Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 11 NOVEMBER 1976

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Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. J. E. H. Houghton, Redcliffe) read prayers and took the chair at 10.58 a.m.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. SPEAKER: As this is Remembrance Day, I ask all honourable members to rise in their places and join me in observing the customary two minutes' silence to mark the occasion.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: And for Sir John Kerr.

Mr. Herbert: You rat!

Whereupon honourable members stood in silence.

Mr. SPEAKER: Lest we forget! Thank you, honourable members.

Order! I take a very dim view of the interjection by the honourable member for Archerfield. I am sure I express the opinion of all honourable members when I say that, on an occasion such as this, which we observe with reverence, his interjection is completely intolerable. I severely reprimand the honourable member and in doing so I am sure I have the support of all honourable members.

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Herbert: It happens to be Remembrance Day in the square, so you just watch your step.

Mr. Marginson interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I remind the honourable member for Wolston——

Mr. Marginson: What about the Minister?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I remind the honourable member for Wolston that I will not tolerate persistent interjections. I now warn him under Standing Order 123A.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

SAND-MINING, FRASER ISLAND

Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah —Premier) (11.6 a.m.): Yesterday the Federal Government decided to ban sand-mining on Fraser Island.

The Commonwealth accepted the recommendations of a commission of inquiry set up by the Whitlam Labor Government that export licences for minerals mined from the island not be renewed from 31 December.

This decision will have three immediate and serious consequences:—

1. All mining leases throughout Australia are now suspect because they can be

rendered inoperative at any time by the withdrawal of export licences.

2. The Commonwealth has misused a power intended to conserve scarce resources in order to impose its policy on a State Government that has constitutional power over mining.

3. A total of 1,000 people will lose their jobs or be seriously affected in Maryborough and the Wide Bay region at a time when there already are some 1,000 people out of work in that region.

It is interesting that even the former Labor Prime Minister (Mr. Whitlam) was highly critical of the Fraser Island inquiry and that now he and the Labor people, as I understand it, are supporting the decision of Mr. Fraser's Government to ban mining.

Nevertheless, the Commonwealth has made its decision—one that it will regret through the loss of confidence it will create within the mining industry and the effect it will have on Queenslanders, who can see that their jobs are at stake any time pressure groups in Sydney and Melbourne choose to make demands on Canberra Governments whether Labor or Liberal.

The main consideration now is the future of the people who will lose their jobs and the future of Maryborough and of Queensland generally.

I was astounded that at the time it made the decision to halt the operations the Commonwealth had not considered a single detailed proposal to offset the loss of the sand-mining industry—just some vague statements about financial assistance.

Mr. Camm, Mr. Knox and I mentioned to Mr. Nixon and Mr. Newman projects that would assist in alleviating unemployment and hardship caused by this Commonwealth decision. I told the two Federal Ministers bluntly that, as their Government was creating the unemployment, it was their responsibility to provide the funds to create new jobs.

Reliable estimates drawn up by the Co-ordinator-General (Sir Charles Barton) show that there will be a loss of regional income of approximately $5,140,000 a year for the next 15 to 17 years at least. This of course does not include the mining companies' losses; that is a separate issue.

What the Queensland Government now plans to do is to set up a special Wide Bay Planning Committee which will have two aims:—

1. To alleviate the immediate short-term effects of the winding down of Fraser Island sand-mining on employment in Maryborough and the surrounding regions.

2. To draw up the detailed plans for long-term projects to provide permanent employment.

One of the suggestions today is that the mining company, with its equipment, could be given a contract to do work such as the provision of the Maryborough barrage project, which I understand will cost some $24,000,000. The whole company, with its organisation, could be switched onto a project of that nature if the Commonwealth so decides.

The committee will include State and area representatives and we plan to have it in operation quickly.

Yesterday, I outlined to Mr. Nixon and Mr. Newman some of the proposed projects which would cost a total of $63,000,000.

They include completion of the Bundaberg Irrigation Scheme, road-works, forestry and special grants to local authorities.

There also is provision for expansion of tourist facilities in the Wide Bay area and on Fraser Island itself.

The programme year by year is:

		$
1976-77	15 per cent	9,486,000
1977-78	25 per cent	15,810,000
1978-79	25 per cent	15,810,000
1979-80	20 per cent	12,648,000
1980-81	15 per cent	9,486,000

These works would include:

IRRIGATION AND WATER SUPPLY—	$
Completion of Phase 2 Bundaberg Irrigation Project	50,000,000
Completion Monduran Dam ..	6,000,000
Total	56,000,000

FORESTRY—	$
Maryborough	1,500,000
Gympie	2,000,000
Total	3,500,000

NATIONAL PARKS—	$
Wide Bay Region	200,000

ROAD-WORKS—	$
Susan River Bridge	80,000
Maryborough–Gympie (Bruce Highway)	610,000
Special maintenance	100,000
Fraser Island—Roads	2,000,000
Total	2,790,000

	$
Special grants to local authorities	350,000

We have allowed an inflation factor to cover the next five years.

Mr. Speaker, the Queensland Government already has told Canberra of projects it wants to replace sand-mining. These are the ones ready to go; there are others that will come forward from the committee we will establish. Canberra has made promises; now we will expect the money so that we can get on with the task of providing new jobs for Maryborough and Wide Bay people.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table, and ordered to be printed:—

Reports—

Commissioner of Police, for the year 1975-76.

Police Superannuation Board, for the year 1975-76.

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 1963–1976 in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

1. TREATIES COMMISSION

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

(1) When was the Treaties Commission, which was promised in his 1974 policy speech, established, how many people are entitled to sit on the commission and who are the present members?

