

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 1976

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

PAPERS

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

Report of the President of the Industrial Court of Queensland for the year 1975-76.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Orders in Council under—

Water Act 1926-1975.

River Improvement Trust Act 1940-1971.

The Rural Training Schools Act of 1965 and the Local Bodies' Loans Guarantee Act 1923-1975.

Regulations under—

Consumer Affairs Act 1970-1974.

River Improvement Trust Act 1940-1971.

By-laws under the Education Act 1964-1974.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

STRIKE AT COLLINSVILLE POWER STATION

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (11.3 a.m.): The power restrictions in North Queensland have occurred owing to the strike by members of the A.M.W.U., E.T.U., F.E.D.F.A. and F.I.A. employed at the Collinsville Power Station. These men are employed in the workshops, in the supply of coal to the boilers and in the operation of the water-treatment plant for the supply of water for the boilers and for general maintenance. They are an ad hoc group calling themselves "the Combined Maintenance Union".

A total of 59 men are involved and they are seeking an increase of \$10 per day over and above the award provisions as an all-purpose allowance on account of the alleged isolation and additional costs at Collinsville.

They believe that they are an underprivileged group when compared with operating staff and coal miners.

The Northern Electric Authority's attitude to this claim is that it must be arbitrated and that it will negotiate only with accredited union officials. No concessions can be made because the workers involved are covered by a general award and any variation thereto will immediately flow throughout the electricity supply industry and subsequently to general industry. Any such concessions would be contrary to wage indexation guide-lines. It should be remembered that a claim of a similar nature for \$12 a fortnight was heard before a Full Bench of the Industrial Commission as late as last April and was refused.

On 25 August the men went on strike but resumed on 31 August after arrangements were agreed for a compulsory conference at Collinsville to discuss the issue on 1 September. No progress was made at the conference and the men walked out on strike again following the conference on 1 September. At a meeting on 6 September the men decided to remain on strike for at least another two days.

The authority has kept the Industrial Commission informed of the situation and a conference under Commissioner G. W. Pont was called in Brisbane at 2.30 p.m. yesterday, 7 September, with the representatives of the above unions, at which it was foreshadowed that it may be necessary to apply for stand-down orders because it has now become impossible to operate any generating plant at Collinsville because of the men's action. At the conclusion of the conference Commissioner Pont said—

"All I ask and very strongly recommend is that the State officials endeavour to do something about getting it back on the rails. Otherwise we can be confronted with a more serious situation, having in mind what usually happens when we have stand-down orders. You involve a lot more people, but I suppose the Department must think it has to get worse before it gets better. But I would ask the officials to convey what has transpired here today to the members in Collinsville in an endeavour to see if they will be back to work tomorrow morning at 7.30."

Over the period 25 August to 30 August, when the men were on strike, no coal was delivered to the boiler bunkers. All coal that had been in the bunkers was used, and large quantities of oil were brought in to operate the plant on oil. This, combined with the maximum feasible use of the hydro-piant and the old Townsville Power Station, the gas turbine at Mackay, together with appeals to the public to conserve power, enabled the Northern Electric Authority to meet the demands except that it was necessary to close down the draglines on the northern coal-fields from 10 a.m. on Sunday, 29 August, until the men resumed work.

Over this period some 183,000 gallons of fuel oil were consumed, at an extra cost of \$61,500.

As a result of the further strike action by the men at Collinsville, coal supplies to the boilers again ceased but, in addition, as a result of their action, the demineralising plant was not recharged and there is now no make-up water for the boilers and progressively they had to be closed down, the last boilers being closed down late yesterday. This leaves only 170 MW to 180 MW of generating plant available to meet a normal load of 230 MW at the morning peak and 280 MW at the evening peak with intermediate loads during the day.

A rationing order was issued yesterday authorising the authorities connected to the N.E.A. system—Cairns, Townsville, Mackay Regional Electricity Boards—to disconnect supply on a rotational basis to restrict electricity usage to the capacity of the generating capacity available. This has been accompanied by very extensive appeals to the public over radio and TV and in the Press.

It has been necessary to shut the draglines down, and over the period 6.00 a.m. to 9.00 a.m. yesterday, it was necessary to restrict supply rotationally; the demand, without the draglines, over this period being still some 25 MW in excess of the generating capability. With the deterioration of the position, a more particular rationing order is being considered to prohibit specific usage of electricity.

Another matter of concern is the draw-down of water storages because of the increased usage of the hydro plant on account of the strike.

This morning the men decided to stay on strike. They will meet next Monday, 13 September 1976.

The members of the N.E.A.'s board are considering an application for stand-down orders.

A.B.C. TV PROGRAMME "THIS DAY TONIGHT"; POLICE OPERATIONS AT CEDAR BAY

Hon. T. G. NEWBERY (Mirani—Minister for Police) (11.8 a.m.): I watched the Queensland edition of the A.B.C. programme "This Day Tonight" last night and witnessed one of the most blatantly biased pieces of so-called objective reporting I have ever seen. The reporter, a young person named Olle, presented a tissue of claims which amounted to a series of slurs against the integrity of the Queensland Police Force without any attempt to separate allegations from fact.

The programme was an example of pure, unadulterated bias. It made not even the slightest pretext of balanced reporting in its coverage of a recent police operation at Cedar Bay near Cooktown. It presented statements against police as fact without any attempt to substantiate or question the

statements. This is the sort of reporting that has brought the programme into disrepute in Queensland.

It should be of interest to members of this House and the taxpaying public that the persons in control of this programme suddenly found the resources to expend a large amount of public money to send a television team 1,500 miles to promote the image of convicted drug offenders at a time when the A.B.C. is reported to be going through an intense period of self-examination and cost-cutting.

There was no attempt at any stage during the programme to question the claims of any person interviewed, particularly with regard to the reason why police were called to visit the area. The reason, of course, was that police had received firm information that illegal drugs were being grown and used in the area by some of the residents. The fact that during the raid police confiscated 100 marijuana plants, which would have had a value on the illicit market of \$20,000, was not mentioned. This fact was published widely in other sections of the media.

I want to make the point at this stage that there was no attempt in the programme to draw any line of demarcation between the communities living at Cedar Bay. The area where police made their arrests was in the northern section of Cedar Bay where a group of undesirable persons had assembled and were living in complete squalor. The stench of human excrement was overpowering and the rotting carcasses of two wild pigs lay near a sluggish creek which served as a water supply.

The people in this area were not on a lease as claimed in the programme. I am advised that they had erected illegal structures in a sanctuary—a State timber reserve which is soon to be declared a national park. They had defiled the area by growing illegal drugs, killing wildlife and living in a state of indescribable filth.

I make the distinction between the people living in this area where the arrests took place and those living in the central or southern region of the bay, who were reported to be living in far more healthy and hygienic conditions although they, too, were camped illegally on a State reserve and were requested by police to vacate. No other action was taken by police against these residents.

No attempt was made to ask the residents of this so-called "harmless" northern commune just what their leader or associates might wish to do with \$20,000 worth of marijuana once the crop reached maturity. Nor was any mention made in the programme of the fact that one resident is now in Stuart Gaol as a result of the raid, after pleading guilty to a charge of possessing marijuana seed, which I have no doubt was ready for the next planting.

