes, and under the guidance of the present Minister, who understands how essential it is that we have adequate hospital services, the block will be completed within a year or two. The people of Brisbane will be very grateful for it, because it is needed, particularly since the Federal Government has encouraged persons to go into hospital under the Medibank scheme with less reason than was the case in the past. We look forward to the completion of that great block. It is starting to take shape now. Externally, from a distance, it looks to be almost completed.

In its wisdom the Government has not only put money into its own hospitals but has been generous in providing money for hospitals run by private establishments and orders. Over the years I have been a great supporter of the efficient complex known as the Mater Hospital in South Brisbane. I was pleased to see the Minister open the new children's hospital within that complex only a week ago. The Queensland Government provided about \$2,000,000 towards the cost of that new hospital. It was money well spent. The Mater has been famous for its care and compassion for patients. The recognition this Government

has given to church institutions that have been prepared to set up public facilities deserves commendation.

This Government's attitude is in sharp contrast to that of the Labor Party, particularly at the Federal level, which over the years has demonstrated some sort of prejudice against private institutions—both church institutions and private commercial establishments. As days go by we on this side look forward to hearing the Leader of the Opposition, who does a lot of frivolous boasting in the Press, enunciate some of his policies and attitudes towards that sort of thing. But he is silent on them. He is frightened, apparently, to say anything. He thinks he will get by, by tipping small dirty buckets dreamt up by his very doubtful staff.

I commend the Minister on the initiative he has encouraged in the present Government to offer \$18,000,000 to the Mater Hospital to be spent on works in the next five years. That is a recognition by the Government of the work carried out by the wonderful order of nuns who conduct the Mater Hospital at South Brisbane.

I feel sure that no-one in Brisbane is denied decent medical treatment at the three large hospital complexes, namely, Royal Brisbane, the Mater and Princess Alexandra. All are situated within a few miles of one another. The hospital facilities offered are a far cry from those that existed a few years ago when Labor was in office. I had the doubtful privilege of being associated with hospital works under a former Labor Government when little sympathy was given by the Government to the individual, and small compassion was shown to those who were sick.

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

Mr. LANE: I shall tell the honourable member something about the Cloncurry Base Hospital. In the 1950s, under a Labor Government, it was the largest base hospital in North-west Queensland. It was an old, wooden, broken-down building, with an inferior staff of junior nurses. It had a morgue sitting on top of a spinifex-covered hill, 200 yards from the hospital. The Labor Party forced young nurses to wheel corpses out to this tin shed in the middle of the night, to be covered in a shroud and left there for post-mortems to be performed a day or two later by the Government medical officer, with flies coming in an open window. That is the history of the Labor Party in country hospitals.

At night-time the local policeman had to sit in the hospital to protect young nurses from the alcoholic patients, ensure that they were not stabbed and enable decent treatment to be given to patients who really deserved it. That is the history of the

Labor Government in hospitals. I am sure that the honourable member for Flinders knows that every word I speak is true.

Mr. Katter: The chairman and deputy chairman had to threaten to burn down the hospital to force the Government to do something.

Mr. LANE: I am not sure of the authenticity of that statement, but the local people became desperate. All medical care in that town under Labor was left to a private practitioner, namely, Dr. Harvey Sutton, who was referred to recently by the honourable member for Flinders. Labor could not care less about people.

Nowadays in Brisbane we have the three large hospital complexes. This Bill deals with their administration, the way the boards are set up and how the hospitals are to be administered by the various superintendents. I commend the Health Department on providing the facilities and recognising the great need in the community so that any individual, wherever he comes from in Brisbane, will not feel that he will lack treatment if he should be sick or injured.

It is remarkable how silent the Leader of the Opposition has remained today. He is the member who, within weeks of coming to this Assembly, became the shadow Minister for Health. Within weeks of his coming here he admitted that he got all his medical training from watching "Ben Casey" on Channel 9. A few weeks after that it became too much of a burden for him; his brain closed in on him and he resigned. In caucus he fled from the position in tears. We know all about his performance.

The Minister and the Government deserve support in the light of what this legislation is designed to do to streamline hospital administration in Queensland.

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (5.30 p.m.): I wish to enter the debate about hospital boards and especially the attack on the state of hospitals many years ago under Labor. I draw the attention of the Minister to a story that appeared in "The Sunday Mail" this year under the heading "Hospital food killed three". We understand that it referred to the Redcliffe Hospital, which is mentioned in the Bill. The report says—

"Three elderly patients died from food poisoning complications after having been served contaminated chicken in the Redcliffe Hospital, the State Health Department's annual report has revealed."

We are not talking about some mythical story made up by the ex-policeman from Merthyr. We are talking now about what happened to three elderly people who died

as a result of the food they were fed under our Queensland hospital service. The article continues—

"The outbreak occurred early last year in a geriatric ward of the hospital, but the first public disclosure came in the report, presented in Parliament last month.

"The hospital was not named in the annual report, but the Health Minister (Dr. Edwards) identified it last week as the Redcliffe Hospital.

"Of 36 patients in the ward, 23 became ill and three died after having eaten a hospital meal of minced chicken.

"Dr. Edwards said it was important to realise that the patients were 'fragile aged.'" I believe it is time we had a look at the hospital services in this State. It is time we investigated the Health Department's control of boards and the way it has caused delays for hospital boards throughout the State. People connected with hospitals say that it takes six or eight months to get an answer to a letter asking for equipment. Doctors themselves have brought their own equipment into our hospitals. I have that in records I used last year or the year before. Doctors were forced to bring into our hospitals equipment that they themselves had purchased.

Dr. Edwards: Where? Name the hospital!

Mr. BURNS: The Royal Brisbane Hospital. I think I could find the report for the Minister and show it to him. It will be there for him to see. If I can remember correctly, the equipment cost \$1,100. Yet we have someone telling us about the great story of health achievements under this Government! Let us remember that the coalition parties talked about a hospital for Wynnum for 20 years, but they have never built a hospital there. They have used the land for an old people's home. I want an old people's home there, but I want a hospital, too.

The Government has talked about a hospital for Inala. When we were offered money for the Mt. Gravatt hospital, the Minister (Mr. Tooth, as he then was) refused it. He said he would not take it. There are no hospital facilities for children on the south side of Brisbane. Children are dragged all the way from Woodridge and other suburbs set up by this Government right across town to the Royal Children's Hospital or to the Mater Hospital. The Princess Alexandra Hospital does not have facilities to treat children.

Mr. Lane interjected.

Mr. BURNS: Here we have a man—supposedly of great knowledge—talking about the past. He wants to talk about country hospitals. What about the people of Quilpie, who have had to get up to all sorts of tricks to try to keep a doctor in their town? Under this Government the Alpha Hospital did not have a doctor for years. I heard the member for Flinders stand up

in the Chamber and complain about the medical services of the hospitals in his area, saying that the Minister and his department suggested that towns of 2,000 people or under would not have a medical service.

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

Mr. BURNS: That was in a debate last year.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! A point of order is being taken.

Mr. KATTER: My point of order is that what I said is being misrepresented—not misrepresented; it is just not what I said.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Does the honourable member ask for a withdrawal?

Mr. KATTER: I ask him to withdraw the remarks that he has made, because they are grossly incorrect.

Mr. BURNS: I will withdraw the remarks. If the man is chicken-hearted and does not want his own statements quoted back to him, let him run away from them.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I understand that the Leader of the Opposition has withdrawn?

Mr. BURNS: Yes, Mr. Hewitt, I have withdrawn. However, I add this: the gentleman who has asked me to withdraw made statements that the department's report suggested that towns the size of Richmond and others in his area would be deprived of medical services.

Dr. Edwards: No.

Mr. BURNS: He said it in a parliamentary debate. It is there in "Hansard". I read it the other day. I draw the attention of the honourable member for Merthyr and others who have been using these—

Dr. Edwards: He was quoting your policy.

Mr. BURNS: No, he wasn't. I can remember sitting in Mt. Isa one night when the Minister addressed a meeting in Townsville. He said that the people of the West could not expect medical care of the same standard as people in the city. The Minister was quoted on the A.B.C. and in other sections of the media saying just that.

Dr. EDWARDS: I rise to a point of order. That is absolutely incorrect. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw it. I did not make that statement at all.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to accept that denial.

Mr. BURNS: I will accept the Minister's denial. I will give him a copy of the newspaper cutting and he might ask them to print his denial also.

In this Chamber, we talk about hospital boards. I can remember the trouble with the board at the Royal Brisbane Hospital. I

remember the question asked in the House yesterday by the honourable member for Wavell about radiologists and the delays that occur and the problems that still exist in that department. I give the Minister credit that there has been some improvement of late. But I was told as recently as a month ago that people were waiting four to five weeks. Doctors at the hospital were telling them to go up the road to a private practitioner because they would not be able to handle them for four or five weeks. The Minister knows that at that time files had gone astray and others have gone astray since then. People return to the hospital and are told to go away because the file cannot be found.

There has been talk about proper administration. The Government put W. D. Scott & Co. into the Royal Brisbane Hospital to investigate the board's administration and the hospital's administration because it knew that something was wrong. If it did not know that something was wrong, why did it put Scott & Co. in? Why did it spend the money? By putting that firm in, the Government admitted that there was a problem in the hospital and with the administration. It is no good honourable members coming here to play their little political stunts.

I have kept quiet about the hospital and I said to the Minister when he was appointed to his portfolio, "I will give you time to try to clean up some of the mistakes of your predecessor." The Minister has to do something about people in the Health Department. I believe they are the greatest clot in the blood system of the hospitals in this State.

I support any alteration to improve the working of hospital boards. I do not believe that people should be kept on them later in life. More new blood should be brought in. I should like to see members of the medical staff on hospital boards. I cannot see why, if we put so much faith in the doctors, we keep them out.

I should like hospital boards to meet in public instead of going into committee. I realise there has to be confidentiality concerning patients and medical documents. But there is something wrong when they have to meet in secret all the time and nothing is made public.

There is no cross-communication in the hospital system. Doctors and staff are not aware of what is going on. When they ask what is going on, they are not told. They are treated like little boys and girls who are creating a nuisance. They are not little boys; they are men. We trained them.

Dr. Edwards: You listen to the wrong people.

Mr. BURNS: A document was produced by the medical staff. Would any honourable member care to move that I table it? It is available. The Minister received a copy of it last year. Another one is circulating this year. It deals with the same problem. The

Minister cannot accuse me of listening to the wrong people. I have not spoken to those people again this year.

An Honourable Member interjected.

Mr. BURNS: In that case the Minister knows that it was not Brian Mellifont and those people that we spoke to together some time ago on these problems.

Mr. Lane: You threatened him with the loss of his endorsement.

Mr. BURNS: Here is the standover man who spent most of his time in hospitals trying to stand over poor patients and rob people of a few bob when they were drunk. He spent most of his time in the Police Force doing that. He used to stand over New Australians and roll drunks. That is how he became an expert on outpatients, morgues and things of that nature. That is his make-up. That is his style. And we ought to expect that. He was able to win the seat of Merthyr by standing over New Australians.

Mr. LANE: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member's remarks are offensive and I ask that he withdraw them.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will withdraw that statement.

Mr. BURNS: Yes, I will withdraw that statement. I like dishing it out to cowards—the people who like to dish it out themselves and then run away when they get a bit back.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I suggest that the Leader of the Opposition return to the Bill under discussion.

Mr. LANE: I rise to a point of order. That remark was offensive to me and I ask that he withdraw that, too.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I have taken the point of order. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw that statement and return to the Bill under discussion.

Mr. BURNS: As I understand it the Bill under discussion—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Do I understand that the honourable member withdrew that statement?

Mr. BURNS: Yes, naturally I withdraw, out of deference to you, Mr. Hewitt.

As I said, we talk about hospital boards and administration. Every week in the newspapers throughout this State someone complains about hospital administration. Surely all of them are not wrong. An article I have reads—

"Specialist services Toowoomba General Hospital could be severely curtailed if the State Health Department does not give visiting specialists what they term better conditions."

Dr. Edwards: We know that very well.

Mr. BURNS: It is a headline out of the paper and quotes the Minister—

Dr. Edwards: Quote the story.

Mr. BURNS: Well, I will quote the article further. It goes on—

"It is believed that already dozens of outpatients at the hospital have been denied specialist treatment as a result of the dispute."

I return to the hospitals board in Brisbane which is the one with which I am familiar.

Dr. Edwards: You are quoting everything out of context.

Mr. BURNS: Those are the first two paragraphs.

Dr. Edwards: Tell us the remainder.

Mr. BURNS: You want me to read the whole story?

Dr. Edwards: I'll tell the whole story.

Mr. BURNS: I am telling the Minister, as part of the debate on the Bill, that the hospitals boards are frustrated. Every member of a hospital board with whom I have spoken off the record has said, "Our problem is that when we want equipment, or want to do something that is new, we send it to the Health Department and have to wait a very long time for a reply." One long-serving member of a hospitals board once told me that he thought that junior clerks in the department received these letters and, if they decided to let them lie on their desks for a week or a fortnight, that was that. It made no difference that each letter was very important to the hospital concerned. I think I could still produce a file that would show delays of six and eight months in receiving replies from the Health Department.

Decisions on the acquisition of equipment and materials have taken far too long to obtain. We would do better to consider these matters instead of worrying about whether a person should retire at 70 or 65 years of age. I am, I might say, in favour of early retirement, although I must accept the point made by the honourable member for Wolston. Many people like Bill Edwards have given sterling service to hospitals boards and they deserve every credit for the work that in many cases they have carried out voluntarily for little or no recompense.

Mr. Lane interjected.

Mr. BURNS: The interjector from Merthyr is here again. I am pleased he is back. I can remember him speaking about the block at the hospital and how welcome it would be. I also remember him talking about that great Brisbane Liberal leader, the man who is in charge of food services. Not only did three people die at the Redcliffe Hospital from the food served to them but every one of us who ate the food that he sold at the Exhibition had stomach pains for

a week after it. This is McDonald, the Liberal's candidate for Lord Mayor. Mr. Poison, they call him.

Honourable Members interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. BURNS: I query the way some hospital food services are run. I have watched the food arriving at the aged persons home at Wynnum. I did not think anyone could serve food cooked in bulk and taken away in cartons or heated cans.

Mr. Elliott: Doggie bags?

Mr. BURNS: No, not doggie bags. The food is carried in a mobile water-heated piece of equipment on the back of a truck and the system works fairly well. No cooking at all is done at the aged persons home at Wynnum. The food is obtained in the way that I have described and the process is quite good. I see that this service is to be provided to all hospitals in order to reduce the cost of duplicating equipment. I understand that the Minister was investigating a food service for most hospitals from one central kitchen. Is that still on the drawing board? Is it any closer to fruition?

Dr. Edwards: I shall have great pleasure in answering that later.

Mr. BURNS: We could also well consider the type of food that is being used in some hospital meals. I have raised before the matter of the fruit and vegetables that are bought and taken to hospitals. The Minister investigated it and very kindly wrote to me that the system was not operating in the way that I had suggested. I am assured that frozen vegetables are still being bought and that fresh fruit and vegetables from the markets are not being bought in the same quantities as they were some time ago. I am assured of this by people who operate in the markets.

The products of our own fruit and vegetable industry are, I believe, the best that could be made available for hospital patients, and they should be supplied rather than the products that are now being purchased by hospitals. I am sorry I did not bring with me a packet to illustrate my point. I could show members a packet of prawns that turned up in one of the canteens run by the State Government. I have it in my room. It was imported from Malaysia. I should like to check to see if any similar products find their way into hospitals. I think the Minister would find that some of his procurement officers are not buying our own local products. Many are buying frozen goods from other countries and I do not believe that that is in our best interest.

I believe that the Redcliffe Hospitals Board should be autonomous, and that there should be more local autonomy in Kilcoy and other places. Local autonomy should be the issue of the day. I do not believe that the Ipswich Hospitals Board should be running all the

hospitals around the district. Wherever possible, local people should be involved with hospital boards. We want a hospital at Wynnum, and if we get it we do not want it run from here in town; we want Wynnum people involved in the running of the hospital in that area. I am sure that the people of Inala would like the same thing. So I will be interested to read the Bill when it becomes available.

Mr. FRAWLEY (Murrumba) (5.46 p.m.): I rise to support this Bill. I am very interested in the Redcliffe Hospital because the western part of Redcliffe is in the electorate of Murrumba. The Redcliffe Hospital serves many people not only in Redcliffe but also in the Shire of Caboolture. The Redcliffe Hospital has a capacity of about 100 beds for ordinary cases, roughly 32 maternity beds and 40 beds for the chronically sick and aged people. It also has a dental clinic.