(2) On what dates has the commission met and what recommendations have arisen from the meetings?

(3) For how long is each commissioner appointed and what guide-lines were set for appointment?

(4) Will the commission be compiling reports and, if so, will these be tabled in Parliament?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) The Treaties Commission was established, in pursuance of the provisions of the Treaties Commission Act 1974, on 18 April 1975. The members of the commission are:—

The Honourable Sir Mostyn Hanger, K.B.E., Chief Justice of Queensland (Chairman).

Mr. T. Parslow, Q.C., Solicitor-General.

Sir Arnold Bennett, Q.C.

Mr. L. J. Murray, Parliamentary Counsel.

Mr. K. Spann, A.A.S.A., Under Secretary, Premier's Department.

Section 3 of the Act provides for the number of members of the commission and section 4 provides for their terms of membership. It is my understanding that the commission has been devoting a considerable amount of energy to an examination of matters which come within the terms of its charter and it is anticipated that its first report will be laid on the table of this House prior to the rising of the House for the Christmas recess.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH PROJECTS

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

(1) How many environmental research projects are funded by the Government?

(2) What is the nature of each project, what governmental group or organisation is undertaking each project and what funding does each project receive?

(3) Does the Commonwealth Government participate in the funding of these projects and, if so, to what extent generally, and what specific projects receive such funds?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) Most Government departments conduct research into various aspects of environmental management. In particular, departments and authorities such as the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Fisheries Service, the Department of Harbours and Marine, the Department of Primary Industries, the Water Quality Council and the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission have personnel engaged on research relevant to the operation of their organisations.

The Commonwealth Government does fund research projects conducted by State Government departments and authorities under schemes such as the National Water Resources Management Programme, the National Sewerage Programme and the Area Improvement Programme.

Precise details on the number, nature and funding of environmental research projects are not readily available.

3. T.B. AND BRUCELLOSIS ERADICATION SCHEMES

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

(1) What progress has been made with the T.B. and brucellosis eradication schemes?

(2) What funds have been provided by (a) the Commonwealth Government and (b) the Queensland Government in each year since the schemes began?

(3) What is the total number of tests so far undertaken, how many reactors have been detected and have the tests shown which area of Queensland is the worst infected?

(4) Has any area been gazetted a declared eradication area?

(5) What incentives are available to graziers by way of compensation for cows condemned for slaughter, and for costs of mustering and improvements such as segregation yards for testing, etc.?

(6) Has any country importing Australian beef laid down any timetable for T.B. and brucellosis eradication?

Answers:—

(1) Substantial progress has been made in the eradication of T.B. It has virtually been eradicated from dairy herds and the prevalence in beef herds is 0.08 per cent, which indicates that there are some 9,000 infected cattle in the population of 10,800,000.

Surveys of dairy and beef herds over the past three years have provided information on the herd and animal prevalence of brucellosis in most areas of the State. The eradication phase of the programme has just commenced.

(2) The annual cost of the scheme is as follows:—

	$
1970-71	239,894
1971-72	864,365
1972-73	1,016,138
1973-74	1,318,555
1974-75	2,484,506
1975-76	2,783,265

The Commonwealth contribution to the programme since 1973-74 has been as follows:—

	$
1973-74	723,479
1974-75	1,662,951
1975-76	1,828,477
1976-77	2,744,000

(3) A total of approximately 5,800,000 tuberculin tests has been completed from 1970-71 to 1975-76. Approximately 1,280,000 brucellosis tests were undertaken between January 1973 and 30 June 1976.

A total of 22,000 tuberculin test reactors have been detected. The prevalence of brucellosis in dairy herds is approximately 2 per cent and in beef herds below 1 per cent.

Tuberculosis is mainly a problem in the Channel Country and a few isolated properties in the Gulf. Brucellosis is again prevalent in the Channel Country and the North-west. Its herd prevalence in the Brisbane milk supply herds and in the Brigalow Development Scheme is a cause for some concern. Otherwise the State has a very low prevalence of the disease.

(4) Protected (Eradication) Areas have been gazetted as follows:—

(a) Queensland Tuberculosis Protected Area comprises the whole State with the exception of Mt. Isa, Boulia and Diamantina Shires and those portions of the Shires of Bulloo, Barcoo and Quilpie west of the dingo barrier fences.

(b) Queensland Brucellosis Protected Area comprises the Shires of Atherton, Ayr, Bowen, Cardwell, Cook, Dalrymple, Douglas, Eacham, Etheride, Herberton, Hinchinbook, Johnstone, Mareeba, Proserpine, Thuringowa and Torres and the cities of Cairns, Charters Towers and Townsville.

(5) Compensation is available for reactors to both diseases ordered to be destroyed as part of eradication programmes. The compensation rates payable to owners are as follows:—

Tuberculosis—

	$
Bulls and dairy cows	90
Beef cows, oxen and steers	45
Weaner calves	22–50

Brucellosis—

	$
Bulls and dairy cows	120
Beef cows	60
Weaner heifers	30
Horses	25

There are no other incentives available.

(6) All major importers of Australian beef have eradication programmes. The U.S.A. aims to reach a free status for brucellosis by 1983. The aim of the Australian programme is to reach provisional freedom by that date.

4. INJURIES AND DEATHS FROM ACCIDENTS AT ROMA STREET RAILWAY GOODS YARD

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

(1) What is the number of deaths caused by accidents to workers in the Roma Street Goods Yard and what were the causes of the deaths and the date on which each took place?

(2) What is the number of injuries serious or otherwise caused by accident and what was the cause of each accident, the nature of the injuries and the date on which each took place?