The programme made no mention of the fact previously published in other sections of the media that an escapee from the

Cairns Watchhouse was suspected of being in the Cedar Bay area at the time of the raid. In the light of the biased attitude of the segment screened last night I feel it is my responsibility as Minister to bring before this House information regarding this escapee. The person in question was being held in custody pending the hearing of charges brought by Federal narcotics agents. The same escapee is reputedly wanted for questioning overseas regarding drug-trafficking, the murder of a police officer and the murder of a prison warden.

This person escaped from the Cairns Watchhouse with assistance from others outside and was reported to police as being seen in the Cedar Bay area. It will also be of interest to this House that persons suspected of assisting in the escape of the person from the Cairns Watchhouse were known to be living in the northern part of Cedar Bay.

This House should also know that a number of residents of the Cedar Bay area fled into the jungle on arrival of police and could not be apprehended.

During the programme emphasis was given to the inaccessibility of the area which was the subject of the raid. Yet the television team seemed to have no trouble in reaching the area and nor would any person who was interested in drug smuggling. The programme made every attempt to give the viewer the impression that the people living in this particular settlement were there as sweet, naked innocents with their only interest to live in peace with the sun and the South Pacific. It made no mention of the fact that these "innocents" had \$20,000 worth of drugs growing in their back yard.

Four people were charged with drug offences as a result of the raid and I understand that two are now serving gaol sentences in Townsville. No mention was made of the interesting fact that the major offender—the man convicted of growing \$20,000 worth of illegal drugs—had, by some happy coincidence, avoided going to gaol when his fine was suddenly paid in Cooktown by another person. I hope members of this House are not naive enough to think that this benefactor who came good to the tune of \$500 was just some passing Good Samaritan who just happened to be in Cooktown as part of his leisure pursuits.

Members of this House should also know that the person so convicted was apprehended armed with a shot-gun making towards the beach where other persons arrested during the raid were being held and that the shot-gun was discharged in a struggle with police.

It is a fact—of course, not reported in the programme—that many residents of the area were armed and fired shots when they fled into the jungle away from police. It is also a fact that the attendance of the naval patrol

vessel H.M.A.S. "Bayonet" was considered necessary because of the unusually large number of trawlers reported to be in the area—some of which were suspected of drug-trafficking. This House should be informed that, although no evidence of drugs was found on any vessel, a number ran from the patrol boat and had to be chased before a search could take place.

It is a matter of common knowledge that there is a festering drug problem in some areas of Far North Queensland, which have a climate and isolation suitable to the growing of illegal drugs. Yet no mention of this problem was made in the programme; nor was mention made of the contribution the \$20,000 Cedar Bay crop might make to the problem. I am intrigued that there was no attempt by the programme to interview any law-abiding members of the North Queensland community, who have expressed their mounting concern about the problems of drug use and trafficking in the area.

No mention was made of the police contribution to combating this problem, despite the fact that some five weeks previously the same programme had run a story that North Queensland was wide open to drug-trafficking and that a Federal committee should look into the situation as a matter of urgency.

It is also necessary for this House to be informed that at no time has any official complaint been received concerning police action at Cedar Bay by myself, by the acting magistrate in Cooktown who heard the charges, or by any person in authority. The allegations have come only from those who have most to gain by attempting to discredit police in their attempts to stamp out drug abuse and drug-trafficking in the area.

I understand that some police officers who took part in the raid were considering legal action against the programme as a result of unsubstantiated claims it contained. I trust that the programme is not another victim of an obvious campaign by drug pushers and vested interests to discredit police action against drug problems in North Queensland. I can assure this House that such a campaign to discredit police in their pursuit of drug offenders will not succeed.

There will be no haven in North Queensland where people can disregard the law. There will be no pockets of isolated jungle where they can grow and use illegal drugs. This obvious campaign to discredit police action only increases my own resolve and that of the Queensland Police Force to attack the drug problem with renewed dedication and vigour. I repeat—there will be no haven for the pushers and users of illegal drugs in this State. I give my full support to the Queensland Police Force in their efforts to stamp out the presence of this evil in our society.

Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES
COMMITTEE

Mr. AHERN (Landsborough) (11.18 a.m.): I present the report of the Parliamentary Privileges Committee and move—

“That the report be printed.”

Ordered to be printed.

PETITIONS

AMENDMENT OF LIQUOR ACT

Mr. MARGINSON (Wolston) presented a petition from 129 electors of Queensland praying that the Parliament of Queensland will amend the Liquor Act so as to allow golf and bowls clubs to sell take-away bottled liquor to their members.

Petition read and received.

[Two similar petitions were presented by Dr. Scott-Young (134 signatories), and these petitions were read and received.]

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

1. CREDIT REPORTING AGENCIES;
INVASION OF PRIVACY

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

(1) How many credit-reporting agencies have been registered or licensed under the Invasion of Privacy Act?

(2) Are there any credit-reporting agencies with registered addresses outside the Brisbane metropolitan area? If so, how many are situated in each provincial centre?

(3) How many prosecutions have been made pursuant to the Invasion of Privacy Act since its proclamation, under what section of the Act was each prosecution made and what was the result and relevant fine in each case?

Answers:—

(1) Twenty-five.

(2) Yes. The provincial centres of Southport, Toowoomba, Cairns and Bundaberg each have one registered credit-reporting agency.

(3) The honourable member is referred to the answer to his question on 31 August 1976.

2. LAND SWINDLES

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

(1) Has his attention been drawn to the newspaper article of 25 July headlined “Land swindles are netting \$ millions”?

(2) Are weaknesses in the State's land property laws allowing criminals to swindle people out of millions of dollars

in the sale of unregistered land and will legislation making it illegal for anyone to sell land without title not be introduced for two years?

(3) Have detectives from the New South Wales Fraud Squad visited Brisbane to investigate complaints from New South Wales residents who paid large deposits on land in three Queensland centres and then found that there were no title deeds for their blocks?

(4) Is the Queensland Corporate Affairs Commission inquiring into complaints by at least 60 people who claim that they have been swindled by the same operator, did the operator go bankrupt before action could be taken against him and, if so, who was the operator?

(5) How many land developers have been investigated as a result of complaints lodged with the Corporate Affairs Commission within the last three years and what were the results of the investigations?

Answer:—

(1 to 5) I ask the honourable member to repeat the question for tomorrow.

3. INCREASED RAIL FREIGHTS FOR
GRAIN GROWERS

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

(1) With reference to the article in “The Courier-Mail” of 7 September that rail freights and fares may rise in the State Budget on 30 September, is he aware of the growing concern among Queensland grain growers about the high cost of rail freight increases in the Liberal/National Party Budget in 1975?

(2) Did he give an assurance to the Queensland grain growers annual conference that State Cabinet would consider a request for a 40 per cent reduction on grain sorghum rail freight?

(3) Did he also tell the conference that he has always believed that passenger rail fares are too cheap?

(4) Has there been any request to the Government for a separation of all grain freights into different categories? If so, what has been the result of the request and the request for a 40 per cent reduction passed by the grain growers' association?

Answers:—

(1) Yes. The increase in rail freights to which the honourable member refers was necessary in view of increasing operating costs. I would point out to the honourable member that a maximum freight concession on grain transport was brought in by this Government in July 1972. A maximum still applies in spite of the 40 per cent increase in rates in 1975.

Queensland grain growers' spokesmen have said on many occasions how they appreciated the assistance given in this way. The industry appreciates that the Government refrained as long as possible from increasing freights.