I was very interested to hear some of the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition about hospitals. When he first entered this Parliament as a back-bencher he used to spend a great deal of time asking questions containing information fed to him by his stooge on the Brisbane Hospitals Board, Alderman Brian Mellifont. I am ashamed to say that Mellifont was once my apprentice. He was an apprentice electrician, but evidently I did not teach him too well. I did not teach him some of the morals he should have learned. The Leader of the Opposition used to stand up here and criticise the previous Minister for Health, and when he found out he was too tough he chickened out and claimed that because his house at Bulimba was robbed he was too much in the lime-light. He even claimed he had 12 suits, but I know he got half of them from St. Vincent De Paul only a week before. He never owned 12 suits in his life—unless he thieved half of them.

We hear members criticise the Health Department. I wonder how many of them have ever had the opportunity of availing themselves of some of the facilities at hospitals in different parts of Queensland. I can speak with a little bit of authority on this subject. Honourable members might not know it, but for 19 years in my capacity as a lift mechanic I visited many hospitals in Brisbane. I used to work on the lifts at the Princess Alexandra Hospital and other hospitals as far away as Glen Innes. In the time I spent at these hospitals I had the opportunity to see the way the food was prepared. I used my eyes; I did not just walk around like an idiot. In the years from 1951 until roughly 1970 I saw nothing but good done in any of those hospitals. Certainly some mistakes were made, but do not forget that, no matter how brilliant are the staff of any institution, they are still subject to human weaknesses and some mistakes are bound to be made.

Honourable members might say that I am fortunate in that no mistakes have been made affecting my family and there have never

been any deaths that I can attribute to negligence in hospitals; but there are bound to be mistakes somewhere along the line, and nobody can help this. This is part of human nature and I like to think that the staff of hospitals are always doing the best they can. If something does go wrong it is an act of God. It is not negligence on the part of the staff, it is just some mistake they have made under pressure.

Getting back to the Redcliffe Hospitals Board—I am very pleased to see that the board is to be granted what might be termed autonomy. It will look after its own accounts. After all, Redcliffe is now building a multi-storey hospital block with all sorts of facilities, such as X-ray units and other equipment. When it was first projected in 1974 it was estimated to cost roughly \$11,000,000, but perhaps it will cost a bit more now.

Mr. Moore: Do you think we should have cottage hospitals?

Mr. FRAWLEY: Cottage hospitals might be a good idea. I would support this concept for some of the small towns in my electorate.

While on the subject of hospital boards—I have always felt it was rather peculiar that the Redcliffe Hospitals Board has on it only one representative of the two local authorities concerned. The present representative of the Redcliffe and Caboolture Councils is Councillor Sheila Wilson, a woman for whom I have a great regard. She is a personal friend of mine. She does a very good job as the representative for both councils on the hospital board, but I think that, now that the Redcliffe Hospital is going to look after its own affairs, it would be reasonable for a city of 40,000 people to have its own council representative on the board. The Government appointee, Mr. Bob Sutherland, is a Redcliffe resident, but I still think that there should be a representative of the Caboolture Shire Council on the Redcliffe Hospitals Board, as there is at present, and also a representative of the Redcliffe City Council. I think this is very important when the hospital—

Mr. Marginson: I've got a city of 65,000.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I don't give a hoot for you or your city; I am interested in mine. That is what I am here for, to look after the interests of my constituents.

Mr. Marginson: Is this when you go around kicking the dogs?

Mr. FRAWLEY: We all know I never kicked the dog, that's a certainty.

I really believe that, with the new responsibility that is to be assumed by the Redcliffe Hospitals Board, each of the two local authorities should have a representative on the board.

As I have said before, the majority of complaints about hospitals that I have had investigated have proved to be groundless.

I can speak with a fairly high degree of satisfaction of the treatment that I have received personally. On the few occasions on which I have been unfortunate enough to be in hospital, both in Queensland and in New Zealand, I have been treated fairly well.

The Minister has a big task ahead of him with the introduction of not only this Bill but also some of the other Bills relating to hospitals and medical services. National Liberal Governments have done much to upgrade hospitals in this State. I remind honourable members that in 1956, when the Labor Party was in power, there were only about 12 maternity beds in the Southport hospital; in fact, it was not really a hospital at all. There are now 450 beds in the Southport hospital, and a new block is either under construction or about to be built. Under Labor, there was not a hospital at Redcliffe.

While I am on my feet, I take the opportunity to congratulate the member for Redcliffe, who is Speaker of this Assembly. From his election in 1960, he worked untiringly until a hospital was erected in Redcliffe, and I should say that the people of Redcliffe should give him a great deal of credit for that. He has been castigated lately in the Redcliffe City Council by all and sundry who have claimed that he has not done anything for Redcliffe. I know for a fact that the honourable gentleman worked very strenuously to get a hospital for Redcliffe. Credit must go to other people, too, but he did a fine job, and I throw the gauntlet down to anyone who challenges him in regard to anything that has occurred in Redcliffe while he has been its representative here.

I congratulate the Minister on introducing the Bill, particularly as it will give the Redcliffe Hospitals Board some autonomy. I sincerely trust that he will show his true calibre when he answers some of the ridiculous statements made by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. KATTER (Flinders) (5.52 p.m.): I do not intend to answer the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition, but I wish to make one comment on country medical services. What I was castigating at the time was a rumour circulating in the Health Department. Although it was at the lower echelons, I was afraid that it might be accepted by the higher echelons. I think that clarifies the point made earlier by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Burns: You were misleading the House.

Mr. KATTER: No, I certainly was not misleading the House. I made my position quite clear.

Mr. Moore interjected.

Mr. KATTER: I do not intend to refer to the story of how the Leader of the Opposition got the mark on his head. Most

people have heard it at this stage, and I imagine that it will reach the Press very shortly.

However, there is one matter about which I wish to say a few words. Earlier in the debate the honourable member for Mourilyan spoke about the need for an increase in geriatric services in the State. That is very badly needed at present. This morning I asked the Minister a question on that subject, and I fully realise that a committee has been set up to consider how to expand geriatric services.

At this stage I should like to put in a very forceful plug for the city of Charters Towers relative to the provision of such services. One of the largest old-people's homes in the State is in existence in Charters Towers, which is an absolutely ideal situation for such a home. Charters Towers was once the largest city in Queensland, with a population of 35,000. Although the city has declined, the old people are still there, and about 30 per cent of the population of Charters Towers are of pensionable age or about pensionable age, which means that it is very much a pensioner society. There are various clubs, groups, club-houses and so on that cater for the pensioners in the town. For example, every Tuesday a large group of old people are taken by bus to the local spot. The youth group runs a record hop there, but on Tuesdays it belongs to the old people in the community. They have a very pleasant morning tea, and when the Minister visits Charters Towers later in the year I shall have great pleasure in taking him to the morning tea that the old people have.

Charters Towers caters for older people in society. The "Eventide" home in Charters Towers has probably the most beautiful grounds that one would see round any building in this State. They are really magnificent and a great credit to the people who run the home and to the Health Department. What I am arguing for, of course, is an extension to the "Eventide" home at Charters Towers to enable it to take more geriatric patients. The extra patients would be housed in the beautiful grounds I have referred to. Many people retire to Charters Towers. Recently 10 of my friends out West retired to Charters Towers. Charters Towers has an ideal climate. There is no need for air-conditioning in the city, because it never gets very hot; nor is there any need for heaters in Charters Towers, because it never gets very cold. That is one reason why people retire to Charters Towers.

Charters Towers remains a city. The population of the city and district is about 12,000. It has absolutely no industrial activity, therefore old people do not have to put up with the noise that is typical of centres of large population. Because Charters Towers is a retirement centre, strong relationships are established in the community. People retire to "Eventide" with their friends in the community. One of the important points I have to make about

Charters Towers is that it is ideally situated geographically. The old people in "Eventide" have relatives who visit them regularly. Charters Towers is only an hour's drive from Townsville, and it lies more or less equidistant from Mackay, Mt. Isa and Cairns.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! We seem to be having more of a travelogue about Charters Towers than a debate about hospital boards. I ask the honourable member to come back to the Bill.

Mr. KATTER: I am sorry if I strayed slightly from the Bill, but we are talking about the setting up of boards throughout Queensland. It is important that when making decisions about the location of facilities such matters as I have been talking about are taken into consideration. The board should have some sort of say in such decisions.

When an administrative structure already exists the cost of putting, say, another 40 beds in Charters Towers would be minimal. There would be no need for another nurses' dining-room or staff room, nor would there be any need for an extra eating-room for the pensioners. There would be no need for extra administrative staff, because the present staff is quite capable of handling another 40 beds. The cost of additional buildings at such a centre would be minimal. If a new building were erected in another centre there would be the initial cost of land. Land purchased in a city costs a great deal of money, and when such a building is erected in an area it depresses land values in the vicinity.

I strongly urge the Minister to consider Charters Towers very seriously when he is making his decision. I feel very strongly that no other site could possibly be considered ahead of Charters Towers.

I conclude with a mention of Medibank. I was adamantly opposed to the introduction of Medibank and probably would be one of the strongest hard-liners in the Chamber on the issue. The way it has worked out, doctors in country centres can now make a lot more money than they were making before. I am now finding it increasingly easy to obtain doctors for country areas.

The set-up of Dr. Harvey Sutton was mentioned earlier in the debate. He is truly one of the great sons Queensland has produced. His Flying Doctor service to outlying areas has been made possible only by the bulk-billing system of Medibank. I must now stand as an adamant opponent to anyone who wants to remove the bulk-billing system from Queensland. It would mean the denying of all Dr. Harvey Sutton's doctors to centres now serviced by them. I refer to places like Normanton, which never had a doctor service before. On that note I conclude and thank the Committee for its time.

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

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (7.15 p.m.): In introducing the measure the Minister said that it was not contentious. While that is strictly true if we keep to the specific amendments outlined by the Minister, I do not think it is true of hospital boards in general throughout the State. As many honourable members have demonstrated clearly, the problems confronted by, and associated with, hospital boards are many and varied and are very contentious in the eyes of the public.

This evening I have heard many words of praise of the boards, and their activities, and individual members. I concur with those words. My feelings for the members of the hospital board of the Rockhampton Base Hospital are similar. When I think specifically of the work they have done, I am sure that they are very progressive. In recent years they have implemented many major changes. If we consider only the expenditure on buildings, we realise how active they have been. I think of the renal unit that was established. Without doubt it is the best in Queensland, if not the best in Australia. The activities of the board in trying to overcome administrative problems is to be commended. We had problems with the outpatient section, with people arriving at 8 o'clock in the morning and having to wait three or four hours for attention. I am pleased to say that the experiments that were conducted were successful, although not completely. However, I do not expect complete success: when we are dealing with human beings we should look for human error. I find myself agreeing with the honourable member for Murrumbidgee that we have to respect this problem.

Mr. Frawley: Let me put a big mark on the wall.

Mr. WRIGHT: When I find myself agreeing with the honourable member, I realise that I will probably have some sort of nightmare later.

There will always be problems, mostly centring on lack of money. It comes down to a fiscal question. While I accept that, I believe that many problems centre on lack of communication, red tape or misunderstanding between boards, in various areas and the central administration. I have heard of numerous recommendations by the Rockhampton Base Hospital on important projects—projects that the board saw as vital—which were delayed or rejected. A typical example concerns ward 5D, the psychiatric unit at the Base Hospital. On going there I cannot help being repelled by the drab, dungeon-like conditions. They are like those of the 19th Century. That has been said not by lay people like me, but by professionals. It has been stated in all sorts of reports and studies carried out by the Capricorn Institute of Advanced Education, by psychiatrists in the area and by members of the board, yet nothing has been done. I wonder why.

I realise that there has been tremendous Government expenditure in my area. What is required is of the utmost importance. If we are to be involved in mental care and psychiatric services, surely the facilities we use must be adaptable to such care. I do not believe that that is so. The conditions are unbecoming to the medical and nursing professions. They are unfit for the purpose. While I realise that a sterling effort has been made by the doctors and nursing staff, I cannot get away from the overall image gained by walking up the stairs into that drab, dungeon-like place.

We must realise that this is a very important problem in the community. While I accept the multi-purpose approach used in this ward in the treatment of alcoholics and psychiatric patients, the environment does not help in the treatment or care of such patients. It has become a place of scorn and derision and it will continue to be such until something is done. It is probably the most pressing need that we have. The areas are restrictive and inadequate for nursing care. I wonder how the administrators who use the 8 ft. x 8 ft. office—I am not exaggerating when I describe it as such—administer the area in question. This is a matter of great importance and I raise it in the hope that the Minister will make note of it, listen to the pleas of the Rockhampton Hospital Board and give the matter due priority. It is not just for the people of Rockhampton; it is for the whole of Central Queensland.

We need to have a completely separate psychiatric unit, not just a remodelling or upgrading of what we have. That view has been put forward by a well-known psychiatrist in the area, and I completely agree with him. We need proper nursing facilities. We need up-to-date counselling facilities. We need a modern administration area. I do not think the unit can be provided by squashing it into the present base hospital complex. What we need is a completely separate unit.

On the matter of accommodation, I was interested in the point raised by the honourable member for Flinders. He spoke about the difficulties he is having with the "Eventide" situation in the Charters Towers area. I stress the important part of "Eventide" work, that is, care of the infirm. At the moment there are arrangements with the base hospital that those people who can no longer be cared for within the hospital are sent to "Eventide". However, in the last week I have been told that the waiting time for a woman to get into the intensive care area of "Eventide" is now between one and two years. For males, it is between three and four months. There is no way to describe this other than to say it is totally overtaxed.

I wonder what is being done about it. The board is concerned. The manager at "Eventide" is concerned, and he has done his utmost. He has used every administrative

technique of shifting people round and changing the various categories within the home to try to cope with the problem, but he cannot do so. He is unable to meet this very, very important need. This is an important facet—one that is confronting not just my area but the whole State. We need more intensive-care facilities. In Rockhampton we need a brand new "Eventide", not just an extension of the present one. We need a totally new complex.

In the meantime—I realise that this is a long-term project—let us start using the facilities that are available. There is a lot of talk about Mt. Morgan and what we are going to do there. I wonder why we cannot use the Mt. Morgan Hospital as a centre to care for the aged and the infirm. Why not use some of the smaller hospitals that have spare beds? Surely these things could be looked at. We are dealing with people—people who have a need.

It is no use saying to a person who needs intensive care, "Look, you go home and stay with your relatives, because in three or four months or, if you are a woman, in one or two years 'Eventide' will look after you." It is not good enough. We cannot depend on the private institutions. The St. Vincent de Paul people and the Bethany Home in Rockhampton have done a marvellous job, but they cannot cope with the demand. Obviously, it comes back to the Government. This is right in the Minister's corner. He is a man who understands the problems. I believe he realises that the demand is outstripping the supply in this field.

Too much emphasis has been placed on ordinary accommodation for the aged. Tremendous grants—4 to 1 grants—were given by the previous Federal Government to provide accommodation for the aged. We had our units; we had motel-type accommodation; we had the cluster-home concept; but I think we have overlooked the problem of intensive care, and it is time we began to look very carefully at it.

Mr. McKechnie: In regard to this 4 to 1, do you know that the Blue Nurses can't get any money because the previous Government offered two years' money in one year?

Mr. Wright: I do not know the honourable member's problem, but I know that many institutions and charitable groups and churches were very pleased with the 4 to 1 subsidies that they received from the previous Government.

I know that the boards face many problems. One problem in my area is that of attracting an ophthalmologist. It is not just a problem of the board, and I do not think it is a problem of the Government, because when we are looking for a specialist the personnel have to be available. However, I ask the Minister to keep this in mind, because it is now something like six years since the first advertisements were placed by the board.

While this may be beyond the control of the Minister—we are waiting for personnel to become available—it is certainly not true of the spectacle supply service that is available at the base hospital. If ever I have come across a racket, it surely exists at the base hospital with the Trevor Henderson service, if that is what he wants to call it. It would be the most shocking service I have ever seen. Mr. Row, you wouldn't believe the things that take place there. Pensioners go along and, without being told exactly—

Mr. Moore: You're getting into the Labor Party.

Mr. WRIGHT: I'm getting into the Liberal Party.

Trevor Henderson seems to have the thing tied up. He gets old folk there. I know that on most occasions there is a notice explaining to people what their rights are; but before long they receive a C.O.D. account for \$50 or \$60 for a pair of spectacles. I am told that the actual glasses are supposed to be free but that the frames have to be paid for. What is going on is totally wrong.