Mr. HODGES: I ask the honourable member to repeat his question for the next day of sitting.

Mr. JONES: I do so accordingly.

5. QUEENSLAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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

(1) With reference to an article in the "Nation Review" of 29 October by D. Jenkyn, where reference was made to a report of the departmental inquiry into the Australian broadcasting system, will he ascertain if all State symphony orchestras are to be disbanded, except for the Sydney orchestra?

(2) In view of the very serious concern expressed by those presently associated with the Queensland State Orchestra, and those students who are asking to be associated with it, will he give this House an assurance that he will do everything possible to see that the Queensland Symphony Orchestra is maintained?

Answers:—

(1) In reply to the first question—I note that in a Press release dated 9 November 1976 the Minister for Post and Telecommunications (Mr. Eric L. Robinson) stated:—"The Government has decided not to act on a recommendation in the Green Report which raised the possibility of reducing the number of A.B.C. Orchestras".

(2) In this financial year my department has continued to maintain and increase its support for the Queensland Symphony Orchestra to present regular live and broadcast concerts in Brisbane and the country, especially to schools.

6. HAZARDS TO SCHOOL-CHILDREN IN PINE MOUNTAIN ROAD, MT. GRAVATT

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

(1) Is he aware of the dangerous situation for school-children in Pine Mountain Road, Mt. Gravatt, as the Brisbane City Council has failed to keep footpaths mown and provide pedestrian access over the bridges on that road?

(2) Will he investigate this matter with the council in order to obtain some correction of these problems in the interests of safety for school-children?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) I am informed that there is no Pine Mountain Road in the suburb of Mt. Gravatt, but I am informed there is a Pine Mountain Road in the suburb of Holland Park. I presume the honourable member is referring to the latter road.

My information is that there are no constructed footpaths on Pine Mountain Road, Holland Park, nor are there any bridges across the road. I am advised that there is only a small number of houses in Pine Mountain Road, Holland Park, and that it would be unlikely that there would be any great use of such road by school-children.

Perhaps the honourable member is referring to another road, and if he cares to check the position and advise me I will have the matter further examined.

7. PROBLEMS OF BUSH PILOTS AIRWAYS LTD. IN SERVICING TOOWOOMBA DISTRICT

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

(1) Is he aware that a very serious problem is being encountered by Bush Pilots Airways Ltd. in its inability to provide ideal connections because of the rationalisation of jet services and the lack of a navigational aid at Toowoomba and that, owing to the refusal of the Commonwealth Department of Transport to install a non-directional beacon at Toowoomba, services to Toowoomba and district will be severely limited?

(2) Will he urgently confer with the Prime Minister and Commonwealth Minister for Transport?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) Following my discussion with the honourable member, I have been made aware of the problem which he has raised in his question, and I will ask my colleague the Honourable the Minister for Transport to discuss the circumstances described with the appropriate Commonwealth Minister.

8. FORESTRY AND COUNCIL DAMAGE TO COOLOOLA NATIONAL PARK

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

(1) Is he aware of recent reports of alleged damage to the Cooloola National Park by a Forestry Department burn-off of the Noosa Plain and by the construction by the Widgee Shire Council of a

water pipeline from Tewah Creek to Bayside development near the township of Tin Can Bay?

(2) Does he have first-hand knowledge of these matters and, if so, are the reports correct?

(3) Is the Widgee Shire being asked to spend an extra $40,000 to provide underground power rather than overhead wires to the pump site?

(4) What are the conditions under which the Widgee Shire may take water from the Cooloola National Park?

Mr. TOMKINS: I ask the honourable member to repeat his question for next Tuesday.

Mr. SIMPSON: I do so accordingly.

9. STREAM FLOW, TEWAH CREEK, COOLOOLA NATIONAL PARK

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

(1) Does his department have a stream-flow recorder on Tewah Creek in Cooloola National Park?

(2) What are the recordings of the stream flow per day in both metric and imperial measures?

(3) Were any recordings made during the dry years of 1968–70?

Answers:—

(1) An automatic water-level recorder was established on Tewah Creek near Coops Corner, 4 km upstream of its junction with the Noosa River, in 1972.

(2) Flood damage in January 1974, and some malfunctioning of the recorder, has limited the length of records available. Those available indicate flows in Tewah Creek have ranged from a minimum of 18.7 cusecs (0.529 cumecs or 10,098,000 gallons per day) to 476 cusecs (13.477 cumecs or 257,040,000 gallons per day).

(3) Miscellaneous measurements made in the period February 1969 to November 1970 showed a minimum flow of 18.5 cusecs (0.524 cumecs or 9,900,000 gallons per day).

10. AGRICULTURAL BANK FUNDS IN BUDGET

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

Of the $20,000,000 allocated as Agricultural Bank Funds in the State Budget, what amount is new funds and what amount constitutes what the "Queensland Country Life" calls cash already revolving within the existing system of loans and repayments?

Answer:—

Funds available for relending from the Agricultural Bank Fund in 1976-77, after allowing for the bank's interest and redemption commitments, administration costs, etc., are estimated at $13,000,000. This has been supplemented by a further $7,000,000 of new moneys to provide a total of $20,000,000 for lending purposes in 1976-77. The total expenditure allocation for the Agricultural Bank this year is $32,500,000, which is $3,300,000, or 11.3 per cent, more than provided in last year's budget.

11. QUEENSLAND SUGAR BOARD DIRECTIVE ON 1977 CROP

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

(1) Is he aware that a prominent sugar industry leader recently stated that the Queensland Sugar Board would limit acquisition of the 1977 crop to peaks only?