(2) Yes. I said that Cabinet would consider any request for a freight reduction. I might mention that Cabinet considers many things. It agrees with a number of them and does not agree with others. I do this in my own ministerial responsibilities.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: Why do you grandstand at question time?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I draw the attention of the honourable member for Archerfield to the fact that there will be no interjections whilst the Minister is on his feet. I ask him to obey the rules of the House.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: I will do so accordingly.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the honourable member does not, he will hear from me.

Answers (contd.):—

At the same time I stated that the Government would be prepared to look at freights if grain prices tumbled. Any responsible Government would consider a request for a freight reduction if such a reduction appeared warranted in the circumstances at the time.

I might mention that during the debate on the resolution in relation to grain sorghum I was asked to give a point of view. I do not consider that the current price of grain sorghum is a collapsed price. The Premier and the then Treasurer (Sir Gordon Chalk), in discussions with leaders of the grain-growing industry after the 40 per cent increase in freights last year, indicated that, if there was a collapse in grain prices, freights would be reconsidered. I think the Government proved its credentials in this matter in what was done for the beef industry when freights were increased by 40 per cent across the board. Because of the then parlous economic situation of the beef industry, freight rates for that industry were not increased.

(3) Yes, and I pointed out that, despite cheap fares, people are still not using passenger trains to anywhere near capacity.

(4) This is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Transport.

4. ELECTRIC BLANKETS

Mr. Dean, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Industrial Development, Labour Relations and Consumer Affairs—

(1) Has his department investigated newspaper reports attributed to the Australian Consumers' Association that 11 out of 28 double-bed blankets failed a basic

electrical safety test and that two of the most expensive blankets tested were found to be potential fire risks?

(2) Are all brands of electric blankets sold in Queensland subjected to Government tests?

(3) Are any of the blankets mentioned by A.C.A. sold in Queensland and, if so, what action has been taken to protect the public?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) This is not a matter coming within my ministerial responsibility and I suggest the honourable member redirect his question to my colleague the Minister for Mines and Energy.

5. REPORT ON COASTAL LOWLANDS STUDY, MARYBOROUGH-ELLIOTT RIVER AREA

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

With reference to the Coastal Lowlands Study of the Maryborough-Elliott River area and the meeting of the permanent heads of those departments associated with the report with committee members on 27 August last to discuss the report and the recommendations arising from the study, when will copies of the report be made available to interested parties?

Answer:—

I have under consideration the Report of the Coastal Lowlands Land Use Study and a broad summary of such report and desirable land use map have been forwarded to the honourable member and to the honourable member for Isis. The local authorities involved have also been forwarded a summary of the report for comment before I give final assent to printing of the report for public release.

6. NEW BUILDING, MARYBOROUGH HIGH SCHOOL

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

(1) When will the three-storey building recently under construction in the grounds of the Maryborough High School be put in use?

(2) After the new building is being used, how many students will still have their classrooms across the road in what was the boys' high school building?

(3) What plans have been made to correct this most unsatisfactory situation with the resultant loss in time for teachers and students?

Answers:—

(1) The building was occupied this week.

(2) A total of 234 grade 8 students will be housed in the classrooms of the technical college complex and 127 girls will have to attend home economics classes at the high school, which will entail each girl crossing the road once or twice a week. Half of the grade 8 students will cross the road once a week for art classes. The library building is situated in the high school grounds, as too is the school tuck-shop.

(3) Forward planning makes provision for a first year (grade 8) centre at the high school as and when funding becomes available.

7. AREAS FOR TRAIL-BIKE AND HORSE-RIDING, MARYBOROUGH

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

(1) What approaches have been made by the Maryborough City Council to the interdepartmental committee set up to investigate the setting aside of lands for the purpose of trail-bike-riding and horse-riding?

(2) What assistance is the interdepartmental committee able to render to local government to provide areas suitable for the popular recreational activities of trail-bike-riding and horse-riding?

Answers:—

(1) In response to a request forwarded to local authorities in June 1976, the Maryborough City Council wrote to the Interdepartmental Committee to Examine the Availability of Land for Recreation Purposes etc. on 25 August 1976 enclosing a copy of a report from a firm of planners relating to the use of the Teddington Water Reserve for recreational purposes. The council also indicated that it had been able to arrange for the lease of suitable land for two pony clubs operating in Maryborough. This report, together with replies received from other local authorities, is at present being examined and the information supplied is being collated for consideration at the next meeting of the interdepartmental committee which will be held as soon as this has been completed.

(2) Assistance to a local authority to acquire suitable areas for trail-bike-riding and horse-riding will largely depend on the circumstances pertaining to the particular area. There does not appear to be any easy solution to this problem and it may be some time before the committee will be in a position to make firm recommendations. However, from a perusal of replies received, it is evident that in a considerable number of cases, local authorities have already made suitable provision for these recreational activities. Because Maryborough is a closely settled

area, the availability of land for trail-bike-riding is restricted and it could be expected that problems would arise because of conflict with residents living in the area mainly because of the noise problem. For this reason, I understand the council is looking at the possibility of the use of the Teddington Water Reserve, which is outside Maryborough, for this purpose.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

DISMISSAL OF EMPLOYEES AT COMMONWEALTH ENGINEERING (QLD.) PTY. LTD.

Mr. BURNS: I ask the Minister for Industrial Development, Labour Relations and Consumer Affairs: Is he aware that the dismissal of employees from Commonwealth Engineering (Qld.) Pty. Ltd. of Evans Road, Salisbury, will commence from today and that up to 61 employees will be dismissed this month, with 13 or 14 employees a fortnight being dismissed from then until March 1977, when it is expected that only 100 people will be left working in that factory? As the workers and the unions concerned are interested in meeting the Minister to discuss this matter, can he make arrangements to meet them as a matter of urgency?

Mr. CAMPBELL: I am not aware of the facts related by the Leader of the Opposition, and I take his statement to the House as being in accordance with the facts. Nothing disturbs me more than when employees are displaced from industry through lack of orders, and I presume that is the reason why this action is being taken by the company. I will do my utmost to meet his request, but I point out to him that, this being Apprenticeship Week, I am heavily committed. I am fully committed today and tonight; I am fully committed tomorrow, when I am obliged to go to Ipswich; and I have a fairly heavy programme on Friday; but I will endeavour to accommodate them on Friday.

VISITS TO QUEENSLAND PORTS BY UNITED STATES NUCLEAR-POWERED SHIPS

Mr. TURNER: I ask the Premier: In view of the presence in the Coral Sea of the U.S. nuclear-powered ship "Enterprise" and the possibility that the "Enterprise" and "Truxtun" may visit Queensland ports, will he give an indication of what the Government's attitude is to visits to Queensland ports by nuclear-powered ships belonging to our American allies, who, during the last war, suffered many losses in the battle of the Coral Sea so that Australia could remain a free country?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I agree with the honourable member that if it had not been for the United States of America and the sacrifices made by hundreds of thousands of American citizens, we would not be here today as we are. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the United States of America

and to the people of that country who, as did many of our own people, made the supreme sacrifice during the last war. I reiterate publicly what I have already said to representatives of the Press: that any United States ship and any representative of the United States of America will always be welcomed by me and by the Government of Queensland, at any time and anywhere.

FIRE AT SALISBURY STATE SCHOOL

Mrs. KYBURZ: I ask the Minister for Works and Housing: Will he give an indication of what arrangements have been made to accommodate those school-children who were displaced as the result of the fire that destroyed a wing at the Salisbury State School and when replacement buildings may be constructed?