It is totally wrong also that bifocal glasses are not available in our State hospitals. It is wrong that Trevor Henderson has control over these hospitals and, in particular, the Rockhampton Base Hospital, because I am told by the honourable member for Mackay that this is not so in Mackay, and Bundaberg has either fought the situation or is fighting it and has been able to get the private optometrists in the area to take over this service.

Surely no Government should sit back and see pensioners robbed by Trevor Henderson and his cohorts, as they have been. It is time something was done about it. The quickest way to do it is to compete with him. Instead of providing two pairs of glasses free and, if the person wants special frames, making him pay Trevor Henderson, the quality of the frames provided should be upgraded. People prefer more modern frames to the old steel-rim spectacles. I know that some of the frames supplied are acceptable, but people prefer those being supplied by the private optometrist.

Mr. Moore: What is wrong with a few wire wheels around the place?

Mr. WRIGHT: I do not blame the honourable member for saying that, because after all he is the fellow who said that women should be out under the clothes line with a mouth full of pegs. His statement does not amaze me. I know his attitude towards old folk, too.

Most honourable members would agree with me that these people deserve a better deal. I return to the main point about bifocals. If a real service is to be given to these people, surely bifocals must be made available. How many pensioners really need two pairs of glasses if bifocals will do?

These are the problems that I raise with the Minister. I hope that he will take some cognisance of them because they are very real. Of all the problems I have raised, I ask him simply to get to work on the psychiatric unit and make ward 5D one of his projects for 1976.

Hon. L. R. EDWARDS (Ipswich—Minister for Health) (7.27 p.m.), in reply: I thank honourable members for their contributions to the debate on the Bill to amend the Hospitals Act. The proposals have obviously created a great deal of interest and I am very pleased that most honourable members have supported them.

I have a few comments to make on what has been said during the debate. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition (the honourable member for Nudgee) mentioned Medibank and the cost of operation of the hospitals system. The Mater Hospital is in full co-operation with us on this particular project. It is now really part of our public hospitals system. We have made full arrangements with the Mater Hospital regarding funding. I do not think it is understood clearly that the Queensland Government funds the total operation of the Mater Public Hospital. We do this up to the cost of our public beds in the metropolitan area. The cost, if I recall it correctly, is something like \$9,000,000 a year. We believe that the Mater Hospital plays a very important role in the provision of public hospital services throughout the State and certainly in the Brisbane area.

The honourable member also mentioned pecuniary interest. This may be a problem. This is in line with what is occurring in all departments and certainly has been the practice in local government for a long time. We are satisfied that there are other provisions in the Hospitals Act and in other Acts to ensure that any dangers can be watched very closely.

The honourable member for Wavell raised the problems that he thought were associated with hospital boards. While I respect his sentiments, I cannot agree with what he said.

He said that there should be a lot more autonomy in local hospital boards. Each hospital board prepares its own budget and has autonomy in this regard. The budgets are then forwarded to the department for consideration and approval. This must continue because it gives us an over-all look at the co-operation that can exist between the boards and the Health Department. This has been the system that has worked very well over a long period.

The Special Purposes Fund is something that will be set up under the Bill and I am sure that he will be satisfied with the conditions that it lays down.

He mentioned Medibank and said that he felt that the Mater money was associated with private and intermediate beds. The

private and intermediate beds at the Mater Hospital are totally paid for by the Mater Hospital. They are not paid for in any way by the Queensland Government. We do not contribute at all towards the private and intermediate sections of the Mater Hospital. They look after themselves and they do it very well.

I should also like to add that the Government does assist private enterprise in the hospital system. For some years there has been a scheme under which interest payments of charitable and religious organisations have been met by the Government. We have, of course, seen advantage taken of this scheme in a number of cases.

The honourable member for Wavell also mentioned the problem of medical advice on hospitals boards. I want to make it quite clear that it is the policy of the Government to include, where possible, a medical man on each hospitals board. However, that is not always possible. Attached to every major hospitals board is a medical advisory committee and advice concerning various situations is invited from such committees as well as from medical practitioners and visiting specialist groups. At the Royal Brisbane and Princess Alexandra Hospitals, these committees work very well. In addition, there are within the department various advisory boards. Certain proposals are submitted to them and their expert advice can be obtained and passed on to the boards.

The honourable member for Mackay referred to the problems facing the Sarina Hospitals Board. The local member (the Minister for Tourism and Marine Services) raised this matter with me while I was in that area, as the honourable member for Mackay would know. This is a problem that has been in existence for a long period. However, we feel strongly that cutting up the Mackay Hospitals Board and creating an additional board would cause great problems. We are hopeful that the differences that exist at present will be sorted out.

I am well aware of the problems presented by the buildings at the Mackay Hospital. I make it clear, however, that hospital buildings do not necessarily make a hospital. It is the people who work within a hospital and the way in which patients are cared for that determine the standard of a hospital. When I visited the Mackay Hospital, I was most impressed by the way in which the hospital is kept. The hospital is old but I assure the honourable member that planning of a new department is well under way.

Mr. Casey: You must admit that the staff do a good job.

Dr. EDWARDS: Certainly. I agree that the staff does an outstanding job. I am sure the honourable member will be very pleased when the announcement concerning the new complex is made.

Mr. Casey: When?

Dr. EDWARDS: The honourable member will be informed in due course.

The honourable member for Somerset mentioned a matter that was referred to by many speakers. I refer to geriatric patients, in country hospitals especially. As I have travelled around the State—I think I have visited about 80 or the 130 or so hospitals in Queensland—I have been most impressed by the care given to the older patients.

I also want to make it quite clear that the previous Federal Government failed in its responsibility in the care of aged people. While that Government made promises right, left and centre, it did very little. The honourable member for Carnarvon mentioned the situation at Stanthorpe. The Federal Government promised there almost \$1,000,000. There were other instances of promises throughout the State which were not honoured because of the Government's financial problems. Although subsidies may have been increased on one hand, they were taken away on the other. Many of the private nursing homes that were making such a contribution to the care of the aged have now had to go out of business and the buildings have been sold for motels. The Government appreciates the situation, and we have set up a committee to consider the whole State and to determine priorities for the development of geriatric complexes.

The honourable member for Mourilyan mentioned, very wisely and timely, retiring members of hospitals boards throughout the State. I, too, just as she has done, pay a tribute to those who have made a tremendous contribution as board members. I know that some of the members of her particular board—from memory, three—will be retiring. Those people played a splendid role. I think it could well be placed on record that the extensions to the Atherton Hospital will remain a long-term tribute to what they have done. I can assure her that, when the extensions are opened, their work will be recognised and they will certainly be invited.

The honourable member also referred to the future of the Herberton Hospital. I pay a tribute to the very wonderful way in which the honourable member has played her role as the local member in meeting this problem. The problem she has had to cope with has not been an easy one. Decisions were made to close the hospital a long time before she became the local member and she has had to face up to the situation. As the Minister, and one who has visited the area, I appreciate her tremendous support and the way in which she has gone about dealing with this problem. I assure her that the Government will continue to give the people of Herberton the service that they require. I also assure her that when a new building is erected it will be an outpatient casualty type of arrangement and she will have her X-ray plant, so it will be possible to X-ray children's arms there. As I indicated to the honourable member, the geriatric problem is one of the things

we are looking at for the area and we hope to be able to make an announcement on it in the very near future. But I do pay tribute to the way in which the honourable member for Mourilyan has played a tremendous role in sorting out this problem and I am sure the people of that area will appreciate her efforts on this for a long time.

The honourable member for Wolston spoke as one who has had a long period in hospital administration and we appreciate what he had to say regarding hospital boards. His tribute to the staff was much appreciated.

The honourable member for Albert, with his experience as a member of a hospital board, spoke in favour of the Bill. Some of the things he said were certainly appreciated, and the matter of the laundry chute will be looked into because I know it has been a very controversial issue in that area. As was proper when discussing amendments to the Hospitals Act, he paid a tribute to the boards and the need for communication and co-operation with them. We are hopeful that this will continue in the case of Southport as it has done for many years.

The honourable member for Merthyr mentioned the Royal Brisbane Hospital and the Mater extensions. I am sure I need not comment on those points as they are not particularly relevant to the Bill.

Of course, the Leader of the Opposition again made his loud-mouthed outspoken comments, said very little but made a lot of noise. Bringing up a criticism of the Queensland hospital service by flashing before the Committee a statement that three elderly people had died in a geriatric hospital was an indication of his poor service to our hospital services. I think it should be made quite clear that this particular epidemic affected the whole of the hospital. These things can occur in cafes, restaurants, hospitals and even in one's own home. If the Leader of the Opposition has never suffered from food poisoning, I have. Of course, the danger to elderly people is far greater and the risk of old people dying at any time is something of which we are very much aware. We made it quite clear to the Leader of the Opposition that we were not going to sweep it under the carpet. We made this statement quite publicly, and we stand by it: we took steps immediately we found out the cause of the epidemic. We regret that it happened, but it is one of those things.

Mr. Burns: You would have been stupid if you didn't.

Dr. EDWARDS: The Leader of the Opposition certainly did not help by saying what he did. Of course, the people who lost loved ones have suffered a great deal. We feel very sad about it, but these are elderly folk who can suffer very easily from this kind of thing and the chance of death from any kind of illness such as this is far greater than would face us if we had it.

The Leader of the Opposition also made statements, as usual, about equipment throughout the State. I have never heard such rubbish in all my life. As I said, I have visited about 80 hospitals and I have not been told that the Leader of the Opposition visited many of them in his trips around the State. When I have spoken to hospital boards I have always asked, "What is the situation regarding equipment?" The Leader of the Opposition is the only member who has raised this issue, yet other members who spend their time in the country and who visit the hospitals in their electorates know very well that the equipment situation in hospitals throughout the State is good. The honourable member for Rockhampton would know very well that there are no problems with equipment at the Rockhampton Hospital and that it has been furnished with equipment which is equal to the best in the world. I want to make it quite clear that equipment is not a problem in any of our hospitals. I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to present to me a list of hospitals throughout the State in which he says there is a lack of equipment. I would be only too pleased to wait for him to table such a list.

The Leader of the Opposition also referred to the wait for X-rays. Again, it is interesting that he always jumps on the band wagon. They call him "half-cocked Tom". He made a statement about X-rays but, of course, he does not know the facts. We are well aware of the problems that exist in our X-ray department and they are all because of the previous Labor Government's legislation. Section 18 of the Hospitals Act is the cause of all our troubles. When I have gone to see Mr. Hayden he has continually refused to do anything about it. It is a problem we have had for a long time. Nobody need be delayed in having an X-ray taken. There is a delay in the receipt of the reports. I have never denied this. I do not hide things as the Leader of the Opposition tends to, or tell half-truths. But I want to make it quite clear that tomorrow morning I will circulate his speech throughout my department and make quite certain that it is made clear that he called these people "Health Department clots". I hope that this will be remembered for a long, long time. Next thing it will be the Department of Primary Industries and the Premier's Department. The respect that the Leader of the Opposition has for the men and women in the Public Service leaves me absolutely amazed. His calling public servants clots is clearly indicative of his interest in people, and I believe that he should be absolutely ashamed of himself. I will take every opportunity to remind the people of Queensland that he has called men and women who give dedicated service—public servants, who have no right of reply—"clots". I will remind them that the biggest clot in this Chamber—

Mr. BURNS: I rise to a point of order. I said the department is a clot in the blood

system of the hospitals. If he checks the "Hansard" pulls tomorrow, I think he will find he has been misleading the Committee again.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! I do not think there is any point of order. The honourable member has admitted using the word "clot".

Dr. EDWARDS: It is obvious that the honourable member is very sensitive about what he calls the public servants. I hope they always remember it. Shame on him, the alternative Premier of this State; and it will be shame on the people of Queensland if they ever elect as Premier a man with a reputation such as his and one who has said this about public servants in this State.

The honourable gentleman referred also to specialist services in Toowoomba. He again flashed a piece of paper and said, "Look, services in this State are being destroyed by the Toowoomba situation."

Mr. Burns interjected.

Dr. EDWARDS: The honourable member did say that. Let me tell the whole story, as I said earlier I would. The situation is quite clear. That was a headline in the newspaper at the time when we were having difficulty sorting out the specialist contract with the Toowoomba specialists and other specialists in this State. But I interviewed the doctors and we had discussions, and my departmental officers, the doctors and the A.M.A. met on a number of occasions. As a result, a working party was set up and we were able to agree on conditions and change the whole situation. As a result of the determination of the "clots", as the honourable member called them—people whom I respect in my department—we were able to reach a situation where over 90 per cent of the specialists throughout the State have signed a contract and come into the hospital service, quite satisfied with the conditions. That situation did not exist before.

Again, this is indicative of the honourable member's attitude. He does not mention the 12,000 people who are in our hospitals day after day, the people who write to me thanking the nurses and the doctors for the work that is being done. He does not speak about that. Instead he stands up in this Chamber and blasts off with half truths, when he knows very well that he is defaming people who have given dedicated service to the hospital system throughout the State. If the honourable member is not proud of the hospital services, I am certainly very proud of the people in the hospitals—the nurses and doctors. The honourable member for Wolston is aware of attacks on the staff of institutions in his area at present. He is a man who respects the people who work in the State hospitals, and he will stand up for the work of the nurses at Wolston Park. I am sure he will be the first to agree with me.

The honourable member referred to frozen services. I have announced on a number of occasions that the Government has pledged itself to develop the frozen services system, and a full statement on this will be made in due course as the system is developed. It is already under trial, as the honourable member indicated, and it has been tried at Wynnum. We know that it is working very well.

The honourable member for Murrumba commended the separation of the Redcliffe Hospitals Board, and, as the Bill indicates, it is intended to put that into effect.

I appreciate the comments made by the honourable member for Flinders about geriatric hospitals. I have mentioned already that the department will look into that as soon as possible.

I also appreciate the comments made by the honourable member for Rockhampton. They are indicative of the interest he has shown in the hospital unit because of his own family problems. The honourable member knows that, with the equipment provided, the renal unit at the Rockhampton Hospital is one of the best in Australia. I know that he will support me when I say that there is nothing lacking in that particular unit.

The building programme is a financial problem, and I make no apology for saying that. The honourable member knows as well as I do that plans are well under way to develop a building programme for the medical wards, which, of course, will overcome the problems in the psychiatric wards. I am not prepared to recommend that we half build one section in order to overcome an immediate problem, when by waiting a little longer a better long-term result will be achieved.

I also remind the honourable member that there is a community health centre in Rockhampton, and he is well aware of the tremendous community support that that centre is giving to particular units.

The position of ophthalmologist has been advertised. Although there has been difficulty with that position, I am hopeful that an appointment will be announced within the next few days.

Mr. Wright: What about Trevor Henderson?

Dr. EDWARDS: Trevor Henderson is a long-term problem, as the honourable member indicated. He has a contract at present and the department is looking into it. Of course, under Medibank, those who are not satisfied can receive optometrical treatment. Therefore, one wonders whether the department should continue optometrical services and the provision of spectacles when such services are available under the Medibank programme. This is one of the things we are looking at at the moment. I assure the honourable member that I shall let him know in due course about the matter.

Despite the small amount of comment on the Bill, obviously the debate has given an opportunity to air many hospital problems. I thank honourable members for their contribution.

Motion (Dr. Edwards) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

Bill presented and, on motion of Dr. Edwards, read a first time.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

(Mr. Row, Hinchinbrook, in the chair)

Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah—Premier) (7.48 p.m.): I move—

“That a Bill be introduced to amend the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1974 in a certain particular.”

This is a relatively simple Bill and makes one minor alteration to the principal Act by altering the existing provision for the retiring age of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations.

It will provide that the present incumbent and any future commissioner shall vacate that office on attaining the age of 67 years or, with the approval of the Governor in Council, be continued in office to any time past that date but not exceeding attainment of the age of 70 years.

When the original legislation was introduced in 1974 it established a new area of Crown service, a concept based on the Ombudsman philosophy, which has also attracted the support of all States and the Commonwealth.

In the brief period since its commencement of operations on 1 October 1974, the office of the Queensland Commissioner for Administrative Investigations has established a sound programme to implement the responsibilities with which it is charged. Its activities have attracted the interest and attention of other ombudsman offices around the world, and the Queensland commissioner has recently received official visits from his New Zealand and Ontario (Canada) counterparts.

When the present incumbent, Mr. D. W. Longland, was appointed Queensland's first such commissioner from 1 October 1974, he brought to the post a comprehensive knowledge of public administration, which was acquired over a lengthy and distinguished career in high and responsible offices of the Public Service.