(2) Has the board issued such a directive to the industry and, if so, on what date?

(3) Has the board issued any directive to the sugar industry regarding limitations on the acquisition of next year's crop and, if so, what was the directive and what amount of next year's crop is likely to be acquired?

Answers:—

(1) No.

(2) No.

(3) No. However, I would advise the honourable member, although I feel it should not be necessary, that the Sugar Board from time to time issues confidential advices to the industry on matters likely to assist both growers and millers in taking decisions in their respective spheres. As an independent observation, on the question of acquisition of the 1977 crop I personally would consider it prudent, in the light of the proposed International Sugar Conference set down for April next year, for the industry not to assume that acquisition of the 1977 crop will be on an unlimited basis.

12. INQUIRY INTO SPECIFIED COMPANIES

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

What is the present position regarding the investigation into the affairs of Resort Corporation of Queensland Pty. Ltd., Condamine Country Estate Pty. Ltd., Darling

Downs Softwoods Pty. Ltd., Ebbs Pty. Ltd., Trivest Corporation Ltd., Rural Co-operative Development Society Ltd. and the Australian Co-operative Development Society Ltd., which was ordered by him in March, and when will the inquiry be completed?

Answer:—

The inquiry being conducted by Mr. J. M. Macrossan, Q.C., is continuing and it is not possible to predict when it will be completed.

13. ABORIGINAL DEBTS TO RAVENSHOE AMBULANCE

Mrs. Kippin, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement and Fisheries—

(1) Is he aware that the Ravenshoe Ambulance has outstanding accounts of $2,674 incurred in the transport of Aboriginal persons for 1975-76?

(2) As these people refuse to pay their debts, is there any way that he can assist the centre to recoup the debts?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) I was not previously aware of the outstanding amount but I would advise that the centre take the normal processes for collection of debts which apply to all people irrespective of racial origins.

No doubt the honourable member is aware that in the past the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs made special payments for irrecoverable debts of Aboriginal patients but the Federal Minister has now decided to terminate this assistance.

If after taking the usual steps for recovery without success the centre is still experiencing financial difficulties, it should be advised to make special application for financial assistance to the Q.A.T.B. State Council, when I would be pleased to support any such approach for help from State resources within the Health Department.

14. WEEK-END GEM FOSSICKERS

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

Following the gazettal of recent amendments to the Mining Act and regulations, what departmental requirements must be met by week-end gem fossickers?

Answer:—

A week-end fossicker should be the holder of a current miners' right and proceed according to the entitlements of the holder of a miners' right under the terms of the Mining Act 1968-1976. There is no difference.

15. POLICE FORCE STRENGTH

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

With reference to the Premier's policy pledge at the last election that his Government had decided to increase the strength of the Police Force by 5 per cent per year and as this year's Police Budget Estimates show a decrease of police officers from 4,942 in 1975-76 to 4,935 in 1976-77, can he give some explanation for the Premier's blatant broken promise on police strengths, at a time when criminal offences are on the increase?

Answer:—

The figures of 4,942 and 4,935 quoted are not the approved strength of the Police Force. They include civilian staff of the State Emergency Service and the Police Department, and Aboriginal trackers as well as probationaries and cadets undergoing training.

In 1974-75 the approved strength of the Police Force was 3,480. The increase in 1975-76 exceeded 5 per cent. In fact, the approved strength was increased by 7.04 per cent to 3,725.

As at 30 June 1976 the actual strength of sworn-in members was 115 below the approved strength. There is no point in increasing the approved strength until such time as the present approved level is attained, and the Government has provided funds this financial year for that purpose.

16. TEACHERS RECRUITED FROM OVERSEAS

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

(1) How many teachers were brought out to teach in Queensland from (a) the United Kingdom, (b) Canada and (c) the United States of America?

(2) How many overseas teachers are currently teaching in Queensland schools and what are their countries of origin?

(3) Are any contracts with these teachers from the various countries not to be renewed after 31 December 1976 and, if so, how many and what are the countries of origin of the teachers?

Answers:—

(1) 593 teachers were brought from the United Kingdom, 489 from Canada and 772 from the United States of America.

(2) 379 teachers from the United Kingdom, 188 from Canada and 544 from the United States of America are currently employed in Queensland.

(3) No contracts are renewed after expiry. However, teachers who gain permanent status may continue to teach in Queensland if they so desire.

17. REFLECTORISED NUMBER-PLATES

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

Now that the new number-plate system is to be introduced in Queensland, will his department consider introducing reflectorised number plates to facilitate safety and identification of vehicles at night?

Answer:—

The honourable member should direct his question to the appropriate Minister.

18. ALLEGED A.L.P. INVOLVEMENT IN CEDAR BAY DRUG AFFAIR

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

In view of serious allegations being publicised and of statements being made by a section of the media and politically interested people, will this House hold a full and uninhibited debate as soon as practicable on all aspects of what is known as the Cedar Bay drug affair, including the disgraceful exhibition in the Magistrates Court at Townsville on 10 September by a group of barristers, together with a man named Rockett, who is the northern official of the Teachers' Union, when the police prosecutor attempted to put the case against two persons charged with drug offences, but who remained silent when a barrister named Cullinane was putting their case, and the allegation that the people, all of whom are members of the A.L.P., were acting on the instigation of the Queensland Central Executive of the Australian Labor Party, the substantial cash bail fixed by the magistrate, who remanded the two accused to Cooktown, that was immediately tendered on behalf of the two accused by an A.L.P. member, the substantial airfare that was immediately paid by the same person on behalf of the accused to enable them to fly to Cairns en route to Cooktown, the widely held belief in North Queensland that a big financially powerful drug ring operates there, supported by the A.L.P., and the possibility of the A.L.P. receiving substantial consideration for its support?