Mr. LEE: After the honourable member for Salisbury made representations to me early on Monday morning as a result of the disastrous fire at the Salisbury State School, I asked Cabinet on Monday to recommend the expenditure of \$250,000 on the provision of eight new classrooms of modern construction, including two withdrawal areas. This recommendation will be put to the Executive Council on Thursday, and I am sure that it will be approved. For the time being some temporary classroom accommodation will be provided, but it will be replaced totally by the new classrooms.

GOLD COAST CASINO

Mrs. KYBURZ: I ask the Premier: Will he give an undertaking that the Government will vehemently oppose the building of a casino on the Gold Coast and that it will not consider the outcry from big business interests who will bleat in the name of tourism?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: All honourable members would be aware of the fact that for a long time the Government's policy has been one of opposition to the building of a casino on the Gold Coast. I can assure the honourable member for Salisbury that that is still our policy and that we have not seen any reason for changing it.

WITHDRAWAL OF GROUNDSMEN AND EQUIPMENT FROM CRICKET GROUNDS

Mr. KAUS: I ask the Minister for Community and Welfare Services and Minister for Sport: Is he aware of the stab in the back to Queensland cricketers by the recent Brisbane City Council decision to withdraw groundsmen and equipment from cricket grounds? The decision by the council will cause a drop in cricket standards, and create a bleak future for Queensland cricketers and a dangerous situation at grounds because of unprepared wickets. Is there any way in which the Minister can assist the cricket clubs in their present predicament?

Mr. HERBERT: I was made aware very quickly of the council decision to cut out its support to cricket. It happens, of course, that as soon as one authority pulls out, those concerned go looking for alternative areas for finance. In this particular instance, it was a very brutal act because it was instantaneous. Any body that intends to withdraw support from any organisation should at least give it some warning and some time to prepare. In this instance, that did not happen at all. The council just cut their throats and left them.

This action has created extreme difficulty for cricket authorities as they had no time to prepare or, in any shape or form, organise to meet this emergency. It will have a very detrimental effect on the coming season. In fact, some of the clubs do not know how they will get out of the situation they are in.

Under the guide-lines for distribution of the sports funds at my disposal, it is not possible for me to assist the clubs at all. The maintenance of grounds is not an area in which we operate; nor is it one in which we could afford to operate. The requests by the Cricket Association to the Department of Sport seem of recent times to have totalled about \$50,000 a year, which is a reasonable contribution for any State Government to make to the sport.

The situation is that it is a matter for the Brisbane City Council. I cannot understand why it acted in the way it did. It could have said several months ago, obviously when it made the decision, that it intended to do it by a given date and given them a chance to organise their supporters and benefactors to see if they could foot the bill that will now be handed to them. It is an extremely retrograde step. I wish that the Brisbane City Council could see the light of day because it now appears that council will be contributing less to cricket in Brisbane than smaller local authorities are contributing in country areas.

DISMISSAL OF TEACHERS CONVICTED ON OTHER THAN DRUG CHARGES

Mr. McKECHNIE: I ask the Minister for Education and Cultural Activities: How many teachers have been dismissed from the Education Department over the past five years for convictions of indictable offences other than drug offences? Did the Queensland Teachers' Union make any move to have them reinstated in other positions or protest about so-called double penalties?

Mr. BIRD: When the president of the Queensland Teachers' Union started to talk about the action that was taken against the four teachers who were convicted of an indictable offence, that is the use of marijuana, and about what he referred to as double punishment—a matter which has been dealt with and explained in full by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations; I refer to the ombudsman, Mr. Longland—I asked the officers of my

department to take out figures indicating the number of teachers who had been dismissed from my department over the past five years for convictions of indictable offences other than the use of marijuana, and it is very interesting to note that altogether 11 teachers have been dismissed—five of them for offences against children, two for gross indecencies against males, one for assault on a female, one for robbery with violence and two for stealing. I understand that at no time did the president of the Queensland Teachers' Union or the union itself consider that these people had been dealt with twice for the one offence, because at no time did they take any action to have them reinstated. Now, of course, Mr. Costello—and I refer to Mr. Costello because he is the man on whose casting vote the decision to strike was taken—

Mr. Hinze: Does he smoke pot, too?

Mr. BIRD: I do not know, and I am not concerned about that, but I am concerned about his double standards. If Mr. Costello is genuine about wanting the reinstatement of those four teachers and this Government were to back down on the decision that has been taken, he and his union and all those persons to whom I referred previously would have every right to demand the same treatment, that is, to be taken back into the Education Department. I ask the parents and, indeed, the teachers of this State to come out and state categorically whether or not they would want such circumstances to apply in the schools throughout the State. We could imagine what would happen if we allowed all these types of people to be taken back into the teaching service. I would say parents would be suspicious for all time about just how genuine, sincere and decent our teachers were. I know from the number of letters, phone calls and telegrams that have come to me that the parents of this State are indeed very concerned, and I know that the great majority of the teachers of this State feel the same way about this matter.

EXTENSION WORK, BRUNSWICK STREET RAILWAY STATION AND TUNNEL

Mr. JONES: I ask the Minister for Transport: As to the proposed extension work on the Brunswick Street Railway Station and tunnel, will he explain on what grounds he based his claim that the proposed method of work was discussed fully with the local businessmen before the contract was let? If such a discussion did not take place, what reply did he receive to queries directed to the proprietors of the cinema and the owners of adjoining property and other properties along Brunswick Street?

Mr. K. W. HOOPER: The engineers had many discussions with business people, particularly those in the area of the Valley that is affected by the new Brunswick Street Bridge. These discussions took place immediately after the contract was let, because, naturally, the contractor had to know what

conditions were going to apply. There have been a number of discussions since then, both with the Commissioner for Railways (Mr. Goldston) and with me, and as late as Monday of this week there was a combined meeting. For the very first time, Valley traders got together.

As I told the House recently, traders were very much divided in their attitude to the question of what conditions should apply there; in fact, one point of view was that on no account should the street be closed, while the other point of view was that it should be closed.

There is now a joint approach, the proposal being that the street be closed on certain conditions. I hope that later today I will know that those conditions have been accepted by the business people of the Valley. I sincerely hope they are. The Valley is a very important part of the city, and certainly it is a centre that we do not want to affect unnecessarily. However, as I am sure the honourable member for Cairns and other honourable members will appreciate, construction work of this type cannot be carried out without some disturbance. The contractor has been most co-operative in every way. He is doing everything possible to meet the demand. I am sure that we have now arrived at a suitable compromise.

Dr. CRAWFORD: I ask the Minister for Transport: Further to the question asked by the honourable member for Cairns, is it possible to so organise the buses in the area that they can drop passengers at either end of the section of Brunswick Street to be closed? Can he make a comment either now or later on that point? Is it possible to so organise matters that most of the work on the new extension can be done from underground so that there will be the least possible disturbance to the business community on the surface?

Mr. K. W. HOOPER: I will answer the last part of the question first. The amount of work that can be done underground was discussed with the contractor in the presence of the secretary of the Valley Business Council (Mr. Hawthorn) only yesterday. The contractor has agreed to do whatever is possible at off-street level. I am very confident that everything possible will be done in that direction.