In the short period of some 20 months which has since elapsed Mr. Longland has not only established the structure and work programme of the office, but has succeeded in having its efficiency and availability recognised by the community at large—the people

it was designed to serve. The people have shown appreciation of Mr. Longland's efforts, and I personally pay tribute to him.

While much has been done, it is considered that some further period of initial settling-down operations and experience is necessary before Mr. Longland should hand over to a suitable successor. The personal image that he has presented of a mature person ensuring complete impartiality in an atmosphere of absolute confidentiality has developed the trust of all who have approached him.

It is considered that the future of the office will be considerably enhanced if he is in a position to further confirm that impression and status in the eyes of those who wish to approach the Parliamentary Commissioner on matters coming within his official ambit.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! I remind honourable members that they will not enter the Chamber without paying due recognition to the Chair.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I might add that there are ample precedents for extensions of service in positions outside the Public Service Act in this State—for example, judicial and semi-judicial appointments—and Mr. Longland's New Zealand counterpart has had his term of service extended by the New Zealand Government to a retirement age of 72 years.

Summed up, therefore, the Bill will allow the services of a most competent official to be continued for a further period until the hitherto unique and important public facility provided by him and his officers has become a completely viable and firmly established structure in the pattern of Queensland's community life.

I pay tribute to Mr. Longland and his officers on the work he has done, and commend the Bill to the Committee.

Mr. Houston: There is no age limit at all?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: It is 70.

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (7.52 p.m.): The Bill affords us an opportunity to review the operations of the Ombudsman. I am disappointed that, at this stage, we are looking only at the age at which the commissioner retires. After a period which could be regarded as an experiment, we should be looking at means of broadening the avenue of participation between Parliament and the people. The Act contains a number of weaknesses that we could have considered again at this stage. This is an extract from the Premier's speech at the introductory stage as recorded in “Hansard” No. 264 for the year 1973-74—

“The aim was to draw on the best features of each country's experience.

"I feel that it can be justly claimed that the legislation now before the Committee is a model of its kind . . .

". . . others saw the institution as a political gimmick to fob off critics of the Government . . ."

I do not think that our legislation is model legislation. I believe that our Ombudsman, in many ways, is purely a public relations gimmick to fob off critics of the Government. I believe that the Ombudsman himself saw it somewhat that way in view of a speech he made to the Queensland Justices Association seminar on 16 November 1974, when he said—

"The presence of the Ombudsman has psychological value. This office gives the citizen confidence that there exists a watchdog for the people that will hold the administrator accountable."

I find that the people do not have that confidence in the position. When I talk about the Ombudsman and the powers that he has under the Act, I make no personal reference to Mr. Longland.

On looking at the Act we see a number of limitations and restrictions on investigation built into it. In retrospect, looking at the debates of that time, I realise that the Government made a number of mistakes by allowing the Act to have so many restrictions built into it. For example, section 12 spells out all the fields of possible investigation, and the schedule, in both Part I and II, lists the Government departments and authorities which may be the subject of investigation. This looks a very impressive list, but Queensland (under section 4), and South Australia (I think under section 3) have the distinction of being the only States in the Commonwealth that are able to remove an authority from the field of investigation by Executive proclamation. In other words, if the Ombudsman is starting to touch on something that the Government does not want him to touch, it can, by Executive proclamation, remove his right or authority to make an investigation.

Another unfortunate provision for the citizens of the State is the mandatory exclusion of many judicial officers, such as some tribunals, legal counsel to the Crown, the Auditor-General and trustees generally. These fields relate to huge areas of public administration in which the Ombudsman should be sorting out and settling grievances caused by administration, red tape, inefficiency, mistake, abuse of power and, in some cases, dishonesty. There are areas such as those listed in the schedule to the Act that affect citizens. For example, there are areas such as the huge insurance bureaucracies and the S.G.I.O.

I have received letters, as I am sure the Premier and the Deputy Premier have, from the Women's Action Group in relation to the S.G.I.O. and complaints they have about workers' compensation. In his letter, the

Parliamentary Commissioner says that he does not really have power to deal with their complaints. In the letter he stated that he sought information on their behalf. For five pages in the letter—and I have a copy here for anyone who wishes to read it—he sets out step by step the answers to their complaints. He told them then that he had made arrangements for them to contact the manager of the S.G.I.O. They went there. He said he would answer their complaints—and he answered them in exactly the same words as the Ombudsman; word for word, paragraph for paragraph. They were far from satisfied, and I do not blame them. I believe they expected and deserved something different from the Ombudsman—not just the answers that the department had provided.

What chance has the little man got against the insurance bureaucracies of the State? The regulations providing for our Insurance Commissioner put him in a position where, in many ways, he becomes a spokesman for the insurance companies. If anyone writes to him, he asks the insurance companies for an explanation. He then sends the explanation to the inquirer. I can remember reading in "Time" and other magazines that the insurance commissioners who are appointed in American States take action on behalf of the citizen who feels aggrieved.

How many complaints do we receive from people who are aggrieved about actions of insurance companies—about policies that they believe covered their homes but suddenly found did not cover at them all? We should be extending the authority of the Ombudsman in some of these areas to help our citizens receive answers to their complaints.

What about the big public undertakings—the T.A.B., for example? What does a person do if he has a complaint about the T.A.B.? If he writes to the Treasurer, the Treasurer says, "The T.A.B. is an autonomous body. I will send your complaint on to the board." The board sends back an answer, and that is the end of that. If the person does not like the answer, there is nothing he can do. The same applies to the media and the stock exchange. I am not suggesting that there should be an Ombudsman for each area, but I am suggesting that we should be considering an expansion of the areas covered by the Ombudsman and not just confining ourselves to an argument about what age he should retire at, or about keeping him on for another couple of years. That is not facing up to the question at all.

The Ombudsman himself suggests that everything is not as rosy as we picture it. On page 6 of his report—and I hope all honourable members have read that—he talks of the problems of administration. He speaks about his staff, and calls it a very small staff. If we consider the area of our State and its population, a staff of 13 is a

very, very small staff to cope with the job we have given them, if the Ombudsman is to be the man to handle the complaints from all of our citizens.

Why don't we have a woman investigator on the staff? We have a couple of investigators. Why is there no woman? No-one can tell me that we do not have a female trained in law and with the ability to carry out investigations. Why is there not one woman investigator on the staff?

The Act lacks teeth. It in fact shows that the Ombudsman is responsible to the Premier and not to Parliament. It is not a personal criticism, but the Act very clearly says that the Ombudsman cannot compel an alteration to a situation of injustice, as a judge may in civil hearings. He can only exercise persuasive power. He has no direct action over administrative bodies. He sends a report of his opinion and recommendation to the department or the Minister, and he sets out the steps to be taken to alter the aggrieved situation. If he is not satisfied with the implementation of his recommendation, he may then send the report, with the department's comments, to the Premier. What happens there? At that juncture nothing compels the Premier to act on that matter. Even if a writ of mandamus is taken out it cannot be enforced. The Premier cannot even be forced to lay the report before the Parliament. The Premier can choose to ignore the matter if he wishes. I suggest that perhaps we made a mistake when we called him "Parliamentary Commissioner". Maybe we should have called him "Premier's Commissioner".

We say that we gave this man some power. We hold the position up and we say, "He is the man to whom we have given the power to do certain things, to act independently on your behalf." Yet we override him! The Queensland Ombudsman was overridden, and I am sure honourable members will remember the headlines in "The Courier-Mail" of 24 January 1975. The article said—

"The Queensland Government has overridden an investigation by the State Ombudsman in allowing mining at the Mt. Etna area near Rockhampton."

Do not argue whether mining at Mt. Etna is right or wrong; argue the fact that the Ombudsman has considered the complaint and visited the area and that before he finished writing his conclusion, we made a decision on it. I do not think public confidence can be built into the situation by acting like that. The Ombudsman is reported in the Brisbane, Rockhampton and Mt. Isa Press as saying just that.

I think also that there cannot be any great faith in the Act when the Attorney-General is given the power to withdraw matters. Again, only Queensland and South Australia provide for the Attorney-General to withdraw a matter where the Ombudsman

could jeopardise security or the detection of offences. None of the other States make this provision or hamstring the Ombudsman in this way.

President Nixon would have been able to get away from the inquiry in his own country if he could have implemented such a law. If there is a case for prosecution and it can be proved by the Ombudsman, there is good reason for him to pursue it and report to Parliament, and let the Government of the day send it to the Crown Law Office and the courts. It is a denial of justice to allow the Attorney-General to take away the right of the citizens' Ombudsman.

Remembering the Watergate case, it is time we questioned the idea of ministerial immunity. I am not suggesting that we have any problems in that regard on our ministerial benches but if Mr. Nixon, in his day, had been able to say that he was immune from any type of investigation, he could have told the hearing in America at that time that it could not investigate him. In those circumstances the Watergate inquiry would never have reached the conclusion it did. I do not believe that we need to have that.

Mr. Lindsay: Those in China still don't believe it.

Mr. BURNS: That is up to the Communists in China.

We are talking about an Act of our Parliament and we are trying to convince the people of Queensland that we have implemented an Act which gives them the opportunity to go to the Ombudsman as the final arbiter.

If after going to see their member of Parliament or local minister or anybody else and putting their case to him they still feel that they have not received justice, we say they can go to the Ombudsman. Then we weaken the Ombudsman's authority all the way along the line with a number of exclusions and conditions in the Act that restrict his ability to operate. That is not what it is all about.

In France the *Droit Administratif* has always subjected its Cabinet to the scrutiny of the court, yet in Queensland we do not. Why not?

The Ombudsman is told that he cannot hear a case if the person has the right of appeal to a tribunal. That is wrong, because some of the tribunals might be right out of the financial reach of the individual. I may have the right to go to the Supreme Court or the High Court of Australia, but if I cannot finance such an appeal, does that mean that the Ombudsman should say, "I am sorry, my friend. You have not exhausted all your legal rights under the laws of the land and for that reason alone I cannot hear your case."? That is an unreasonable exclusion. It is true that I have a right to go there, but if it is financially beyond me because I am poor, I do not get justice. That is wrong.

There is another provision in relation to the Ombudsman's power of investigation. It should be noted that only in Queensland and in Western Australia is he required to give 48 hours' notice in writing before entering the premises occupied or used by any Government department or authority to which the Act applies. If we are suggesting that somebody has done something completely wrong and we write and tell him that some-one is going down in 48 hours' time to investigate his books, aren't we being a little naive in thinking that nothing will be done to those books; that nothing will be changed within 48 hours? After 48 hours the investigator would turn up and this "honest" crook would be sitting there with his books and would say, "I wouldn't cook the books in 48 hours. I would not do that sort of thing." It is a perfect tip-off for an unscrupulous person. It is an escape clause for him.

Finally, I come to one of the most important exclusions. I have no doubt that it was carefully drafted when the Act was framed. However, exclusion, under section 12 (4), of investigations by the Ombudsman of actions of the Queensland Police Force and Queensland police officers was a grave mistake.

Mr. Houston: We opposed it.

Mr. BURNS: As the honourable member for Bulimba says, we opposed it. I believe that it is important to find some way of settling the problems that we have in the Police Force today. There has to be some independent body that both policemen and the public will respect and will be prepared to approach. I thought that the creation of an Ombudsman might have been the answer. I remember watching and listening to the Ombudsman from Canada who was here meeting our Ombudsman a couple of months ago explaining on television how he set up a system in Canada which, he said, was acceptable to the Canadian police and the public and was working successfully. When amending this Act, it seems that we should have been looking to extending the area of influence of the Ombudsman to include the police.

Michael Tait, lecturer-in-law at the University of Tasmania, in an article in *Australian Current Law* of August 1974 said that this exclusion is very rare to Ombudsmen Acts. The Canadian Act of 1972 provided that complaints regarding the police be included in the matters capable of being investigated by the Ombudsmen. The Nebraska Statute, the Public Council Act of 1969, does not exclude the police. Even with all the troubles in Northern Ireland, their Commission for Complaints Act of 1969, in its schedule 2, sets out matters not subject to investigation, but it does not exclude the police.

There is no exclusion of the police in Nova Scotia, Quebec or India in the Lokpal and other Acts there. In Israel the police are covered by the Ombudsmen. In Western Australia the Parliamentary Commissioner

does not have the police excluded from his jurisdiction. In fact, in all the Australian States Queensland enjoys what could be, I believe, a unique disadvantage rather than an advantage. The only Act that ours seems to be in line with is the Constitution of Fiji Act of 1970. Even Ghana in 1969, and Guyana in 1966, allowed the Ombudsman to investigate these complaints.

I think giving the Ombudsman this power might be the answer to some of today's problems, because we need a Police Force that we can respect. There are so many good policemen that there should be some means by which their names can be quickly cleared if they are the subject of a complaint of some sort. It always worries me how complaints about the police should be handled, and I think the Ombudsman might be just the person to deal with them. I could give even more places in which the Ombudsman has this power. I sought this information in the library and I found this country after country and State after State that allows the Ombudsman to investigate complaints against the police. Queensland and Fiji are the two places that I could find in which this is not allowed. I wonder why?

Let us now look at some relevant statistics. In the annual report of the Swedish Parliamentary Ombudsman for 1971 there is a summary in English which shows on page 542 that the number of complaints investigated and completed against police were 458 out of a total of 2,893. The report of the Finnish Parliament states that 103 complaints out of 879 were against police. The Queensland Ombudsman reported that he had received 29, even though he had no jurisdiction, of a total of 457. The percentage of complaints against police in Queensland is probably only 6 per cent, which is less than the percentage in some other places.

After the 1972 election it will be remembered that the Minister for Justice said in the Press, "The right of inquiry will include all Government departments, not only the police." That was very clearly stated as part of the Government's policy at that time. I believe it is important that we do something about improving and extending this Act to cover the areas that are not covered today. There are so many people today who feel disadvantaged. The world is becoming so large and insurance companies, corporate affairs bodies and major international companies are coming on the scene. The little fellow with his few bob needs someone such as an Ombudsman to whom he can go for assistance. He wants to be able to place his case before a body that he believes will be of some assistance to him.

I now want to speak briefly about the need for an Ombudsman even in the area of the environment. I represent an area in which there are major problems of pollution. If one has a complaint about pollution one goes to the Minister, he complains

to the company, there is an argument, and the company says, "We can do no more about the problem."

In this State today we do not allow a person to take an action on his own against a company, saying, "You have invaded my privacy with the smell from the pollutant in the creek that goes past my door. You have destroyed my environment. You have destroyed the value of my property." Why can't he take out a writ against the company that is doing that to him if it annoys him? We say, "No, our Clean Air Act and our Clean Water Act state that you cannot do it as an individual." If he wants to, he has to ask the Minister for permission. The Minister generally says, "Look, we'll handle it for you. Leave it to us; it is covered by our Acts. We will look after it." No private person has been able to take an action of this type in Queensland. We do not even allow people to take action as a group or representatives of a district. If I can prove that the district of Murarrie is adversely polluted—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr. BURNS: The Parliamentary Commissioner Act should provide for this type of class action. As I say, if I can prove that the residents of a whole area or a group of people have had their property values and their home life affected by a polluter, why should we not have some provision for them to go to the Ombudsman to finally say that they feel they are being pushed from one jurisdiction to another without receiving justice?

I wrote to the Premier one day in relation to some people who complained about problems with Bulimba Creek and they were told by the Water Quality Council that the smell was in the air and that they ought to go to the air pollution people. They went to the air pollution people, who said, "The smell comes from the creek; it is water quality. Go back to the water quality people." The people said that this was a straight-out pillar-to-post job from one department to another. We wrote to the Premier, who then tried to solve the case for us.

The point is that if these people are not satisfied with the answer they get in that case, where do they go now? They have no place to go. They have no answer other than to sell up their home and shift out of the area. That is not good enough, because if we are going to allow that then more and more, as companies get bigger and industry gets stronger, the little man, the individual, will be squeezed out. I always believed that one of the real reasons for an Act such as

this was to give the little man a go, and I hope that we will take the opportunity not just to amend the Act like this—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! I remind the Leader of the Opposition that he might like to sum up on the matter under discussion.

Mr. BURNS: I am summing up the point about the Ombudsman—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The Bill pertains to an extension of the Ombudsman's term.

Mr. BURNS: I am saying that. I would think it is in our interests not to just amend the Parliamentary Commissioner Act to allow the Ombudsman another couple of years—

Mr. Jones: Will he be able to fix those things up in the two years he has left?