Answer:—

The Government is dealing in the correct manner with the matters involved in the Cedar Bay drug affair. It is my understanding that shortly the Crown Law Office will submit its recommendations as to the procedure to be followed as a consequence of its examination of the Cedar Bay report. The Government will consider these recommendations and make its decision.

I am satisfied that to have the matter debated now in this House, as suggested by the honourable member, would only further confuse the issues in the mind of the public.

With regard to the other matters raised by the honourable member in his question, all I can say at this stage is that while I share his concern at their serious nature, I do not believe that it is yet appropriate that the time of this House should be taken up in debating activities of A.L.P. members in relation to the processes of the law.

19. STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE ASSISTANCE TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Mr. Katter for **Mr. Lester**, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Police—

(1) As there is provision for assistance in providing accommodation for State Emergency Services organisations at local government levels, to what extent will this assistance be provided?

(2) Which local government authorities have requested assistance to date?

(3) What are the criteria for consideration of local authorities for such assistance?

Answers:—

(1) A subsidy is available to local authorities to assist in providing headquarters/operations/training accommodation in the local government area. A Commonwealth Government subsidy of 50 per cent and a State Government subsidy of

25 per cent up to a maximum cost of $20,000 is provided, with the remaining 25 per cent to be from local authority funds.

(2) As of this date the following local authorities have requested assistance—

	$
1. Bundaberg City	10,500
2. Eacham Shire	6,000
3. Isis Shire	2,983
4. Pioneer Shire	12,000
5. Mackay City	20,000
6. Murgon Shire	20,000
7. Mulgrave Shire	20,000
8. Douglas Shire	
9. Atherton Shire	5,000
10. Noosa Shire	15,000
11. Barcaldine Shire	9,570
12. Maroochy Shire	12,000
13. Mount Isa Shire	20,000
14. Rockhampton City	20,000
15. Carpentaria Shire	12,000
16. Gladstone Shire	20,000
17. Maryborough City	20,000
18. Ayr Shire	20,000
Total	245,253

(3) General criteria for consideration of a proposal are:

(I) There is not in the vicinity any Defence Force accommodation, including a C.M.F. depot, which is suitable and which can be made available on a full-time or share basis without detriment to normal defence operations.

(II) The building would be for the exclusive use of the relevant State Emergency Service organisation. Sharing of the accommodation by other organisations having a close affinity with emergency services would be considered, but each case would need to be assessed separately and on its individual merits.

(III) The building or facilities should allow for:—

(a) Indoor classroom training;

(b) Safe custody of emergency services stores and equipment;

(c) General administrative needs; and

(d) An adequate Emergency Operations Centre (E.O.C.) if such is not located elsewhere, for example, council offices or police station.

(IV) The building or facility would be in a location and to a general standard, as provided by Commonwealth/State agreements.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The asking of a question on behalf of an absent Government member should be done by the Whip or the Deputy Whip.

20. Uniform Controls of Gas Appliances in Caravans

Mr. Moore for **Mr. Akers,** pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Mines and Energy—

(1) Will caravans manufactured outside Queensland be required to comply with the new regulations covering gas appliances in caravans?

(2) If not, will he take action to eliminate the cost disadvantage imposed on Queensland manufacturers under the regulations, by either attempting to co-ordinate other States to provide uniform controls throughout Australia or by controlling sales in Queensland of caravans manufactured interstate?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) Caravans manufactured outside Queensland, if sold in Queensland, must comply with the Queensland Gas Regulations 1976 if they contain gas appliances.

21. Dental Clinic for Nanango General Hospital

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

As the township of Nanango does not have the services of a private dentist, will he investigate the situation with a view to the establishment of a dental clinic at the Nanango General Hospital?

Answer:—

I am advised that a private dentist operates a dental practice in Nanango on a part-time basis.

For those persons least able to afford private dental fees a dental clinic has been established at the Kingaroy General Hospital, approximately 15 miles from Nanango.

Bearing in mind the over-all needs of the State and the present shortage of dental manpower, the establishment of a

dental clinic at the Nanango General Hospital cannot be considered at this time; but I assure the honourable member that his representations will be kept in mind in future planning.

22. REMEDIAL TEACHER FOR LAIDLEY NORTH STATE SCHOOL

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

(1) Is the Laidley North State School to have the services of a remedial teacher?

(2) Has that school had to reject the services of a remedial teacher because of lack of accommodation?

(3) If so, what will be done to correct this situation?

Answers:—

I thank the honourable member for his continuing interest in the schools in his electorate.

(1) Yes. A remedial or resource teacher will be appointed to the Laidley North State School when a suitably qualified teacher becomes available.

(2) The question of suitable accommodation at the school has not been an issue as a teacher is not available.

(3) The question of accommodation will be considered when a remedial or resource teacher is being considered for appointment.

23. NEW EAST BUNDABERG STATE SCHOOL

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

(1) How many tenders were received for the new East Bundaberg State School?

(2) Was a tender accepted and, if so, what is the starting date and the approximate finishing date?

(3) If no tender was acceptable, will he give the job to the Bundaberg Works Department and have the work commenced immediately, in order to have the school finished by the start of the 1977 school year?

Answers:—

(1) Three.

(2) A decision has yet to be made.

(3) No. The programme does not require this replacement school to be completed for the commencement of the 1977 school year.

24. LAND USE COMMITTEE

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

(1) When was the Co-ordinating Committee on Land Use created and who are its members?