In the first part of his question the honourable member asked about stopping places for buses. At this stage that is not a responsibility of mine. So far there have been only preliminary discussions with the Brisbane City Council. After all, the council has to give permission for the closure of the street. Until we know definitely that the compromise has been accepted, we cannot have discussions on a final note. I believe that the Brisbane City Council is cognisant of what the problems will be, and we will be putting to it the situation concerning buses.

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

COMMITTEE OF SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) for **Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN** (Barambah—Premier): I move—

“(1) That this House do appoint a Committee to be called the Committee of Subordinate Legislation.

“(2) That the Committee shall consist of six Members.

“(3) That the following Members shall comprise the Committee:—

Roy Alexander Armstrong, Geoffrey Talbot Chinchin, M.B.E., D.F.C., Lindsay Earle Hartwig, Harold Bertram Lowes, Peter Richard McKechnie and Keith Webb Wright, B.A., A.Ed., M.A.C.E.

“(4) That it shall be the duty of the Committee to consider all Regulations, Rules, By-laws, Ordinances, Orders in Council or Proclamations (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Regulations’) which under any Act are required to be laid on the Table of this House, and which are subject to disallowance by resolution.

If the Regulations are made whilst the House is sitting, the Committee shall consider the Regulations before the end of the period during which any motion for disallowance of those Regulations may be moved in the House.

If the Regulations are made whilst the House is not sitting, the Committee shall consider the Regulations as soon as conveniently may be after the making thereof.

“(5) The Committee shall, with respect to the Regulations, consider—

(a) whether the Regulations are in accord with the general objects of the Act pursuant to which they are made;

(b) whether the Regulations trespass unduly on rights previously established by law;

(c) whether the Regulations contain matter which in the opinion of the Committee should properly be dealt with in an Act of Parliament;

(d) whether for any special reason the form or purport of the Regulations calls for elucidation;

(e) whether the Regulations unduly make rights dependent upon administrative and not upon judicial decisions.

“(6) If the Committee is of the opinion that any of the Regulations ought to be disallowed—

(a) it shall report that opinion and the grounds thereof to the House before the end of the period during which any motion for disallowance of those Regulations may be moved in the House;

(b) if the House is not sitting, it may report its opinion and the grounds thereof to the authority by which the Regulations were made.

“(7) If the Committee is of the opinion that any other matter relating to any of the Regulations should be brought to the notice of the House, it may report that opinion and matter to the House.

“(8) A report of the Committee shall be presented to the House in writing by a member of the Committee nominated for that purpose by the Committee.

“(9) The Permanent Head of the relevant Department shall forthwith upon any Regulation, which is required to be tabled in Parliament, being approved by the Governor in Council, forward sufficient copies to the Clerk of the Parliament for the use of the members of the Committee.

“(10) The Committee shall have power to send for persons, papers and records, provided that a Minister or members of the Public Service shall not be obliged to provide information, oral or written, which has been—

(a) certified by a Crown Law Officer to be information which, if it were sought in a Court, would be a proper matter in respect of which to claim Crown privilege; or

(b) certified by the responsible Minister, with the approval of the Ministers of the Crown in Cabinet assembled, to be against the public interest to disclose.

“(11) The Committee shall have power to act and, subject to paragraph 10, to send for persons, papers and records and to examine witnesses whether the House is sitting or not.

“(12) The proceedings of the Committee shall, except wherein otherwise ordered, be regulated by the Standing Orders and Rules of the Legislative Assembly relating to Select Committees.”

Motion agreed to.

PHYSIOTHERAPISTS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

THIRD READING

Bill, on motion of Dr. Edwards, read a third time.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

HOME-OWNERSHIP

Mr. BYRNE (Belmont) (12.18 p.m.): One of this Government’s principles is that people should be enabled to determine the course of their own lives. It is an accepted principle that in every way there should be a striving towards making it possible for people to achieve home-ownership. Governments could be criticised for not having succeeded in promoting this ideal, so I believe it is necessary that we adopt a new outlook on housing in the community.

These days young people who wish to purchase their own homes face enormous difficulties. If they are paying 12 per cent interest on a loan of, say, \$20,000 to \$30,000, the prohibitive interest repayments alone make it virtually impossible for a man whose wife is not working to meet his normal family commitments and at the same time pay off his home. The sheer force of economic circumstances compel both a husband and wife wishing to have the security of their home to work.

Until Governments appreciate the fact that it is the security of the family home that enables the community to avoid a great number of social problems, they will need to spend on social welfare large sums of money that could in other circumstances be spent on housing.

Housing is of paramount importance to our society. Every person should be enabled to own his own home. I recall the statement made by the honourable member for Windsor that every Government in Australia should have the policy of allowing everyone to own a home of his own. In an attempt to achieve this aim, the Queensland Government, through the Housing Commission, has embarked on a new course relative to the many existing Housing Commission rental homes. It is making their purchase easier in the light of its recognition of this tenet. If a person can raise a deposit of \$200 on a home that he is renting—this relates to homes on which there is no prohibition under the Federal-State Housing Agreement Act—he can get a loan of \$25,000 from the Government at only 7½ per cent interest. But even this scheme imposes heavy economic burdens on some people. Because of their economic circumstances many of the people living in the 1,200 Housing Commission rental homes in my electorate gain the benefits of rebated rents. I hope that those with sufficient income to take advantage of this offer will do so.

The Government should give much greater recognition to the good tenancy of people in Housing Commission homes. I point out that the \$200 deposit now required is met by capital payments by tenants over probably a 10-year period. If people rent a Housing Commission home and pay the normal Housing Commission rental for about 10 years, they normally accrue a deposit of about \$200. Perhaps the record of people's tenancy for a much shorter period should be taken into account. I suggest a term of five years or even less so that people with a good tenancy record can get a home from the Housing Commission under its policy of trying to encourage people to purchase their own home. The funds that these people pay towards meeting the cost of those houses could be used in the construction of other homes. If that can be done, this policy should be pursued.

It is unfortunate that the expenditure by the Federal Government on housing increased by such a small amount. The

increase in the advances to the States—from \$364,000,000 to \$375,000,000—does not show sufficient far-sightedness or sufficient appreciation of the great importance of housing to the community generally. I suggest that it would be of enormous advantage to Australia (and certainly to the people of Queensland) if the housing expenditure allocated by the Federal Government was increased at least threefold. An allocation of \$1,000 million to housing would overcome many problems in the community. The building industry has an extremely high rate of unemployment and the lack of home security creates many social problems at a later stage, especially when people live only in rental accommodation. The expenditure of such a sum would also lead to an increase in the natural productivity of the nation.

While some people may consider an outlay of \$1,000 million to housing as \$1,000 million given away, I point out that with a subsidised interest rate, and with the money being made available long-term at a certain repayment rate, the eventual expenditure is not \$1,000 million at all. The only real expenditure by the Government would be on the subsidised interest rate. But there is a further saving for the Government. When people have the security of their own home, the social problems that I referred to earlier are avoided. Juvenile delinquency and other problems arising from broken homes create economic burdens for Governments, which now have to provide for the correction of these social evils and wrongs.

As long as that situation pertains, as long as there is no endeavour to get to the root of the problem by providing security for families, providing circumstances where juvenile problems will not develop and providing an environment where crime is not encouraged, Governments will have to spend money correcting social problems that could have been prevented in the first place by allocating funds to provide home security. So my suggestion is that more money should be spent on housing in the short term, which will have the long-term effect of decreasing the need for Governments to expend funds on correcting social problems which would not have arisen had there been adequate housing.