Mr. BURNS: That's a very pertinent question. I do not have much time left and I do not want to delay the Committee. I suggest that, instead of just amending the Act to allow the current Ombudsman another couple of years in office, we ought to be looking very closely at the Act. We ought to be studying the report of the commissioner himself. Honourable members will see in his report that he has difficulty in relation to administration. He makes the point that he asks those who want to contest an opinion, or show him a contrary interpretation, to take the legal steps to show him where he is wrong.

At the top of page 6 of the report in the paragraph headed "Discretion to prosecute", he talks about being advised by the people concerned that the matter was outside his jurisdiction and he just accepted that. In circumstances such as that, where a matter is outside his jurisdiction and the person concerned seems to have some legitimate complaint, we ought to be looking to see whether we should extend his jurisdiction or not.

Mr. POWELL (Isis) (8.14 p.m.): I rise to support the Premier on this issue. Some years ago as a member of the Young Country Party, as it was in those days, I was one of the strongest advocates for the appointment of an Ombudsman in this State. History records that we had some considerable trouble getting this sort of motion through the various levels of our party, but eventually it was adopted as policy and now we have had an Ombudsman for some years.

Today we are discussing a Bill to extend his term of office for a number of years and I support the proposal. Even when I was a member of that younger branch of the party, we saw the need for an Ombudsman to be able to arbitrate, as it were, on arguments between people and departments. Most of the objections to the Ombudsman raised by the Leader of the Opposition could be overcome fairly easily by people approaching their

members of Parliament, presenting their cases to them and letting them follow them through. Surely each member of Parliament, in his own right, is an ombudsman, a person who is able to carry forward the problems of his constituents to a Government department and have them resolved. There are those, of course, who argue that that is not the job of a member of Parliament, and they are in part correct. However, if they did their job correctly and diligently, the task of the Ombudsman would be much easier—if they researched their problems and took them to Government departments with verve equal to that which they display in this place.

In considering some of the issues on which the Ombudsman in this State has been overruled, I think consistently of the Mt. Etna caves. The Leader of the Opposition said that the Ombudsman is responsible directly to the Premier, not to Parliament. I would ask, "To whom is the Premier responsible?" He is responsible to Parliament, so indirectly the Ombudsman is responsible to the Parliament, as is every departmental head.

It is quite obvious that members of the Opposition in this Chamber adopt the attitude of criticising everything that the Government does. I suppose that is their job, but surely their criticism should be constructive, not destructive. It is quite obvious from their criticism that they believe that, because they are weak and because of their attitude in Government, there should be a greater bureaucracy and less control by the elected representatives of the people. I spoke on that subject recently in this Chamber, and I feel very strongly that the elected representatives of the people have had their power eroded from them by the appointment of various heads of departments with additional powers, and so on.

I support the provisions of the Bill. The position of Ombudsman is as important today as it ever was, and I believe that in Queensland the job is being performed very capably by the present incumbent. The people of Queensland are being served very well by their Ombudsman, and I sincerely hope that if the terms of reference of the Ombudsman are amended in the legislation, we will not go overboard and go as far as some other countries have done, thereby abdicating the responsibility that we have as members of Parliament.

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (8.18 p.m.): As the Premier explained, the main point under discussion here is whether this Assembly agrees with the idea of removing the restriction on the age limit of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations. Normally I would say "no", because I believe that at 65 years of age a man has done his stint within the Public Service. But considering the service that Dave Longland has given in Government departments and the record that he has established as the Parliamentary Commissioner, I would have to support the Bill. However,

I think it is a pity that we cannot simply provide some sort of specific exemption to cover just Dave Longland and not allow this to go on for many years to come. In my opinion he is a special case and should be treated as such.

The introduction of the Bill gives members an opportunity to consider the role of the Parliamentary Commissioner, or Ombudsman as he is called, since the position was created in this State. I recall the debate that took place at that time, and I recall that the Opposition put forward many amendments to the Bill, some of which have been referred to in this debate by the Leader of the Opposition. The past two years have given me an opportunity to see how effective the Ombudsman has been. One can always come back to statistics, and it was stated in the 1975 report that 904 complaints had been handled. Many of these—in fact, 18.5 per cent, or some 166—did not come within the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman. Surely when we are dealing with problems put forward to the Ombudsman and when such a high percentage does not come within his jurisdiction, it is time for Parliament to consider an extension of the terms of reference of this person and this office. It is to be noted that, of the complaints investigated, 141 were justified and 217 were unjustified. At the time the report was printed, 323 were still under investigation. That proves that the commissioner and his officers worked very hard.

I wonder whether we could gain even further by extending the total concept of the Parliamentary Commissioner. Most honourable members who live in provincial cities or the metropolitan area—or in any type of electorate, for that matter—realise the numerous departmental-type problems we get, such as when a person rings up and says, "I have waited three weeks for my compensation cheque," or when people tell us how they have written to the Main Roads Department four months earlier for their motor vehicle registration labels but they had not been received. Some come to us and say, "Look, we have received two registration stickers." Other complaints are made by age pensioners who are supposed to receive some sort of rebate but the rebate has been denied. After the matter is taken up the rebate is given. All sorts of departmental problems arise. It has exercised my mind as to how many of these problems could be solved at the very point of decision making. What we do not want is a huge watchdog mechanism based in Brisbane. We need some sort of grass roots administrative concept. I believe this could be achieved if we were to employ the services of departmental complaints officers. We could simply extend the personnel in the Parliamentary Commissioner's office to deal with such problems.

Let us consider the advantages of such a scheme. Officers could be appointed first of all on an experimental basis. Fifteen

persons are associated with the office at the moment, but we do not want to be employing 115. Some could be appointed in major State Government offices, and one or two could be appointed in the major provincial cities. They would be part of the total Ombudsman's office. If they could not handle the grass roots problems brought to them the problems could be sent on to the Parliamentary Commissioner.

Sometimes difficulties arise simply from the attitude of some person or persons who work in Government offices. On some occasions they show a total lack of willingness to check out a complaint. Not long ago a person complained to me about not having received a cheque. I contacted the office and was told, "The doctor's certificate has not been received." I telephoned the doctor and found that his certificate had been sent. I was then told that it must be the employer's certificate that had not arrived. When I contacted the employer I was told that that had been sent. When I went back to the office again I was told, "But the cheque has been sent." When I went back to the complainant I asked, "Where is the cheque?", and was told that it still had not been received. When I went back to the office staff checked up and found that the cheque was pinned to the person's file in the cabinet. That took eight or nine days to sort out. I realise, of course, that that is not a typical case. Honourable members could cite many instances of unnecessary delay, which not only hurts the person confronted with the problem but also casts a shadow on the Public Service itself. We hear criticism of the compensation section of the State Government Insurance Office, of the Main Roads Department, of court-houses, and so on. Complaints are made about the handling of estates by the Public Curator's Office. Probably a list could be drawn up 10 feet long. If we had administrative officers on the spot complaints could be thoroughly checked out; they could be easily and readily handled. It would mean a fair amount of good public relations for the Government, and particularly for the department concerned. People would not be writing letters to the editor. As complaints were speedily handled the public would start to recognise the worth of those officers. Individual departments would soon become well aware of the activities of a particular man or woman. These officers could carry out very effective watchdog activities, just as the Parliamentary Commissioner has already done. I think the idea should be tried. It is so easy to implement. It could be tried in any of the major Public Service buildings in this city or, say, the S.G.I.O. building in Rockhampton. We could simply appoint a person, give him an office, keep him separate from individual departments so that he has the necessary independence, and let him go to town! He would have direct access to the departmental head or section head

involved, but he would be independent of the section. There would be no question of politics, but he would have behind him the statutory authority given to the Parliamentary Commissioner. Above all, he would be on tap to the public, which is the most important thing. If ever a service has been derided and attacked, it is the Public Service. And this is so unnecessary. However, it will continue, because the work-load will continue and personal problems will increase. We must get down to some way of handling the grass roots grievances and the petty problems, and of allowing easy access to the resolution of them.

Such a system would greatly decentralise the Parliamentary Commissioner's office. He has a deputy commissioner, and we know that the commissioner travels throughout the State and has been to most provincial cities. If over a period we were to set up such departmental complaints officers in Rockhampton, Townsville, Ipswich, Toowoomba, Mackay, Bundaberg, Cairns, Mt. Isa and so on, with perhaps a dozen persons, we would resolve many of the difficulties that people eventually try to place on the Ombudsman's desk. It is important that we try to do this and that we take cognisance of the problems that have existed.

As members of Parliament we cannot resolve all the problems. We must accept the word of the departmental head or the officer to whom we speak, but these appointees would be within the office. They would have the power of entry and the power of investigation, just as the Parliamentary Commissioner has. They could check files and talk to individual officers who have dealt with the people's problems. In that way we would overcome many of the difficulties. I ask the Premier to give this suggestion consideration. It is not a total change of the system but a progressive extension of it. We could use the experience that we have gained through Dave Longland and his personnel. So much is to be gained by decentralising this procedure and bringing it down to a grass roots level.

I put forward a suggestion relating to the problem facing many people who have dealings with the legal profession. I wonder how many honourable members have had persons complaining about their solicitors. Someone writes to the Minister for Justice, who replies that he is very sorry but it is not the role of the Crown Law Office to deal with personal problems and suggests that a solicitor should be consulted. Rarely can another solicitor be prevailed upon to take on an offending solicitor, and very rarely in a small town would one solicitor dare to be in conflict with his legal colleagues. Members of Parliament and the community generally need some access to legal advice.

I know that Mr. Howatson is a barrister and that he plays, and has played, a very effective role in the commissioner's office. We need access to such a person. On many occasions members of Parliament would like

some legal advice. As we are dealing with the Parliamentary Commissioner who reports back to Parliament, I wonder whether greater access could be given to members of Parliament to gain such legal advice. I am not trying to diminish the role or place of the lawyers. We certainly should not do that as members of Parliament, but at times we do need the advice or expertise of the legal profession and it should certainly be forthcoming from a person within the office of the Parliamentary Commissioner.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to the need to broaden the powers of the Ombudsman. I totally agree with him and especially with his remarks about the need for the Ombudsman's powers to cover the Police Force. We do not accept that the reason why the Police Force is not covered is that, like the law-deciding courts, it is a law-enforcing mechanism. The excuse that has been given time and time again is that it is not really an administrative department but a law-enforcing authority, hence it does not come within the purview of the Parliamentary Commissioner. That could well be left for the Parliamentary Commissioner to decide. In fact, the report that I have read showed that he has investigated certain matters. He has not always been able to get his way, but he has been able to extend his role in this field. The Police Department certainly should cover matters that are designated as definitely administrative rather than purely law-enforcement matters.

After all, what redress is there at the moment if the Police Department makes a decision against a person, or a decision that the person is not happy with? Unfortunately, many such decisions are made, and because the matter comes within the Police Force, the person cannot see the Parliamentary Commissioner. I have spoken to some police officers about this aspect. They do not seem to be at all afraid about being included in the provisions of this Act.

If we do begin to broaden the powers of the commissioner, one area that should be included is the State Service Superannuation Board. That again comes within Schedule 2 of the Act and is, therefore, exempt from the commissioner's powers. However, it should be noticed that the commissioner has used his discretion. On one occasion, regardless of the legal advice given to the State Service Superannuation Board, the Parliamentary Commissioner went on with his investigations. I think it will be shown that the board finally accepted his right to do that. Practice, therefore, has proven the worth of extending the commissioner's powers into this area. I have had nothing but complaints about some of the decisions of the State Service Superannuation Board. I am not speaking of the board's administrative actions in toto, but rather things that relate to it. I have often thought to myself, "If they do not resolve the matter, what will I do? At the moment I cannot refer it to the Parliamentary Commissioner."

Just as the Leader of the Opposition said, I cannot see any reason why we cannot extend these powers. As has been referred to by another honourable member, we need to broaden the terms of reference to include conservation and environmental matters. No doubt there are other matters that have exercised the minds of other honourable members.

I have wondered whether, if there was ever a legal challenge to this, the commissioner would not win. Page 4 of the report states—

"The Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1974 requires that I investigate a complaint and then reach an opinion as to whether the administrative action to which the investigation relates—

(a) appears to have been taken contrary to law;

(b) was unreasonable, unjust, oppressive, or improperly discriminatory;

(c) was in accordance with a rule of law or a provision of an enactment or a practice that is or may be unreasonable, unjust, oppressive, or improperly discriminatory;

(d) was taken in the exercise of a power or discretion, and was so taken for an improper purpose or on irrelevant grounds, or on the taking into account of irrelevant considerations;

(e) was a decision that was made in the exercise of a power or discretion and the reasons for the decision were not, but should have been, given;

(f) was based wholly or partly on a mistake of law or fact; or"—

and this is the final one, and the important one—

"(g) was wrong."

There is nothing broader than that. The commissioner has the right to investigate an administrative action if it is believed or suggested that that administrative action or decision is wrong.

If that is so, I cannot see why this could not be extended to cover the conservation issues. When decisions are made that the public generally, or sectors or even pressure groups within the public, are against, it is important that they should have some avenue of redress. They do not have the finance to fight it legally in the courts. We know of all the writs that are taken out to try to halt matters such as Aurukun. I wonder what, if the Parliamentary Commissioner was given the right to investigate Aurukun, we might come up with. The Minister for Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement and Fisheries is sitting in the Chamber. If the Parliamentary Commissioner was given that power and took with him some members of the church and his own department to sit and talk, not to the council, but to the community, I wonder what they might come up with. Maybe we have to look at the final power of the commissioner. If a decision is wrong,

or if it is believed to be wrong, the commissioner should have the sole right to investigate it.

We have seen the worth of the Parliamentary Commissioner. The concept has worked. We realise, too, after the short time that it has operated, that there is room for improvement. I have suggested some improvements here and I should hope that consideration would be given to them. It is not just that we as members of Parliament would benefit but that the community as a whole would benefit.

Mr. LAMONT (South Brisbane) (8.35 p.m.): It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on this matter tonight. In 1962, when I was a student at the University of Queensland studying political science along with Senator Kathy Martin, or Miss Martin as she was then, the question of an Ombudsman was first raised in Queensland. Senator Martin came to me, as we were fellow students, and said, "What this State needs is an Ombudsman." At the time I did not know the full import of what an Ombudsman was. After canvassing the idea around a bit, it turned out that nobody on the political science staff at the university knew what it meant, either. We even came to the conclusion that not many people in the Liberal Party knew what it meant. It was a totally new concept in Australia.

Mr. Chinchin: It started here in 1967.

Mr. LAMONT: I am talking about 1962.

In that particular year Miss Martin—because she was not a senator then—raised it at the Queensland State Conference of the Liberal Party and it was then adopted as party policy. This was the first mention of an Ombudsman in any party in Australia and I am proud to have supported the proposal at that time.

Mr. Wright: What an indictment of your own party, that it took so long to act.

Mr. LAMONT: I was about to say that there have been several examples of resistance to the concept of an Ombudsman operating properly as an Ombudsman, not only in the parties on this side of the Chamber. I am sure that the honourable member for Rockhampton would not want me to speculate upon the hypothetical possibilities of what a Federal Ombudsman could have done in the past three years. He would have been like a child at his first Hallowe'en. I did rise with the intention of avoiding party-political issues in this speech so, with the indulgence of the persistent but conscientious interjector, I would like to continue in a non-political vein.

There have been examples of resistance to the establishment of an Ombudsman throughout Australia. In spite of the fact that the State Conference of the Liberal Party adopted the proposal in 1962, the matter was not taken up eagerly in the State Parliament by any of the members and, when it was,

then took several years beyond that before members of the Cabinet could be persuaded to bring it in.

In the Northern Territory the Legislative Council passed a Bill in the 1960s to create an Ombudsman and it received a unanimous vote; in spite of that, various Federal Ministers for Territories repeatedly refused to create such an office and used the spurious argument, which we have already heard tonight, that representatives are in fact Ombudsmen.

I regret that at this time there is not a Federal Ombudsman because I have in my own electorate a businessman who I believe is being seriously disadvantaged by the deliberate policy of a Government department under the guidance of the former Labor Government. I believe that his business is being seriously disadvantaged with no gain to the Government but to the advantage of competitors. That is a matter which I foreshadow I might have to raise in this Parliament if justice is not done in the Federal sphere.

Mr. Moore: We have the Government there. Why don't you talk to someone there?

Mr. LAMONT: We are doing that, and I am hoping that something will happen. I merely wish to raise it now in order to apply a certain amount of pressure in certain quarters.