(2) On what dates has the committee met and what recommendations have come from the meetings?

(3) For what term was each member appointed to the committee and what guide-lines were set for appointment to the committee?

(4) Will the committee be compiling reports and, if so, will they be tabled in the Parliament?

Answers:—

(1) It is assumed that the honourable member refers to the Land Use Committee set up by the Environmental Control Council. This committee was established in 1972 and is comprised of the following—

Mr. R. Skeates, Co-ordinator-General's Department (Chairman); and

Miss R. Hesse, Co-ordinator-General's Department (Technical Secretary).

Members are—

Mr. P. L. Ellis, Co-ordinator-General's Department;

Mr. W. M. Robinson, Forestry Department;

Mr. A. Britton, Department of Harbours and Marine;

Mr. G. Lee, Land Administration Commission;

Mr. S. Ross, Irrigation and Water Supply Commission;

Mr. A. S. Muhl, Department of Local Government;

Mr. J. Woods, Department of Mines;

Mr. J. E. Ladewig, Department of Primary Industries;

Mr. J. Gasteen, Australian Conservation Foundation;

Mr. B. J. Ryan, Australian Institute of Landscape Architects Inc.;

Dr. G. McDonald, University of Queensland;

Mr. M. Armstrong, Local Government Association of Queensland;

Mr. T. Hundloe, Queensland Conservation Council; and

Professor C. Rose, School of Australian Environmental Studies.

(2) The Land Use Committee has met at varying intervals, as business required, since its establishment in 1972. The committee has investigated numerous submissions on both specific and general land use matters and has reported back to the Environmental Control Council at each of its meetings.

(3) Members are appointed as representatives of various Government departments, teaching institutions or organisations. The term of membership rests with the nominating department or organisation. Membership has varied from time to time and, in addition, the services of officers from other Government departments have been sought and obtained. Membership was decided in accordance with interest in, and knowledge of, land use matters.

(4) The Land Use Committee has prepared several reports, which it has presented to the Environmental Control Council. That council is responsible for dealing with the committee's reports.

25. OVERSEAS TOUR OF MINISTER FOR WATER RESOURCES

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

(1) What were the reasons for his travel overseas this year?

(2) What specific topics and areas of interest were studied?

(3) When does he intend to report on these matters to Parliament?

(4) On what day did he leave Queensland for overseas and on what day did he return?

(5) What are the details of his movements, with specific reference to cities and towns visited on each of the days spent away?

(6) What persons accompanied him and/or were officially attached to his entourage at any time during his period abroad, for what periods respectively were they so attached and what were the duties of each person?

(7) What was the total expenditure incurred by him and members of his staff in fares, accommodation, other travelling expenses, entertainment expenses and all other expenses charged to the Government during the period from the date of his departure from Queensland until his final return on completion of his overseas tour?

Answer:—

(1 to 7) I would refer the honourable member to the answer given to the Leader of the Opposition by the Honourable the Premier on 10 November 1976.

I could not give any consideration to taking the honourable member with me, because he was already travelling overseas at that stage on a parliamentary delegation.

26. "EQUALITY OF OUTCOME" PHILOSOPHY ON EDUCATION

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

As "equality of outcome" has been the philosophy of the Australian Schools Commission and apparently of his department during the past several years, does he believe that this philosophy is still the desirable philosophy for his department to follow or is his department rethinking its general approach?

Answer:—

The honourable member is quite mistaken in claiming that the philosophy of the Australian Schools Commission has been "equality of outcome". If he reads Chapter 3 of Schools in Australia: Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, May 1973 and Chapter 2 of the Schools Commission Report: Rolling Triennium 1977-79, July 1976 he will find that the philosophy is clearly based on "equality of opportunity". I quote from paragraph 2.14 of the second report—

> "The Commission has never spoken, nor does it now, in favour of promoting equal educational outcomes among individuals."

My department has at no time formally or informally declared its dependence upon the philosophy of education as expounded by the Schools Commission.

I refer the honourable member to sections 24 and 25 of the Education Act 1964–70, in which statements are made that the provision of primary and secondary schooling shall have regard to the age, ability and aptitude of the child concerned. I understand this to mean that the recognition of individual differences is obligatory, and that State education should be concerned with providing equal opportunities for all children to realise their potential.

27. AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS COMMISSION
CHANGE OF ATTITUDE

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

(1) Has he seen the latest report from the Australian Schools Commission?

(2) Has he noted that this previously ultra-progressive body, which expounded equality of outcome as the first objective of schools, deriding competition examinations and hard subjects, is now changing back to a respect for a more traditional education system?

(3) Does he support the view, as stated by the head of the commission, that in spite of the 4.3-fold increase in Commonwealth funding of education, schools are little more than marginally better than they were three years ago?

(4) Has he seen the statements by the head of the commission in his dramatic "we were wrong" speech and his expressed opinion that schools need to swing back towards more emphasis on basic skills?

(5) Is he prepared to use his influence upon his senior departmental officers to convince them that they, too, have been wrong and should swing back to an emphasis on basic subjects and skills?

Answers:—

(1) Yes.

(2) No. I ask the honourable to refer to my answer to the previous question of today.

(3) No.

(4) I am aware of the article in "The Bulletin" of 30 October by Peter Samuel, which, I am assured by the Chairman of the Australian Schools Commission, is a biased and inaccurate report of his speech.

(5) I have repeatedly told the honourable member that emphasis has never been removed from basic subject skills and that I have complete confidence in my senior departmental officers.