Prior to my election, one of the promises that I made to the people of the Belmont electorate was that I would give housing an absolute priority. With nearly 4,000 original Queensland Housing Commission homes in my electorate, I was totally aware, when I nominated for that seat, of the very great neglect that appeared to exist there in relation to maintenance. I am happy to be able to say that over 30 per cent of the rental homes in that area have now been painted externally and many of them internally also, and that they have been raised to a level of maintenance which has removed much of the depression then existing in that environment. The ghetto form of

housing which existed many years ago when these homes were built must not be continued. It creates an environmentally depressing situation which can only add to the social problems that I mentioned existed.

Many people do not appreciate how few homes become available for rental purposes, particularly in my area. In fact, in the period of nearly two years since I was elected to Parliament, fewer than 70 of the original rental houses then totalling almost 1,500 and now numbering 1,200 have become vacant for re-letting. With the increasing pressures upon Governments to provide assistance to people, there is an obvious necessity to provide the security of a home for its people. There is increasing pressure to see that people who find themselves in caravan parks when they do not desire to be there, and find themselves in hostels when they do not desire to be there, are properly housed, and this can be achieved only if the economic resources are provided by a Government with sufficient foresight to realise the wisdom of solving problems by allocating funds now rather than trying later to correct social wrongs which could have been prevented.

RAID ON HIPPIE COMMUNITY AT CEDAR BAY

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (12.28 p.m.): On Sunday, 29 August, a paramilitary raid involving police, Federal narcotic investigators, customs officers and naval personnel was carried out on a so-called hippie community at Cedar Bay, south of Cooktown.

While the general public must support aggressive measures taken by the authorities against illegal drug usage and drug abuse, and while members of the Opposition totally support measures to crack down severely on the pedlars, the dealers and the producers of illegal drugs, no reasonable person could be expected to condone the events that took place at Cedar Bay.

As clearly reported by the "Sunday Sun" on 5 September—now backed up by a film report by the A.B.C., statutory declarations, radio tapes and photographs which I have seen personally—the actions by a few members of the Queensland Police Force—and I stress "few"—have been described now as being over-zealous, irresponsible and loutish, and even likened in a few instances to storm-trooper tactics.

It is vitally important that the growing illegal drug traffic and drug usage in this State be stamped out, but surely there must be limits to the methods used. Because the Minister admitted that he has certain information, I do not question the fact that the raid was necessary, and because of the inaccessibility of the Cedar Bay area I do not question the use of a helicopter, a light aircraft, a customs launch or a naval patrol boat.

But no-one, irrespective of his political ideology or public station, can condone what followed after the initial raid took place.

It is somewhat surprising that in a television interview and also now in a ministerial statement to the House this morning, the Minister said that he supported the action.

I personally have seen photographic evidence which demonstrates a complete lack of respect for the rights of individuals and their property by certain members of the force who took part in that raid. There is evidence to show that they adopted a search-and-destroy operation; that they burnt down dwellings; and that they piled children's clothing in a heap, poured kerosene on it and set it alight. There is evidence to show that they piled the food up and set it alight and destroyed it.

Mr. Newbery: Who told you they did this?

Mr. WRIGHT: This comes from the statutory declarations, and when I have finished speaking I shall present to the Minister photographic records of the whole thing.

Mr. Newbery: Who took the photos?

Mr. WRIGHT: They were taken by responsible people.

They also went around shooting up water tanks. They even went to the ridiculous extreme of cutting up a hose, which most people would say was totally unnecessary. They chopped down dozens of fruit and other trees and they completely ruined the clothing and domestic property of adults. They willfully destroyed two guitars. They shot up all sorts of equipment about the place. There will be statutory declarations to show that the police officers fired indiscriminately into the scrub surrounding the area, without caring about people who could have been there, and finally they handcuffed people to trees.

Mr. Hinze: The police are always in the wrong. You blokes always blame the police.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. WRIGHT: Further accusations have also been made. One is that when one person tried to prove that he had reasonable means of support by showing a bank-book in which a credit of some hundreds of dollars was recorded, this book was taken by a police officer and torn up.

It is further alleged that when the cases were heard in the Cooktown Court the young Acting Stipendiary Magistrate actually asked the police prosecutor what fines he should impose. These are serious allegations and, coupled with the evidence that clearly shows that the whole area was ravaged, they stress the need for a full inquiry.

The Minister says that the raid was to find a prison escapee. I believe that that is not true, because there is evidence to show that another police raid took place some days previously. It involved 11 police officers and the State Government launch "Booru" and it was the one instigated for the purpose of finding an escapee. I believe that it has

now been mentioned as a red herring—a sop to the public—to try to provide a basis for the actions taken.

It is also claimed that the marijuana plants taken were worth \$20,000. Originally I heard that the value was \$27,000. This estimate must be based on the value of full-grown plants because the amount is questionable when one considers the quantum of fines imposed on these people. However, accepting the statement about the value of the marijuana and accepting that the raid could have been a search for an escapee, that still does not provide grounds for the destruction that took place. Surely it does not provide grounds for the wilful and malicious destruction of personal property, children's clothing and food.

Let us compare what happened there with the apprehension of a murderer. The law enforcement agency does not follow up his capture by destroying his dwelling, his personal property and the trees that grow in his back yard. But that happened in the case to which I am referring. The Minister claims that the area was unhealthy. To quote his words, they were "living in a state of indescribable filth." There are photographs and films that contradict these claims. But, even accepting the Minister's statement, that still does not give the police the right to cut down fruit trees, destroy babies' clothing, guitars, hoses and other personal property including a Bible.

Although there are reports that indicate that only a few of the police were irresponsible, all members of the Police Force will be branded because it will be said that what went on was police brutality. I believe that the former Minister in charge of the Police Force tried to clean up its image. We might not have agreed with all that he did, but he certainly tried to clear the force of some who should not have been in it.

The issue cannot be left as it is. There cannot be within the community a growth of indiscriminate police violence that involves only a few, yet brands the whole force. I believe that a full and in-depth investigation must be made into the Cedar Bay attack. I therefore call upon the Minister for Justice, who is the Queen's chief Minister in the field of justice, the guardian of the public interest and the State's chief agent in the enforcement of the criminal law, to thoroughly investigate the legality of this action by the police.

My advice from senior counsel is that section 92 of the Criminal Code has in fact been violated. I have further advice that other sections of the Criminal Code, namely, section 245 dealing with assaults on persons and section 461, which refers to the unlawful setting on fire of dwellings, have also been contravened. If crops were burnt, the Criminal Code makes the crime punishable by 14 years' imprisonment.

It also appears from the evidence that property was wilfully and maliciously destroyed. I think it is necessary to establish

who authorised the destruction of this property because there is here a question of conspiracy. We know that police officers are bound to take an oath in which they swear to uphold the laws of this State. One wonders if certain members of the Police Force involved in the raid kept to the oath that they took on entering the force.

Finally, section 78 of the Criminal Code is supposed to preserve the liberty and political rights of citizens against unlawful actions of the Queensland police generally. That section provides—

"Any person who by violence, or by threats or intimidation of any kind, hinders or interferes with the free exercise of any political right by another person, is guilty of a misdemeanour, and is liable to imprisonment with hard labour for two years."