The first Ombudsman was established in Sweden in 1809. Originally he was called on only to supervise administration, but later he developed investigatory powers and it is the investigatory powers that seem to have dominated the debate tonight, in spite of the fact that the Bill refers to years of service.

The most important element of the terms of reference of the original Ombudsman are contained in this provision—

"Riksdag (parliament) shall appoint a person of known legal ability and outstanding integrity . . . in the capacity of a representative of the Riksdag and according to the instructions issued by the Riksdag."

The law went on to establish a procedure of reporting to Parliament, and it refers specifically to calling attention to defects in the law.

It is frequently difficult to persuade Governments to accept the notion of an Ombudsman in the fullest sense of the definition of what an Ombudsman really is or ought to be. Cabinet Ministers of any party, quite understandably, do not welcome the idea of an officer who is empowered to investigate the operations and dealings of Government departments. The attitude is hardened when such an officer is made responsible not to the Minister but to the Parliament. Nevertheless, Governments are sometimes forced by pressure either from the Parliament or the public, or possibly their own consciences (I hope this Government was) to accept the

task of establishing the office of Ombudsman. For the reasons that I have already stated, Governments can, and sometimes do, attempt to sabotage the new office from the outset while still seeming to accede to the general demand. This must not be permitted to happen and I think it would be well to have the Parliament forewarned. We are now extending the age limit for retirement of the present Ombudsman and will therefore probably be facing the appointment of a new Ombudsman. I think it would therefore be well that the Parliament be forewarned of the means by which a Government can in fact undermine the office of Ombudsman.

There are really only two simple tactics. The first would be to establish the office of Ombudsman and make him responsible to Cabinet. Gratefully, although it was once mooted, that has not eventuated here. The second tactic is to find a gentleman who is so sympathetic to the Government of the day that he will not in fact carry out his duties with sufficient vigour. I am not by any means casting a slight on the present occupant of this office. I merely state that this is a danger. In that case, the officer appointed would become a lackey of the Government which he is supposed to investigate, and a Government can ensure that a citizen sympathetic to Cabinet and named as an Ombudsman would in fact be a tame-cat Ombudsman. That would be no more than a political appointment and it would circumvent the spirit of the law, irrespective of whether the officer was made responsible to Parliament. I think we all appreciate that a political appointee in such a position mocks the essence of justice. The appointment would almost certainly be changed with a change of Government. We have seen enough of that in the Federal sphere to this date. This is a matter that I felt obliged to raise. It is one that I leave now without attempting to cast a slur on any gentleman who presently holds the office or may be put up for it in the near future.

I would like to look, however, at the basic characteristics of an Ombudsman because the Leader of the Opposition has already mentioned various aspects of the powers of Ombudsmen that he would like to see changed. The extract from the Swedish Act that I quoted earlier contains the first characteristic which is that the Ombudsman is an independent and non-partisan officer of the Legislature completely free from control by the Executive.

Secondly, he deals with specific complaints, not general policy. These complaints are brought to him from the public. The public must have totally unimpeded access to the Ombudsman. That is a question that I think ought to be looked at a little more closely when the next report of the Ombudsman is tabled.

Thirdly, he must have full power to investigate actions of the civil service or a statutory corporation. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned the matter of the Ombudsman in

this State having to give 48 hours' notice that he is going to investigate a department. The Victorian Act is very similar to the New Zealand Act, which was the model for the first Act in Australia, and it provides that, if the Ombudsman believes that a department is deserving of investigation, he certainly should show the courtesy of notifying the head of the department that he intends to conduct an investigation of that department. But, should the head of the department resist investigation, the Victorian Ombudsman has total power to enter that department, impound files and investigate without the co-operation of the department, because he is acting in the interests of the citizenry and as an officer of Parliament. After all, as long as we believe in the Westminster system, Parliament is supreme because it is the representative of the people. I believe that that is a matter that really ought to be put to the Parliament and written into our Act.

Fourthly, the Ombudsman has no power to command changes. He cannot simply change departments, change laws or change regulations. He merely recommends and persuades Parliament to act upon his advice. Surely that is innocuous enough.

Finally, and most important of all, he must report his own activities fully to the Parliament. I believe that the report of the Ombudsman should be fully debated in Parliament, not simply tabled and received without debate. It is no good fighting for years to get a Parliamentary Commissioner to investigate complaints on behalf of the people if his report is simply to be tabled and accepted without debate. I must say I fell for it last year but I am going to make every effort to ensure that it does not happen this year.

Arguments against the institution of Ombudsmen are various. Their source is not various. Their source is invariably the bureaucracy. It comes from those at the head of the bureaucracy who believe that government by expertise is far better than government by representatives of the people believing that we poor representatives are merely amateurs at the game of government. Even though we have an Ombudsman in this State, these spurious arguments are still put forward by the same source and daily we do battle, not with our own Ministers and not with the Cabinet, but with a bureaucracy that is very often unyielding and in fact unchanged from the days when it was living off a different era, off a different society and off a different Government with a different philosophy. We know bureaucracies are unyielding and hard to change because the people who have risen to the point of making decisions in those bureaucracies very often believe that we, the members of the Parliament, the representatives of the people, are in fact amateurs whilst they are the experts.

Ministerial responsibility is a basic cornerstone of the Westminster system and it means that a Minister must answer for

the acts and omissions of his department. It means that he is responsible to Parliament in all matters, but the modern party system that we have breaks this down. We are loyal to our leaders in Cabinet. It is rare that the back-benchers of any Parliament are sufficient in number to overturn a Minister, and that is as it should be under our system.

Mr. Houston interjected.

Mr. LAMONT: The honourable member has his opinion of what is the ideal system; I have mine. But I will admit that the modern party system does break down much of what was intended by those who helped to develop our particular style of representative government. We know that, while Ministers need the consent and support of Parliament, once they have that general consent at the beginning of a new Parliament—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! I would remind the honourable member that the Bill is concerned with the extension of the term of office of the Ombudsman.

Mr. LAMONT: I am certainly leading up to that point. In fact, I have not strayed from the main issue and you will see that, Mr. Row, as I come to the predicate of the proposition that I am now midstream of. Ministerial responsibility is fundamental to our system, and I have said that the party system tends to break that down. I said that Ministers know that, whilst they need the consent and support of Parliament, once they secure that general consent very often they tend to dominate the Parliament—in fact, invariably they dominate the Parliament because of the loyalty of their party members. I then intended to say at the point that you drew my attention to the Bill that the appointment of an Ombudsman helps reverse this trend and return us to the original principle of Parliament as a system. No Minister would want such a situation that facilitates or encourages intense scrutiny and criticism of his department, but unfortunately, of course, he cannot say this in public. We all understand that Ministers of any party naturally feel this, but accordingly, as they cannot actually oppose the principle, arguments are forwarded by their departments against the Ombudsman along somewhat specious and theoretical lines. It is suggested that the post of Ombudsman would violate all that the British parliamentary system stands for. Parliamentary supremacy, the rule of law and ministerial responsibility would be put in jeopardy, it is said, by the appointment of an Ombudsman in the terms outlined by some honourable members tonight. So runs the argument. Clearly the supremacy of Parliament can only be increased by giving Parliament an officer who can operate full time as a check on injustices and abuses by that other arm of government, the Executive. At no time is an Ombudsman in a position to legislate or even modify the laws. He never usurps the role of

Parliament; he merely presents his findings to the Minister. Nor is the rule of law interfered with in any way which suggests influence or control by the Judiciary. In the dozen or more instances of the institution of Ombudsman in the British Commonwealth countries, including New Zealand, Canada and the other States of Australia that have an Ombudsman, in no case has power been given to interfere with a decision of the courts. The Judiciary remains independent. The Ombudsman reinforces the rule of law by seeing that civil servants do not offend the law. It would not be unfair to suspect that it is with the third pillar of the British system, ministerial responsibility, that Ministers and critics of the Ombudsman are most concerned; but we shall see that here, too, the Ombudsman aids the proper application of that ideal.

Critics say, as some honourable members have said tonight, that only Parliament has the right to examine the action of Ministers and their departments. But if Parliament is truly supreme, it surely has the power and right to appoint its own investigatory officer. After all, the Ombudsman has not the power to call a Minister to answer for his actions. What he does do is single out anomalies and abuses which often may be corrected without much fuss at all. And there have been many occasions when he has to do that. The honourable member for Rockhampton gave the Committee several examples. Where complications are inherent, Parliament is informed by the Ombudsman and it is for Parliament then to act. The end result is that Parliament then can call the Minister to account, if necessary, or amend the law when it sees fit to do so. The objection is clearly that more anomalies might be found than most departments would find comfortable, and that Parliament might be strengthened at the expense of the Executive, not at all that British institutions might be threatened.

I support the role of Ombudsman because I believe the Parliament, and not the Executive, is supreme. One of the red herrings that is often brought into the debate about Ombudsmen is an argument that honourable members have heard tonight, also. It is that an Ombudsman would not be necessary if members of Parliament did their job properly. All members are in fact Ombudsmen, so we are told. But I ask whether in fact this is really so. Are we supposed to act as Ombudsmen? I believe that is not a fair proposition. On investigation, we find the limitations of the members of Parliament to be enormous in comparison with the Ombudsman. None of the criteria for impartial investigation is open to a member of Parliament. Members of Parliament do not have the right of access to departmental records, and this limitation alone refutes the argument that members of Parliament can play the role of Ombudsmen. Moreover, Opposition members of Parliament might be too tempted to make political capital out of a citizen's grievance, although I know that the

members of the present Opposition are honourable men. On the other hand, Government back-benchers might easily feel inhibited in pressing the claims of a citizen. I believe that there are many arguments to destroy the concept that an Ombudsman is not really needed with the full teeth that we have seen given to Ombudsmen in other Australian States. I think it would have been appropriate at this time, if we are going to extend the term of the Ombudsman, to think of extending his powers as well.

I should like to quote from a report by Sir Guy Powles, the new Zealand Ombudsman, in 1971, when he reported to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meeting in Wellington on the first eight years of the establishment of his office in that country. He said that over 6,000 complaints of grievances had been lodged with his staff. Of those, many were outside the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman, and several were withdrawn because the complainant had found an alternative remedy. Still more could be dealt with without investigation because immediate remedies were available. But there remained 2,781 which were fully investigated, and of those complaints 551—about a quarter of them—were investigated and found to be absolutely justified. Those complaints for which a remedy was already established could have been satisfactorily dealt with by any conscientious member of Parliament, but the 551 which required full investigation could never have been dealt with by a back-bench member of Parliament. Without the Ombudsman there would be, as Sir Guy Powles himself pointed out to the meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, “551 unsatisfied grievances in New Zealand at the present time”. If that figure is thought to be significant, it becomes more so when one considers that it is believed probable that a large percentage of citizens have genuine grievances against Government departments but are unaware of the existence of the Ombudsman, are unaware of what he can do, and are unaware of their recourse to justice through him.

I believe that an Ombudsman who has the sort of power that I outlined as applying in Victoria—the power to tell a Government department, “I have an objection. I believe that your department requires investigation. I will therefore be investigating whether you consent or not, but I would be grateful to have your consent,” and if the consent is not given, to go to the department and impound files, examine them and discover on behalf of the citizen what the truth is, then report to Parliament so that it can take the necessary action—would be an Ombudsman such as was intended when the Liberal Party State Conference in Queensland in 1962 first adopted the motion.

(Time expired.)

Mr. LINDSAY (Everton) (8.55 p.m.): At the risk of being accused of inserting a commercial, and not wishing to delay the

Committee, I should like to remind the silent majority of the Everton electorate that, if the Ombudsman's telephone is engaged, my office is at 5 Sizer Street, Everton Park, telephone 55 0999.

Motion (Mr. Bjelke-Petersen) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

Bill presented and, on motion of Mr. Bjelke-Petersen, read a first time.

DAIRY ADJUSTMENT PROGRAM AGREEMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

(Mr. Gunn, Somerset, in the chair)

Hon. K. B. TOMKINS (Roma—Minister for Lands, Forestry, National Parks and Wildlife Service) (8.59 p.m.): I move—

“That a Bill be introduced to ratify and approve two agreements between the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Government of the State of Queensland relating to a dairy adjustment program.”

The purpose of this Bill is to ratify and approve two agreements between the State and the Commonwealth providing for the operation in Queensland of the Commonwealth's Dairy Adjustment Program. Copies of the agreements are set out in the schedules to the Bill.

The proposed programme, envisaging an expenditure of up to \$28,000,000 by all States over a short term period of 23 months ending on 30 June 1976, was announced by the Honourable the Prime Minister on 8 April 1974. It provided for an extension of the Marginal Dairy Farms Reconstruction Scheme which was due to expire on 26 July 1974, and for the range of assistance to be considerably broadened to place emphasis on restructuring rather than disposal of uneconomic dairy farms.

Administrative problems associated with the Commonwealth Industries Assistance Commission Act required that the programme be introduced in two stages.

The first stage involved the implementation of the major part of the programme which provided for continuation and broadening of the Marginal Dairy Farms Reconstruction Scheme to include interest-free loans for conversion to bulk-milk supply, purchase of build-up land, farm development, improvements, stock, plant and equipment. It also provided for diversification in special cases and relocation assistance for farmers disposing of their farms.

The second stage is to provide for assistance to dairy factories and extended bulk-milk conversion assistance to any dairy farmer, and also includes repeal and re-enactment of the earlier agreements under the new title of Dairy Adjustment Program.

For various reasons, including the double dissolution of the Federal Parliament, legislative, drafting and administrative problems at Commonwealth level, the first stage of the programme did not come into operation until 11 December 1974. The agreement for the second and final stage apparently encountered even greater problems at Commonwealth level and was not received until 30 June 1975. The draft agreement was agreed to on 31 July 1975 and eventually executed under date 2 October 1975.

In view of the response to this much more attractive dairy adjustment scheme, particularly in Victoria where the emphasis was on conversion to refrigerated bulk-milk vats, it was obvious that the \$28,000,000 earmarked for the programme would prove inadequate. However, it was confidently expected and indicated that provision of further funds would be forthcoming.

A serious blow was dealt to the dairy industry on the eve of the Federal Budget when the Commonwealth announced that the scheme would need to be suspended as at 31 August 1975. Approved funds were apparently fully committed and the Commonwealth could not see its way clear to approve further moneys.

I am pleased to be able to say that in the short period of nine months of operation, Queensland dairy farmers responded well to the new programme. Approved advances to 418 dairy farmers and 8 factories totalled \$4,700,000. This amount is equivalent to 16 per cent of the funds finally allocated to all States and comprises the following—

Purchase of uneconomic dairy farms	\$480,000
Purchase of dairy build-up land	\$900,000
Interest-free bulk-milk conversion	\$1,330,000
Dairy upgrading, development, stock and plant	\$1,330,000
Assistance to factories	\$660,000

In addition, 424 marginal dairy farms were purchased under the original scheme at a cost of \$11,100,000, making a total of \$15,800,000 utilised in Queensland. This amount represents 35.6 per cent of the total of \$44,500,000 provided by the Commonwealth.

Moneys for the programme were made available to the States on very attractive terms. Commonwealth advances for bulk-milk conversion loans, including vats, installation and tanker road access, were on an interest-free basis repayable over 10 years. Interest-free terms were extended to the dairy farmers, who in many cases were also given further loans with interest at 5 per cent to upgrade the dairy, plant and stock.

Loans for land, development, stock and plant and dairy upgrading were on the same 50 per cent grant, 50 per cent loan terms as applied to the original scheme. Advances

to borrowers are being made with interest at the very concessional non-variable rate of 5 per cent per annum.

Commonwealth moneys for the purpose of lending to dairy factories are fully repayable interest free over 10 years. The interest rate of 7½ per cent determined for advances to factories is lower than the Commonwealth would have preferred. The delays in implementing the factory assistance provisions and the sudden and almost simultaneous suspension of the programme has seriously inconvenienced dairy factory managements in installing or upgrading bulk receival facilities. Whilst Queensland has made good use of the Commonwealth schemes, a lot still remains to be done both at farm and factory level to place the industry on a reasonably sound footing.

Honourable members will be aware that since January 1973 this State has been operating its own supplementary scheme of assistance to the dairy industry under the provisions of the Primary Producers' Assistance Act 1972. This State scheme became the foundation upon which the Commonwealth developed its programme. Assistance to the industry is being continued under this State scheme and I expect to introduce a Bill in the present session to provide for broadening the range of assistance available.

Policies announced during the recent Federal election by leaders of the present Government indicated that it was proposed to provide further dairy adjustment assistance. It is to be hoped that the current financial problems will not severely limit any assistance or prevent it from being forthcoming.