ORDER IN CHAMBER DURING QUESTION-TIME

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! If honourable members want to continue their conversations, I ask them to leave the Chamber. There is far too much noise in the Chamber this morning.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

PETITIONS AGAINST ELECTRICITY BILL ORGANISED BY LIBERAL PARTY ALDERMEN

Mr. MELLOY: I ask the Premier: Is he aware that Liberal Party aldermen of the Brisbane City Council and their electorate office secretaries are this morning collecting signatures for a petition calling for a referendum in the Brisbane metropolitan area on the Electricity Bill now before the Parliament?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I think that the honourable member will get his answer in this Chamber later today.

DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL PARKS

Mr. MELLOY: I ask the Minister for Tourism and Marine Services: What consultations or discussions have been held between the Tourism Department and the National Parks and Wildlife Service with a view to creating tourist amenities in the various national parks in the State? Can the Minister give an indication as to what assistance the Government will give to private-enterprise initiatives in the development of Queensland national parks?

Mr. HODGES: I am not aware of what has transpired but the honourable member can rest assured that everything done will be in the best interests of the State and of the Tourism Department.

MR. WILEY FANCHER

Mr. MELLOY: I ask the Minister for Industrial Development, Labour Relations and Consumer Affairs: Is the Wiley Fancher who, as reported in the "Sunday Sun" of 31 October, was charged by inspectors of his department and fined $160 with $98 costs of court for underpaying four station employees the same Wiley Fancher whom the Premier employed last year as his financial adviser in the abortive Swiss loan hunt? In view of Fancher's deplorable record in paying accounts of any kind, will he give to the House an assurance or undertaking that his inspectors will keep the closest possible watch on this undesirable alien so that he does not cheat any more Queensland citizens?

Mr. CAMPBELL: I haven't the foggiest idea.

STAND OF LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION ON SAND-MINING, FRASER ISLAND

Mr. LANE: I ask the Minister for Mines and Energy: In view of the substantial effect that the Federal Government's decision on Fraser Island will have on the economy of this State and the necessity for the Queensland public to understand where the responsibility lies for the campaign by militant preservationists which has resulted in loss of employment for many Queenslanders, does he believe that the Leader of the Opposition in this House has a public responsibility to declare where he and his party stand on the Fraser Island issue?

Mr. CAMM: I think it is up to the judgment of the Leader of the Opposition whether he declares his stand on the Fraser Island debacle, as I might call it. I should say that the first job of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition will be removing the innumerable splinters the Leader of the Opposition got in his backside from sitting on the fence in this issue.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Mr. LANE: I ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer: Does he see the recent comeback by the honourable member for Bulimba as a leader of the Australian Labor Party and as Deputy Leader of the Opposition in this place as a final recognition by the Opposition rank-and-file members and by the Australian Labor Party generally of the inadequacy of the Leader of the Opposition as a parliamentarian?

Mr. KNOX: This is not an expression of opinion; it is an expression of fact. Nobody will deny that, while the Leader of the Opposition in 1974 was on a fact-finding tour of Australia to find out how to win State elections, he was stabbed in the back by no less a person than the honourable member for Archerfield, who organised the coup while his leader was away on this important party business. The former Leader of the Opposition, now Alderman Tucker, cannot be blamed as he was merely a pawn in the game. The honourable member for Archerfield was the master-mind of the whole operation.

Mr. Katter: He's hiding in the Press gallery.

Mr. KNOX: Yes. He led the honourable member for Rockhampton to believe that he was the pea for the job when he himself withdrew his nomination. Much to his dismay, the honourable member for Rockhampton found out that the honourable member for Archerfield had returned to help the former Leader of the Opposition back into office as Deputy Leader.

Of course, the honourable member for Bulimba lost the leadership of the Opposition only because he could not count. He actually won the vote on the motion of no confidence but he could not count correctly. That is recorded in the minutes of that meeting. He still regrets doing his own counting when he could have left it to others.

We see today on the front Opposition bench six old wise men. Some of them will be a little wiser soon because one or two will not be here after the next election. Indeed, we could not get a better example of a set of "yesterday's men", as Mr. Whitlam has described so many of his colleagues.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST ELECTRICITY BILL BY LABOR ALDERMEN OF BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL

Mr. LANE: I ask the Minister for Mines and Energy: Is he aware of the current activity of Brisbane Labor aldermen who are rather unsuccessfully attempting to drum up public opposition to the Government's Electricity Bill with some form of petition calling for a referendum on the matter? As hard work of this nature is something completely foreign to these usually lazy individuals, can he indicate what motives they may have for this sudden rising from their comfortable leather-upholstered armchairs at the City Hall?

Mr. CAMM: My attention has been drawn to the rather concerted campaign being conducted by one Alderman Thomson against the Electricity Bill. This is in spite of the fact that the electricity industry has been conferring on this Bill for the past four years. I have had an opportunity of discussing it with the Lord Mayor and also with Alderman Thomson. Yet they leave it till the eve of the second reading of the Bill to mount this propaganda campaign. One wonders where the money is coming from to pay for the radio time now being used for their propaganda. This is an indication of the way in which they squander taxpayers' money because of their Labor affiliation.

I have also been asked about their motives. The only motive that I can see is that those who are conducting this campaign are afraid that we will now find out how they have been overcharging electricity users in the city of Brisbane in order to finance some of their grandiose and uneconomic schemes. It is rather significant that the members of local authorities surrounding the Greater Brisbane Area which will be affected by the Bill to the same extent as Brisbane, such as Gold Coast, Redland, Ipswich, Moreton, Pine Rivers and Redcliffe, are not joining the little coterie of A.L.P. aldermen of the Brisbane City Council.