Mr. NEWBERY: I rise to a point of order. These are the same allegations as were made to the Senate last night. They are absolutely identical with what was said in Canberra in the Senate last night.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. WRIGHT: I ask for your protection, Mr. Speaker. The Minister is taking up my time.

Mr. NEWBERY: They are absolutely identical with what was said in Canberra last night.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Rockhampton.

Mr. WRIGHT: I believe that there are serious allegations here. The Minister has refuted some of them, but there is significant evidence to back up these claims. The State has a responsibility to protect the rights of its citizens, irrespective of the philosophy of life that they hold. The State also has a responsibility to clear the good name of the Police Force of this State, which is under a cloud because of this incident.

I reiterate that the drug traffic must be stamped out, but the Cedar Bay incident cannot be simply smoothed over by a ministerial statement in this House and I call on the Minister for Justice, in the interests of curbing the unnecessary use of violence by police in this State and also in the interests of protecting the future rights of citizens, to carry out an immediate investigation into the Cedar Bay incident.

WORKING CONDITIONS ON TOWNSVILLE-MT. ISA RAILWAY LINE

Mr. BERTONI (Mt. Isa) (12.36 p.m.): In the two years I have been a member of this Parliament I have on many occasions highlighted my concern about the working conditions of people employed on repairing the rail link between Townsville and Mt. Isa. It is pleasing to know that the Government has taken action to upgrade the line and

improve the living conditions of the men employed on the line and those of their families who live in the area.

I often have discussions with Railway Department employees in the electorate of Mt. Isa but I never thought I would see the day when they indicated to me that working for the Railway Department was like serving a stretch with the Foreign Legion. A railway employee I was talking to the other day told me that he has done more walking since he joined the Railway Department than any soldier in the Foreign Legion would. I asked him to explain this statement and he said, "These confounded breakdowns in the middle of nowhere where there is absolutely no communication has meant that some of us walk miles and miles and miles to get anywhere." I checked out this incredible complaint and found that the truth is that there is no communication with our trains enroute and if a breakdown does occur, the poor old fireman has no alternative to walking to the nearest telephone.

I am led to believe that the normal procedure when there is a breakdown is for the driver of the train to get out his manual—his troubleshooter—and try to check what has gone wrong. He then tells the fireman what is wrong and the fireman has to walk, perhaps miles, to the nearest telephone to report the breakdown. On one section of the line the fireman has to report to the Hughenden control station. The Hughenden control station then makes contact with Cloncurry control, usually with the leading hand electrician, and then the fireman is told what is wrong. In a lot of cases the fireman then walks all the way back to the train to tell the driver what he has been told to do and if this does not work, back he goes again. It is indeed an archaic situation; this rail link has been in operation since 1910 and yet in 1976 there is no direct communication with the train. Quite apart from the fact that the fireman has to do so much walking, in the north-west of the State where the climate can be so overbearing this could be quite dangerous.

I suggest to the Minister for Transport that the situation is totally unacceptable and should be looked at. Apart from the disruptions to their home life which these men have to put up with when they are rostered for duty, when they are allocated rostered days off, which I think is acceptable to the Government and to the men, on many, many occasions they arrive late because of breakdowns or other hold-ups and, instead of being rostered off, they then find that their roster has been changed and they have to make up new crews. This certainly places great stress on their families. A number of women have indicated to me that they would rather have their husbands in more regulated employment, such as they could get with Mount Isa Mines or in the surrounding district, than in the Railway Department. I believe that the men and

women who live in the West are entitled to greater understanding and more consideration than they are receiving at the moment.

Both from the point of view of the Government and the taxpayers, the present situation is ridiculous. From the Government's point of view, breakdowns result in the delaying of trains that are supposed to pass one another at certain points—double-header trains, copper trains, and trains taking goods into and out of the area—and necessitate the rescheduling of shifts. In addition, from the public relations point of view, it is not desirable to have goods arriving late at their destination, and many other problems arise, too. It must be borne in mind that deliveries to country areas are made from Cloncurry and Mt. Isa. If goods are not on the platform at the railway station for collection at a certain time, the people who make the deliveries to country areas cannot wait for them to arrive. Therefore, goods have to remain there for another week because a train has been delayed.

All honourable members are well aware that delays do occur in the running of trains. Usually the blame for a delay cannot be attributed to any single factor; but if a delay does occur, we as a Government should try to minimise its effect as much as possible. Let me give the House an example. Recently a breakdown occurred on the section of line between Nonda and Mt. Isa, and four to six hours elapsed, while checking and rechecking were carried out, before the fault was discovered. A delay such as that has a cumulative effect down the line. Other trains cannot pass, and there is a need for rescheduling of men and goods.

I have taken out some figures on Government employment costs. Of course, railway employees receive overtime rates after completing an eight-hour shift, and they receive additional payments for late arrival. Taking a crew comprising a driver, a fireman and a guard, I estimate that every breakdown which occurs may cost the Government up to \$200, and that cost could flow on to other crews that are held up. In the Nonda-Mt. Isa area, up to 15 breakdowns have occurred in a month, so the cost to the department in that time could be about \$4,000. Taking the State as a whole, the over-all cost to the department could run into thousands of dollars. Although the distances involved on the coast are not nearly as great as they are in western areas, the cost could still be high, and the figure for the whole State could be staggeringly high.

I suggest that the department investigate the provision of some type of communication—a telephone, for example—that could be allocated to each train (perhaps to the loco crew, perhaps to the guard) and connected to the railway telephone system when a breakdown occurs.

Mr. K. W. Hooper: I am happy to look at that suggestion. I do not know the technical problems, but I think it is a jolly good idea.

Mr. BERTONI: I thank the Minister for his comment; it is very good to hear. It might be worked simply by putting wires across the existing line and attaching a telephone. For the Minister to say that he will look at my suggestion straight away is a great breakthrough. The railwaymen at Cloncurry are the ones who complain most, because they seem to do the most walking. Now that I have the Minister's assurance that he will look at the problem, I can go back with confidence to railway employees in my electorate, and I again thank him for saying that he will take immediate action.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S IMMIGRATION POLICY

Mr. LANE (Merthyr) (12.45 p.m.): The matter of public interest I wish to raise this morning relates to the present immigration policy of the Federal Liberal-National Country Party Government. I should like to take that Government to task over its lack of compassion towards and understanding of some of the problems facing migrant families in this country, particularly those who wish to be reunited with other family members presently living in the Old Country.

My interest in this subject comes from a long-standing association with migrant groups. I represent an electorate with a very large migrant content. About 15 per cent of my electorate is made up of migrants, mostly from southern European countries, in particular Italy. Frequently I have had occasion to make representations to the Federal Government about individual problems, and I did so with respect to one particular problem I should like to mention now.