I commend the Bill to the Committee.

Mr. JENSEN (Bundaberg) (9.5 p.m.): This Bill—the Dairy Adjustment Program Agreement Bill—is only a further extension of the Marginal Dairy Farms Agreement Act of 1970. We realise that at that time the Federal Government made available \$25,000,000 to help the dairy industry. The money was made available to all Australian States over a period of about four years. I believe that Western Australia was the first State to take advantage of the money.

At that time criticism was directed at the scheme. The Federal Government was criticised by many economists. One, Professor J. M. Lewis of the University of New England, said that the assistance to the dairying industry did not go far enough. He said—

“The programme seems likely to leave the reconstructed properties far short of long-term economic viability.”

He was pretty right at that time. That is why in 1972 this Government introduced legislation to assist the primary producers. The original scheme could not carry on without the further assistance.

This Bill provides for something that is similar to the assistance the Queensland Government previously gave. I cannot understand why the two Bills we are to discuss were not incorporated. One is complementary to the other. Why didn't the Government bring them down together and make one Bill of them? The measures taken in 1974 and 1975 by the Commonwealth Government have done many of the things that were previously allowed for in the Primary Producers' Assistance Act, with the exception that they did not allow for bulk milk. However, that will be covered in the Bill to be introduced on the next sitting day. The new Bill for assistance to primary producers will go to the extent of the Bill being introduced tonight. I am speaking now about the State side of the scheme. The Federal Government has already supplied money for this purpose.

It is for that reason that I cannot understand—the Minister might be able to explain it later—why the Government did not bring both measures forward at the same time, because it is not possible to speak on one without speaking about the other. The Government should have made one Bill of it.

Mr. Tomkins: I will tell you that now. The previous Federal Government wound it up. We have to validate the agreement and then set up our own new agreement under the Bill that you referred to.

Mr. JENSEN: The Government did set up a new agreement?

Mr. Tomkins: We will.

Mr. JENSEN: It was set up in 1975. It was signed in 1975. Perhaps it was wound up by the new Federal Government. I know that Government members criticised the Australian Government time and time again, complaining that it would not give assistance to primary industries. However, it went further than the measures taken in 1970, which allowed only for the purchase of uneconomic farms.

The Minister quoted the amount of money the Queensland Government expended on those hundreds of farms. He said—

“In addition, 424 marginal dairy farms were purchased under the original scheme at a cost of \$11,100,000.”

So Queensland benefited considerably. We got 35.6 per cent of the \$44,500,000 provided by the Commonwealth. When the original scheme was introduced, it allowed for a distribution to all States of only \$25,000,000, but that escalated to \$44,500,000. It probably would have been further increased had it not been stopped. It was going too far.

The Minister knows quite well that the Labor Government advanced some money interest free.

The Commonwealth advanced the bulk-milk conversion loans, including vats and installation of tanker road access, on an

interest-free basis over 10 years. They are the Minister's own words. The Bill to amend the Primary Producers' Assistance Act will cover this too. The Minister can assist in the bulk handling of milk and upgrade the factories to handle the bulk milk. We are in agreement with trying to assist these farmers and dairy factories, but they should be upgraded to become economic.

We still have too many small butter factories throughout the State. Many have been closed down, including some in the Burnett region. But we still have half a dozen or more there. Right throughout the State we have small butter factories that are not economic. They should be closed down and one decent factory should be provided, whether it be in Central, North or South Queensland. We should follow the example set by the sugar refineries. If every sugar mill in Queensland had its own refinery, we would have the same stupid uneconomic process. Cream should be sent to one efficient and economic butter factory. We do not want a series of little uneconomic factories all over the place. Bundaberg factory will probably be the next to go, at the end of this year. It produces about one tonne a week.

Mr. Moore: That would be a shame.

Mr. JENSEN: It is not a shame to close down something that is uneconomic.

Mr. Gygar: On that basis, do you think that the A.L.P. should be closed down because it is running at a loss at the moment?

Mr. JENSEN: Some Government members will be closed down, the way they have been attacking their Ministers. That is coming very fast.

We must ensure that the money that we are providing is put to its best use. Even powdered-milk factories should be upgraded. We do not want a series of small powdered-milk factories. I saw one factory in New Zealand run by two or three operators in a computer room. It is one of the biggest powdered-milk factories in New Zealand. We cannot compete with it, because our factories are too small to be economic. We have now expended \$44,000,000 throughout Australia, and Queensland received a fair proportion of that money to upgrade the dairy industry and to allow farms to be bought out. I suppose that Government members would say we should still carry on with small dairy farms.

Mr. Moore: What is wrong with that?

Mr. JENSEN: What is wrong with it? I am telling the Government what is wrong. People cannot live on small areas. The Government has done the right thing in buying them out and restructuring the scheme in an effort to upgrade the industry and give people a decent living in those areas. People could not live on a few acres running

20 cows. They had either to get out or to buy other farms. The honourable member for Windsor wants them to carry on and wants the small butter factories to remain open. That only lifts the price of our produce. We could import butter from New Zealand at 40c a lb. instead of the 80c we are paying here. If we want to preserve the industry, that is all right; but we must consider our international trade as well. New Zealand is now buying sugar from Cuba and other places because the balance of trade between Australia and New Zealand is not even. We sell our sugar and motor cars to New Zealand and the difference in trade between our two countries is about \$300,000,000 or \$400,000,000. The New Zealanders are not satisfied with this situation. They have our Prime Minister in their country now and discussions are taking place on this same theme.

We do not care about New Zealand. As long as we can supply it with our products, we do not care about what it can supply to us. It can produce milk powder and butter at half the cost of production here. If we wiped out our dairying industry, we could rely on New Zealand for dairy products. But we do not wish to do that. We want a viable dairying industry; but it has to be able to compete. We cannot allow this industry to continue to operate as it has in the past. That is why the Federal Government in 1970 provided \$25,000,000 for the assistance of the dairying industry. The Federal Labor Government continued this scheme of reconstruction and provided another \$20,000,000 for uplifting dairy farms by the taking over of other properties with their stock, machinery, sheds and other equipment. Now the Government has gone one step further; it wants to uplift the bulk-milk supply and help factories take in milk by tankers, as is done in New Zealand. I have seen this done in that country. In my own area milk is now being supplied to butter factories in tankers.

Mr. Moore: At best it's a mixed blessing. That's all I have to say.

Mr. JENSEN: It is a mixed blessing. The only other way is to allow dairy farmers to continue to operate uneconomically and half starve on the land. The other course would be to close them down completely and import butter and powdered milk. Perhaps I should not include powdered milk, because our dairy farms can produce whole milk and powdered milk. It is butter that is costing the money, and New Zealand producers are starved of markets for their butter. We cannot carry on in the present way; we have to do one thing or the other. We have to upgrade butter factories.

Mr. Moore interjected.

Mr. JENSEN: What was that? The pig industry?

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Gunn): Order! I remind the honourable member that he must address the Chair.

Mr. JENSEN: Yes, Mr. Gunn. I could not understand the honourable member. He is gabbling a bit. We are not complaining about the Bill.

Mr. Sullivan: Are you in favour of it?

Mr. Moore: Did you get that brief straight from the department?

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member will continue with his speech.

Mr. JENSEN: I said that we are not really complaining about the Bill. The Minister has to ratify the agreements, otherwise he would not get the money that will be made available by the Commonwealth. I know that he is hoping that the present Federal Government will continue the scheme. He knows that there is a chance that it might finish completely and he will then be in trouble. He has to ratify the scheme to receive the grants from the Commonwealth Government.

I am a little concerned that the two matters have not been brought on for discussion together.

Mr. Sullivan: That would have saved you making two speeches.

Mr. JENSEN: That is right. They are complementary and they should have been taken together and incorporated in one piece of legislation. If there is something extra that the Minister for Lands was going to include, he could have incorporated it in this Bill. Why should we have two similar Bills for the reconstruction of the dairying industry? That is in effect what the legislation amounts to. Not only the farming side but farming plus bulk-milk supply have been considered, and now the legislation has to go further to deal with butter factories and their upgrading. Some small factories have been wiped out and others that should not be allowed to operate are being permitted to continue operations. They may employ a few men, but that does not give them the right to carry on. The industry is spread throughout Australia and it might be more economic to bring butter from Victoria if the Government does not want one decent factory in Queensland. We could put up one factory, or two, if we like—one in Southern Queensland and one in Central Queensland.

Mr. Moore interjected.

Mr. JENSEN: The honourable member can put it up all the same. I suppose he is going to tell me next he could not get his cream.

Mr. Moore: That's what I am saying.

Mr. JENSEN: Yes, the honourable member can get his cream. It can be sent down from North Queensland by train in refrigerated vans.

Mr. Moore: What about the time-tables?

Mr. JENSEN: They can run at any time. The honourable member is not going to tell me we cannot do these things. We can do them.

Mr. Moore: It would come out butter at the other end.

Mr. JENSEN: I know all about the honourable member coming out butter.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Gunn): Order! The honourable member will return to the Bill.

Mr. JENSEN: I was just going to say, Mr. Gunn, that we can run our sugar down to a refinery in Brisbane and we can run our cream to Rockhampton, Townsville and Brisbane to decent sized butter factories and so produce butter more economically than we do at present. We cannot allow the continual rise in prices. I am not saying that milk prices should not go up. Today milk is a very cheap commodity compared, say, with soft drink. It is a damn ridiculous thing that kids are paying 30c for a bottle of soft drink.

Honourable Members interjected.

Mr. JENSEN: Honourable members opposite belong to a Government that could supply free school milk if it wished. The money could be provided now through schemes such as this. The Government does not wish to do it, and I bet the new Federal Government will not reintroduce the scheme, either. Don't tell me these things. Don't tell me that just because the Labor Government wiped it out the Labor Government can be blamed for everything. It was wiped out for a reason.

Mr. Sullivan: Were you in favour of it?

Mr. JENSEN: I was in favour of its being wiped out in certain instances. The Government acted very badly in not checking the schools. Milk was being dumped at schools, and everybody knows it. There were plenty of kids who would have liked milk, but the Government did not conduct the scheme properly; it just allowed this dumping to go on until the scheme had to be stopped. The Government is allowing little butter factories to run and it has to stop them, too. As I said, milk is a cheap commodity compared with soft drinks. When children are paying 30c for a bottle of coloured water but will not pay 20c for a bottle of milk there is something wrong with our State.

Mr. Lane: What's it like with Bundaberg rum?

Mr. JENSEN: It is very good with Bundaberg rum—the honourable member knows that quite well. That is one of the best drinks one can have. It is better than going out and drinking that stuff that gives people gut rot. People will never get it from Bundaberg rum and milk, that's for sure! I do

not want to delay the Committee any longer, Mr. Gunn. We have to deal with a related Bill later on and I think it would be better that we leave the matter there until we see the Bill. We will continue with the other Bill and see what the Minister plans to do with the Primary Producers' Assistance Act, which is not covered by the present Act.

Mr. CORY (Warwick) (9.24 p.m.): Contrary to the previous speaker, I think this Government can be proud of what this dairy adjustment scheme has done since its inception. One of the reasons for its success is that we have had a continuity of officers administering this scheme since its inception and they have had first-hand experience of all the problems that have arisen. Because of this, Queensland has led Australia in the implementation of the dairy adjustment schemes that have been brought down over the years.

We appreciate the fact that it was the Queensland Government that first brought this type of scheme into operation. The Federal Government supported the scheme for a period, and because of this it did expand. Unfortunately, however, because of the Labor Government's attitude that Federal support is not with us at the present time. Nevertheless we can hope that in the future we will again get Federal support and see the new improved scheme, which the Minister will be introducing in a Bill concerning farmers' debt adjustment and will be even more appropriate and useful to the industry.

There are quite a lot of important innovations in this Bill, which we will discuss on another day, but one thing I cannot help mentioning at this time is the ownership adjustment plan within that Bill.

One of the sore points of the scheme has been that there is no way of adjusting ownership. For example, a son who has been willing to purchase from a father who for very obvious reasons wants to get out of the industry has not been able to obtain the financial assistance that he needs to do so. The Government is bringing forward provisions of that type, and they will be expanded when further assistance is received from the Commonwealth.

I mention particularly the comments made by the honourable member for Bundaberg indicating his wish to close factories and dairy farms. I should hope that this Government would never close private-enterprise dairy farms or factories contrary to the wishes of the industry. If it is the basic policy of members of the Opposition to centralise industries, activities and people, it is not the policy of the Government. If the Government can again make viable an industry that was once successful, it will do so.

I remind the honourable member that the dairy industry was the basis of settlement of a large part of eastern Queensland, particularly southern areas of the State. It led

to the improvement and development of many acres of land in Queensland, and it has been the basis of the economic prosperity of many small towns. If that is the type of industry that the A.L.P. wishes to close down, I am glad that is its policy and not ours.

The honourable member referred also to New Zealand and its large factories. What he probably did not appreciate when he was visiting New Zealand was that the pasture, farm structure and relationship to factories in that country are not greatly different from the set-up in Victoria, where the radius of pick-up from the factory is no farther than 10 miles. If the honourable member thinks that under Queensland conditions it is possible to have one big factory with a pick-up radius of 200 miles, he does not know much about the industry.

Surely what should happen in an industry is what the industry itself wants. The industry does not want to be closed down; it wants a little bit of assistance. Because history shows that the dairy industry has been the basis of settlement in many areas, it is receiving the support of the Government.

Let me deal now with the stages through which the improvement scheme went and add a little to what the Minister said earlier. When the scheme was introduced, the industry was at a low economic level. The first priority was to provide a source of finance to enable people to buy out, at the option of the owner, the uneconomic dairy farms to which honourable members opposite have referred. After the scheme had been in force for a short period, it was realised that more and more people did not want to get out of the industry but wanted a little assistance to stay in it. The scheme was immediately adapted to meet that request from the industry.

Because of the initiative of the State Government, there has been progressive improvement in equipment, property build-up and so on, and bulk-milk equipment has also been provided. It has made the scheme important to the person wanting to stay in the industry, not to the person wanting to get out. Honourable members will see that at present it is being used not by people wanting to get out but by people who want to upgrade their equipment to meet present requirements.

The first major movement in the scheme was to broaden it to assist those in the industry to build up their capital, and I think everyone is aware of that.

The 7½ per cent interest charged on loans to dairy factories is lower than the rate the Commonwealth Government wanted. That represents one of the important initiatives of this Government. We were able to hold it down to a reasonable interest rate. We were able to hold the rate below what the Commonwealth requested. That proves that it is vital to any of these schemes that we administer them reasonably close to the industry and the people in the industry. If

we have such schemes administered by bureaucratic control in Canberra, remote from the actual problems, a wrong idea of the problems will be obtained and a wrong type of remedy will be applied.

One of the reasons for the success of this scheme is that we have kept the administration close to the people. The officers have kept close to the people and have personally looked at their problems. That is what we want. We do not want official letters written from someone in a swivel chair, saying, "Sorry, that is not policy. We cannot do this and we cannot do that." If there is a problem we want someone to go out and have a look at it, and we want the two persons to work out a solution to it. That is the sort of thing that has been done. Surely we do not want anything run by the academic and centralised approach that the honourable member for Bundaberg mentioned. We want administration kept close to the problem and the people with the problem. While we retain that and recognise the wishes of the industry, we will not go far wrong. We certainly won't go far wrong with this scheme.

We look forward to further Commonwealth Government help in the future. This Government is bringing forward important innovations in the amended scheme. The most important one is the ability to adjust ownership within a partnership or family. Our Government is to be congratulated on having that initiative.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (9.33 p.m.): The Bill before the Committee is an extension of previous legislation brought down over recent years to try to assist the dairy industry. Unfortunately, 10 or 12 years ago, the dairy industry was flying the flag of distress. Governments of the day did little about it. I am talking about both the Federal Liberal-Country Party Government and the State Country-Liberal Government. About two or three years ago the State Government came up with a great scheme of "Get big or get out." That was the philosophy of the National-Liberal Government at that time.

A Government Member: Who took the milk from the school-children?

Mr. HOUSTON: Yes, we stopped supplying milk to school-children. As has already been said, the honourable member's Government will not bring that scheme back. When his Government reintroduces the scheme he can get up and say, "We have now done that." However, I do not want to get side-tracked. The honourable member would not know one end of a cow from the other.