That problem concerned a family that conducts a delicatessen and fruit shop in New Farm. It is the sort of small business which the Liberal Party claims quite justly to be especially interested in. However, little assistance in this particular case has been forthcoming from the Federal Government, and I should like to criticise it publicly here today. That small shopkeeper wished to bring his brother out from Greece to help him in the family business in New Farm. He made application through the normal channels—the Immigration Department. When his application was refused he asked me to take the matter up for him. I did that while the Labor Party was in power in Canberra, but to no avail. In the first instance I wrote in October 1974. I received a reply the same month from the Department of Immigration advising that the nomination would not be accepted for the time being because of Australia's unemployment situation. I was told, however, that the matter would remain under review. That letter reflected the policy of the Australian Labor

Party towards immigration. It saw everything in industrial terms and had no real understanding of, or flexibility in, individual cases. It was clearly the policy of the Australian Labor Party, as outlined by Mr. Clyde Cameron (the then Minister with that responsibility), to downgrade immigration and curtail it to the greatest possible extent. Since the days when Arthur Calwell made that infamous statement, "Two Wongs don't make a White", when he outlined and underlined quite clearly the Labor Party's attitude towards immigration, the Labor Party has resented immigration on the grounds that some of its supporters in the trade union movement may think migrants would deprive Australian citizens of jobs. So the A.L.P. has spoken against immigration quite strongly and while in government it did everything it could to cut down on immigration. It was not unexpected when I received a letter in those terms from the Immigration Department.

However, when the new Federal Government was elected to Canberra I took the case up again. I asked the local Federal member to put the case to the Immigration Minister for review and I pointed out that the brother in Greece would be provided with employment in the family business in New Farm. It was not until June this year that I received a reply from the then Acting Minister for Immigration, Mr. Ellicott. Mr. Ellicott wrote a letter to me in the most threatening terms, and the most offensive terms to immigrants generally. He said—

"It is confirmed that the nomination was refused because Mr. 'Migrant' is not within the family reunion group nor, as a shop assistant, is he in an occupational category being accepted at the present time.

"I note that the sponsor has stated he could arrange employment for his brother but this of itself does not create grounds for approval. Any vacant positions in Australia calling for the occupational experience possessed by Mr. 'Migrant' could readily be filled by a number of people, Australians or migrants, currently seeking jobs."

Here comes the threat. The letter continues—

"In fact the reservation of employment for prospective migrants in the current situation could be seen as a form of discrimination against Australians and migrants already here."

We all know the provisions of the Labor Government's industrial discrimination laws, under which people are liable to prosecution if they discriminate in employment against any person.

I claim that that letter from Mr. Ellicott contains a very clear threat to this Greek family in New Farm who wanted to reunite their brother with the family.

Recently I wrote to Mr. MacKellar when he returned from overseas, pointing out that the term "family reunion group", which

allowed mothers, fathers, sons and daughters to come to Australia to join their families, was too narrow. I claimed that it laid down false criteria and should be changed to allow brothers and sisters to rejoin families.

As to the second objection that the Federal Government still seems to have, there is a category related to employment. In my letter to Mr. MacKellar I said—

“To refuse entry on occupational grounds when a job is available within the family business simply because it does not fall within a prescribed ‘category’ is very difficult to accept. I am sure you will see how much more difficult this is for the relatives concerned to accept.”

I pointed out to the Minister that the word “discrimination” constituted a threat and intimidation to this family to withdraw their representations. I pointed out, too, that the migrant family did not intend to deprive anyone of a job. No job existed, because what the family intended to do was share some of the family employment with the brother if he was allowed to come here from Greece. I repeat that the family intended to share some of their employment with him. This employment was not available to anyone else in the community. The family were prepared to make this sacrifice to bring the brother from Greece to Australia to make a life here with them.

I am disappointed at the failure of the present Federal Liberal Government to alter the migration policies and standards laid down by a Federal Labor Government. It is still going along with the hard-line immigration policy of Arthur Calwell and his hatchet men such as Clyde Cameron. It is not to the credit of Federal Liberal members and the Prime Minister that they are perpetuating this immigration policy, which was introduced in the first instance by the Labor Party.

We know, of course, that the Federal Government is under considerable pressure. We hear continual cries from the Federal president of the Australian Labor Party and president of the A.C.T.U., Mr. Hawke, against the employment of migrants. Almost daily he protests against bringing migrants to Australia. In fact, as recently as late last month he said that he would be contacting the Trade Union Congress in England and asking it to make it clear to potential migrants that they face unemployment here. He views the matter just as Clyde Cameron saw it—in terms of black and white.

I would have expected greater flexibility in the Liberal Party’s approach once that party was elected to office in Canberra. I look forward to a change of policy in this matter. It is wrong for any Government to say that this man will not be allowed to come here simply because he does not meet the false criteria that have been laid down. That is quite dishonest.

(Time expired.)

HERVEY BAY HOSPITAL

Mr. POWELL (Isis) (12.55 p.m.): The matter I bring before the House today in this debate concerns the Hervey Bay Hospital. Honourable members know that I represent the area.

Mr. Turner: It is well represented, too.

Mr. POWELL: I thank the honourable member.

Some of the local residents and I have had quite a running battle with the Health Department and the Maryborough Hospitals Board about getting facilities for the Hervey Bay Hospital. Confusion exists in the local community about what treatment should be available at the hospital. Some people think it should be a major surgical hospital, but the majority of Hervey Bay people do not want that. They want a hospital to serve adequately the needs of the permanent population of 9,000 or 10,000. This area has a large floating population at holiday-time, with the number over Christmas reaching about 40,000.

Hervey Bay is approximately 35 kilometres from Maryborough, where the nearest major hospital is situated. When accidents occur at Hervey Bay, ambulances take the patients to the Hervey Bay Hospital. However, in most instances people have to be taken to Maryborough for treatment. The Health Department’s assumption that that should happen may be reasonable, but I do not agree with it. Apparently those in the halls of power in the Health Department have not considered sufficiently the relatives of hospitalised people. When people become sick or meet with an accident, their loved ones wish to visit them. Many Hervey Bay residents who are hospitalised in Maryborough are visited by their friends and relations from the Bay. But there is no public transport. Buses leave for Maryborough at about 7 o’clock in the morning and return between 5.30 and 6 p.m. The service does not meet the demand. There is no public transport from Hervey Bay to Maryborough at night-time. People could use taxis, but the round trip of about 70 kilometres would be extremely expensive.

Mr. Ahern: There is a parallel situation at Caloundra.

Mr. POWELL: Perhaps the honourable member and I should get together to see if we can do something about these parallel situations.

The Maryborough Hospitals Board has suggested to the Health Department that a 40-bed old people’s nursing home be established at Hervey Bay. I understand that the Health Department has agreed, and the people of Hervey Bay are very happy with the proposal. But it will not overcome the problem of people who require minor surgery or who must be treated immediately after an accident.

A private-enterprise group has decided to establish a private hospital at Hervey Bay. The people of the Bay and I are very happy with the proposal but, again, this facility will not overcome the problem. It is a simple fact that the hospital at the Bay is not meeting the need for which it was first designed. An established hospital should obviously be equipped to undertake minor surgical and post-surgical work. It should be a place where people can be looked after; but the one at Hervey Bay is not up to that standard at the moment.

Mr. Turner: Is it an old hospital?

Mr. POWELL: No.

I have made constant representations to the Minister for Health to upgrade the hospital and establish a hospital board at Hervey Bay. He is extremely sympathetic. No-one in this House or elsewhere should be under the misapprehension that he is not. He has given me an adequate hearing and listened to the people from the Bay. However, we are getting nowhere. The hospital would be administered most effectively if a local hospital board was created, but apparently that is not an acceptable solution. When the new Maryborough Hospitals Board was constituted, extra representatives from Hervey Bay were appointed. I feel sure that that will relieve the situation in the future.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. W. D. Hewitt): Order! Under the provisions of the Sessional Order agreed to by the House, the time allotted for the debate on Matters of Public Interest has now expired.

The House adjourned at 1.1 p.m.