It is true, as the honourable member for Warwick said, that when this type of legislation was first introduced, the idea was to allow people to buy themselves out. I had no fight with that at all at the time; but the trouble was we were hitting the problem from the wrong end. If the Government is going to do anything for the dairy industry, it has

to do something about the real facts associated with that industry. I do not care how much is put into the industry, or how efficient it becomes, it will never be a worthwhile proposition until the price the dairy farmers get for their product has some real relationship to their costs and they can show a profit for engaging in the industry. That is the point that has been missed all along when we have been dealing with the dairy industry.

Mr. Powell: What are you prepared to pay for your milk?

Mr. HOUSTON: I do not drink it. To keep the record straight, my not drinking milk relates purely to a medical problem. I do eat ice cream or other dairy products, particularly cheese. I am prepared to pay a reasonable price for locally produced butter and cheese. I hope that satisfies the honourable member. If he quotes my speech in his area, I ask him not to do what many of his colleagues do, that is, quote only part of it. I suggest to him that he should produce the whole speech.

When considering the dairy industry, we must look not only at the production of milk, cream, butter and cheese but also at the profit margin available to the producer. As the honourable member for Bundaberg said, we are not opposed to helping dairy farmers, but do not let Government members say, as they have said over the years in this Chamber and in the electorate, "We have given you money to make yourself bigger and better", and then do nothing else.

Three separate identities are involved in getting milk to the consumer, that is, the producer, the wholesaler and the retailer. In the manufacture of butter and cheese a fourth identity is involved, that is, the factory. At the end of the line, the consumer pays. He does not mind what he pays for the product so long as he believes it is a legitimate, properly calculated price. How much has the Government done to determine whether one section of the community is living off another? In that context I refer to those involved between the consumer and the producer.

In New South Wales, Mr. Willis has called for an inquiry into the marketing of milk and milk products. That is being done because the price of milk and milk products in New South Wales is getting higher. I shall refer later to some of the prices here, and what is happening to our milk and milk products while the Government continues to do nothing about it. Members of the National Party simply talk about the dairy industry believing that that is the end of it. That is not so at all.

Mr. Greenwood: Would you bring in price-fixing?

Mr. HOUSTON: In the correct context that could be good sense. It could do a lot of good.

We must find out who, among those involved in the industry, are getting most from what the consumer pays for the products. Over the years the Government has engaged in what can be described only as a makeshift, stopgap programme.

I shall now deal with the present price of milk. I do not care how much milk is produced, if it cannot be sold at an economic price a loss will be incurred. That principle applies to all products. An article in today's Press shows that the powers that be are converting bottles from a standard pint to 600 ml. The present price of milk is 19c for a bottle containing 568 ml. If the size of the bottle is increased to 600 ml, to keep the relationship the price should be about 20·07c a bottle.

Mr. Powell: Where will you get the 0·07?

Mr. HOUSTON: That is right; we cannot have 0·07. But the wholesaler does not say, "Let us make it 20c"—and the new price is very close to 20c—hoping that people will buy milk at that price. No fear he doesn't! He goes for the extra cent. After all, there is an 0·93c difference between what should have been the increase and what is the artificial increase in price.

Mr. Powell: He would lose 7c for every hundred bottles of milk.

Mr. HOUSTON: It is an extra 0·93c for every bottle, or 93c for every hundred. The honourable member's maths are pretty good.

Let us look at some of the other things. A carton of milk goes from 21c to 23c—again an increase of 2c.

Mr. Lane: When did you last have a glass of milk?

Mr. HOUSTON: I have already answered that. I know when I have had a glass of milk; but, looking at the honourable member, I do not think he has had a wash for a long time. He should go and clean himself up.

A quart carton of milk—1 136 ml—was 41c. It was decided to make that a litre carton. It has dropped to 37c. Actually, calculated on the present price, it should be 36·09c. Once again the public are being touched. When they are being touched—and particularly those on lower incomes who tend to rely on milk more than those on higher incomes—it will be found that they tend to cut down on the amount of milk they consume.

This is one of the problems that the milk industry is facing; yet the Government is doing nothing at all about it. The monopoly set up in Brisbane was allowed with the idea of keeping prices down; but, with a completely free hand, they are operating as a monopoly in the worst possible way. At first the idea of the co-operative scheme

was to get the best out of the monopolistic system. I notice that not one member in this debate or any other debate or in question time has suggested that those responsible for the increase have done the wrong thing. I repeat that the prices should have been made 20c and 36c.

Looking once more at the increases, for the extra 32 ml involved in the change from a pint bottle to the 600 ml bottle the cost is 2c—in other words, 1c for 16 ml. However, in the case of the quart carton, which has dropped from 1 136 ml to 1 000 ml (dropping in price from 41c to 37c), we find that for 136 ml the drop is 4c, or 1c for every 34 ml. These are the things that the industry and the Government should be inquiring into.

I said that the New South Wales State Government is calling for an inquiry because it believes that the milk price in that State is far too high in comparison with the price in other States. A litre carton of milk in Queensland will be 37c; yet in Melbourne it is 31c and in Adelaide and Hobart, 33c. Doesn't this indicate that something is wrong somewhere?

According to the Brisbane Milk Board Chairman—I am quoting his figures, which I hope were reported accurately—out of the 33·4c per litre—that is if it is worked back to existing prices—16·6c goes to the producer, 8·3c goes to the wholesaler and 8·4c goes to the retailer. To me, this seems out of all proportion. Fifty per cent of the selling price goes to the producer and 25 per cent each to the retailer and the wholesaler.

Mr. Greenwood: What about their capital costs?

Mr. HOUSTON: The primary producer has a lot of capital cost—and changes to his machinery, if you like. Someone said, "What about the cow?" To the primary producer, the cow is his unit of production, just as a machine is in a bottling plant. Certainly it is alive, but it is the unit and it has to be changed regularly. It is affected by veterinary and other physical conditions, which have a bearing on whether or not it produces well. In addition, climatic conditions, the type of food and other factors have an effect. But they do not affect the machinery in a wholesaler's establishment. The wholesale industry in this State is receiving too large a proportion of the price that people are paying for milk. The wholesaler and the retailer each get 25 per cent. The idea of the wholesaler getting the same percentage return is ridiculous.

The reason the retailer is given that amount is that he has a lower volume of sales. The wholesaler sells in bulk and in big quantities. A retailer could go to a home and deliver one litre and go to the next home and deliver another litre. In a

day he delivers so many litres. But the wholesaler has the opportunity to sell 10, 50 or even 100 times as much.

Mr. Moore: The wholesaler is also the bottler.

Mr. HOUSTON: Yes, but the bottler—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Gunn): Order! I remind the honourable member that I am still in the chair.

Mr. HOUSTON: Yes, Mr. Gunn, and you are a very attentive listener. I can see that because you have not interrupted me until just now. I am greatly appreciative of your attentiveness.

An Honourable Member: He was asleep.

Mr. HOUSTON: He was not asleep. That is why he asked me to speak to him.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member will return to the Bill.

Mr. HOUSTON: I am right on the Bill. If we are to keep pumping millions of dollars into the industry—and I do not mind doing it—we must make sure it has a beneficial effect on the industry. If we allow the industry to continue producing milk when it cannot make economic sales because of other factors, it is money down the drain and we are treating these people shabbily. It is no good propping people up and allowing them to get into debt. They are not getting this money for nothing. The money they are borrowing cheaply for this purpose is not their only commitment. They are buying other things as they expand. We must ensure that they have the ability to sell their product.

The Government must look into who is supplying Brisbane with milk. It would be reasonable to assume that more milk would be required as the population of Brisbane expands. We would expect that more and more outside farms would be sending milk to Brisbane, but that is not so. This should be looked into. After all, if the suppliers are allowed to sell a fair percentage of their milk at the high price—provided the price is correct and is economically sound in comparison with costs—it would be better for the industry. In travelling around the dairy farms all over the State I have found that some farmers sell the whole of their production at the high price and the other poor devils sell at the low price.

Mr. Moore: The manufacturing milk price?

Mr. HOUSTON: Yes. I do not think that is fair at all. With modern transport and co-operative operations, this could be tackled in a much better way. Although I support money going into the industry, we should make sure that the industry—from the producer to the final sale to the householder—is made more economic.

The honourable member for Bundaberg suggested that we have too many small factories. Surely if a small factory can be kept going in an area, it is desirable to keep it going. But the costs of maintenance and development—

Mr. Moore: He was talking about butter factories.

Mr. HOUSTON: That is right, but the principle applies anywhere. Many small secondary industries have had to close because they were uneconomic and could never be made economic. Some of the big problems in Queensland are climatic conditions and the condition of roads and transport generally. There are areas that are isolated in times of flood.

I also feel that there should be co-operation with New South Wales in the investigation that I asked the Government to carry out into the entire milk industry. After all, Northern New South Wales is very close to the Queensland border and some of the milk produced in New South Wales will find its way to Queensland, together with cream, butter and cheese. I therefore think that it would be a good idea to have a look at all these considerations together. I feel that there is something wrong when the Brisbane price of milk will be 37c a litre whereas in Melbourne it is only 31c, in Adelaide 33c and in Hobart 33c.

Mr. CASEY (Mackay) (9.51 p.m.): I have a few remarks to make on this matter.

Mr. Lindsay: How many?

Mr. CASEY: I am certainly not going to put in only an electorate plug, as the honourable member for Everton did during the debate on the last Bill. I propose to speak reasonably on some aspects that concern many people in the dairying industry throughout the State.

The Bill is designed for the restructuring of the dairying industry rather than the disposal of uneconomic dairy farms. The whole basis of the Bill is the assistance that has already been given to the industry and the future allocations that will be made. When looking at financial assistance being given to assist uneconomic dairy farms to become viable, it is most important to consider other aspects of the dairying industry that might completely upset the proposals before the Committee this evening.

There are dangerous signs on the horizon for the Queensland dairying industry. Those members, including myself, who follow this industry closely (it is of great concern to your area, too, Mr. Gunn) know full well that on both national and world-wide markets there is an oversupply of dairy products such as skim milk and casein. This produces a backlash in all countries that are exporting dairy products. If it is impossible to export skim milk, more milk is put into the production of

butter or attempts are made to sell more milk. That is what is happening in Australia today.

I refer initially to the Victorian industry. It has already become involved in cut-throat interstate trading. Quite recently a large advertising programme was undertaken in that State and as a result of that advertising approximately 6,000 Victorian dairy farmers penned their names to a petition to do certain things that were in the interests of the Victorian dairying industry only and would bring suffering and hardship in other States, particularly New South Wales and Queensland. The Victorian industry hotly contested through the High Court a decision that the New South Wales Government tried to impose. That is another reason behind the move, to which the honourable member for Bulimba referred, by Sir Eric Willis, the New South Wales Premier, to institute an inquiry into the dairying industry in that State.

In the southern part of New South Wales there is the problem of the Victorian industry making inroads into the New South Wales market, and in the northern part of New South Wales there is the problem of not being able to gain access to the main New South Wales market in Sydney. This is the market on which the Victorian industry has its eye, because Victorian dairy farmers could produce and supply milk and milk products to the lucrative Sydney market, with its high price structure that was mentioned by the honourable member for Bulimba, at a much better figure than could producers in the Northern Rivers of New South Wales. They are already receiving almost as much support under this scheme before the Committee this evening as the Queensland producers are, and this is the big worry that the New South Wales industry has, but over all it is compounded. The Victorians are already unhappy with the fact that 35.6 per cent—I think that was the figure used by the Minister in his introductory remarks—of the aid that has already been given (the \$44,500,000 provided by the Commonwealth Government) has been spent in Queensland and another almost similar figure has been spent in New South Wales, mainly in the Northern Rivers area, to assist the dairy industry in its plight.

I think it is only fair to remind the Committee as Queenslanders that the Federal Government today is controlled by a group of Victorian farmers who have no sympathy whatsoever for certain farming groups in Queensland because they already append their support to the various dairying organisations in their own State. This group of Victorian farmers who control the Commonwealth Government know full well what the score is in so far as our primary industries are concerned, and they know also that in the dairy industry in Australia the Victorians and the Tasmanians provide the main economic units. Consequently, it is the money of the taxpayers of those States—this is the way they see it—that is also being used to prop up the industry in Queensland and

New South Wales. So we have to be very, very careful of any moves that we make in the industry today.

Another point about which I would like to remind the Committee is the recommendation made late last year by the Industries Assistance Commission, a Commonwealth-Government-sponsored body, which has actually recommended the complete scrubbing of the Dairy Industry Reconstruction Scheme. I feel that the critical issue facing us this evening in accepting this Bill is one that is known to the Minister for Primary Industries. I am only sorry he has left the Chamber. He was listening to the debate earlier. It is just as important to his portfolio as it is to the Minister who is charged with the responsibility of introducing this Bill, probably even more important. His normal responsibility is land matters. Nonetheless, I think that the most critical problem we face is that both Victorian and Tasmanian producers are selling most of their dairy products to low-priced export markets.

We have nothing in this Bill that will worry, say, the Tablelands producers, because they are basically milk market producers. Nor will it particularly worry the producers in my own area round Mackay. Here again they are virtually entirely milk market producers. The same applies in the Moreton area surrounding Brisbane and in most of your area, Mr. Gunn. Most of your suppliers are supplying mainly to the Moreton milk market and rely on that market for their return. Consequently they have good returns and the industry is reasonably stable in this area. This even applies on the Darling Downs because we have had this growth into the area of producers supplying milk to the Brisbane market. But it will greatly worry the producers in the Upper Mary Valley. I would hazard a guess that the Minister for Police, who is in the Chamber, would be concerned about what is going to happen to some of the producers in his area in the future if we do get a restructuring on a Commonwealth-wide basis along the lines of the recommendations of the Industries Assistance Commission or of this new dairy stabilisation plan. It is certainly going to worry the producers in the Burnett Valley area and the Dawson Valley area and these are the producers whom I believe we are seeking most to support and sponsor under this Bill before the Committee this evening.

I mention this matter because it comes into the over-all consideration of the industry. The Australian Dairy Corporation's plan for stabilisation and orderly marketing, which has been put forward in the main by the Victorian and Tasmanian producers, is completely unacceptable to Queensland in its present form. If accepted, in some areas of the State it would probably bring about the downfall of the restructuring covered by the proposed Bill.

The proposal for a 1·3c per gallon levy at the gate, with no indication of any restriction on future levy rates, is a dangerous threat to Queensland. It will not worry Victorian or Tasmanian producers greatly, because responsible leaders of the dairy industry have indicated that under the proposal Queensland producers could be paying upwards of \$500,000 a year to southern States to help them gain a greater income. Already the per-capita income of Tasmanian and Victorian producers is far above that of any producer in Queensland.

When I first stood for election to this Assembly in 1969, I had a Liberal candidate, not a National Party candidate, opposing me.

Mr. Moore: You nearly got done, too.

Mr. CASEY: I did not even nearly get done. An amazing thing happened. Suddenly, out of the blue, a person turned up who was to be a full-time organiser for the Liberal Party for the four or five weeks of the campaign. I met that gentleman and found that he was driving round town in a brand new Mercedes Benz. He owned a share-farm dairy in Victoria, and he was so rich at that stage that he could afford to take four or five weeks off and drive to Queensland in a new Mercedes Benz.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Gunn): Order! I do not see that that has anything to do with the Bill.

Mr. CASEY: He did not want to drive his three-year-old car up from his Victorian dairy farm. It will give you an idea, Mr. Gunn, of the wealth of Victorian dairy farmers compared with Queensland dairy farmers. Not very many dairy farmers in the Esk district drive round in Mercedes Benz cars.

Mr. Lindsay: That's a nice suit you have on.

Mr. CASEY: Yes, not too bad; it is pure wool. The same cannot be said by the honourable member for Everton, who is wearing a cheap Hong Kong suit.

Mr. LINDSAY: I rise to a point of order. I object to that remark. My suit was not made in Hong Kong.

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

Mr. CASEY: I accept the honourable member's remark that it was not made in Hong Kong. Perhaps it was made in Singapore. It certainly has an oriental cut.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! Please return to the Bill.

Mr. CASEY: I wish to make one final point. Under the new dairy stabilisation plan the levy will also cover milk market supplies. So the viable dairy farmers in Queensland will have to pay a levy that

will assist the Victorian and Tasmanian producers, and I think there will be a further breakdown in the industry in this State if that comes about.

In my opinion, the new scheme will not be of any use or assistance to the industry in Queensland.

Hon. K. B. TOMKINS (Roma—Minister for Lands, Forestry, National Parks and Wildlife Service) (10.4 p.m.), in reply: I thank honourable members on both sides of the Chamber for their contributions to the debate. I propose to reply in great detail at the second-reading stage.

Motion (Mr. Tomkins) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

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

“That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until Tuesday next.”

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 10.6 p.m.