BRISBANE OPERATIONS OF VOLVO AUSTRALIA PTY. LTD.

Mr. JONES: I ask the Premier: Following the Government's purchase of a Volvo 264 motor vehicle as one of the impressive transport fleet for his personal use in the electorate of Barambah, did he in a Press statement in "The Courier-Mail" of 25 June last state that he would make a bid to entice Volvo to set up headquarters and manufacture cars in Queensland? Further, was the Premier correctly reported as saying that during his overseas trip in July he would have talks with the Volvo company in Sweden and urge that a decision be made on an expansion of Volvo's operations in Queensland? Finally, is it a fact that now, despite his assurances, or because of his personal representations in Sweden and assistance in Brisbane, Volvo is closing down its Queensland regional retail division operation as of 31 December 1976——

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

Mr. JONES: All right. If so, how successful has the Premier been in encouraging this firm to expand its operations in Brisbane——

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

Mr. JONES: Is the Premier aware of the degree of the scale down, and what will it mean to the metropolitan bus transport contracts and the supply of buses to the Brisbane City Council through this outlet?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: There is a lot involved in the question the honourable member has asked, or the accusations he has made, most of which are completely and utterly untrue, as far as I know. He must have dreamed them up last night. I would ask the honourable member to put his question on notice so that I can put the record completely straight. I can say that the Volvo people are very thankful and happy to be in Queensland, as far as I know, and that they plan to develop and expand their operations in the whole of the South-east Asian area. If the honourable member puts his question on notice, he will probably find that his dream was just another nightmare.

Mr. JONES: I do so accordingly, and I shall be very interested in the reply.

EFFECT ON MARYBOROUGH OF CESSATION OF FRASER ISLAND MINING

Mr. ALISON: I preface a question to the Deputy Premier and Treasurer by thanking the Premier for his support and State Government efforts to assist the Maryborough district by providing employment for those workers who are going to lose their jobs as a direct result of the savage and callous injustice meted out to my electorate by the Federal Government. In view of the Premier's statement this morning, would the Treasurer explore ways and means of having Federal Government finance provided for the proposed Mary River/Tinana Creek barrage and irrigation scheme, for the opening up of softwood forestry plantations on Crown land to the north of Maryborough (as recommended in the Coastal Lowlands Study), and for the proposed upgrading of the Maryborough/Tin Can Bay road to tourist standard?

Mr. KNOX: The Premier has already outlined a number of projects which have been submitted to the Commonwealth Government as being capable of immediate implementation to assist this area. The honourable member for Maryborough has brought to light matters which are, of course, already well known to the Federal authorities and which are capable of being implemented without any delay. The three projects he mentioned were included in the Premier's statement. The situation facing the district arose from the blatant use of a power which should normally be used only for other purposes, but which in this case has been used solely for political purposes. It has been used in a manner which reveals a lack of genuine concern for conservation. This is simply a political exercise, not a conservation exercise, and it shows lack of concern for the people of the area. There was plenty of opportunity for consultation with the people in the area, but the Federal Government did not take advantage of this opportunity.

The people in the Maryborough area, as Australians living in that part of Australia, are more concerned than are any other Australians about the environment of that area, and are just as concerned as any other Australians about protecting that environment, and also about allowing man the opportunity to play a part in it. For the rest of Australia to tell them, under the process used by the Federal Government, how to look after the environment in their area is gross impertinence, just as it would be gross impertinence for the people of Maryborough to tell somebody in Western Australia how to look after their environment. The Australians in this area are proud of their record in looking after their environment and, if they had been allowed to, would have continued to do so successfully, without this capricious decision.

There are, of course, things that can be done immediately by the Federal authorities if they have genuine concern for the area, and the honourable member's pleas should be listened to.

MEALS ON WHEELS

Mr. GOLEBY: I ask the Minister for Health: Does the Government, through his department, subsidise the construction of kitchens for Meals On Wheels?

Dr. EDWARDS: There is no subsidy available at present for capital works on the development of kitchens for Meals On Wheels. The Commonwealth Government, through the Queensland Government, subsidises the provision of meals, and a further subsidy is available for the provision of orange drinks, and so forth, in conjunction with the advice of a dietitian.

This matter, of course, has caused the department some concern for some time; but I must say that the amount of work that has been done by service clubs and voluntary organisations in the provision of kitchens for Meals On Wheels has been outstanding. The Government has always encouraged the provision of such facilities in senior citizens' complexes, and subsidies from both the Commonwealth and State Governments certainly are available on the development of such complexes. I should be quite happy to supply the honourable member with information about them, because I know of his particular interest in this matter. It was particularly evident in the work that he did in the development of a Meals On Wheels kitchen at Victoria Point, which his committee asked me to open some time last year.

"AUSTRALIAN SENATE PRACTICE" BY R. J. ODGERS

Mr. LOWES: I ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer: Has his attention been drawn to the publication of the new edition of "Australian Senate Practice" by R. J. Odgers, the distinguished Clerk of the Australian Senate? Does this authority put beyond all doubt the constitutional power of the Senate to reject or defer Supply Bills? Did the dismissal of the Whitlam Government on 11 November 1975 by His Excellency the Governor-General do more than resolve an impasse and place the governing of Australia in the hands of the electorate?

Mr. KNOX: Of course, today is remembered not only as Armistice Day but also as the historic day on which, 12 months ago, the people had restored to them power to return this country to the democracy that we all want it to be. At that time we had a Prime Minister who wanted to be bigger than the Parliament, bigger than his party, bigger than the Constitution, and bigger than the head of State. He was given the big A by the people.

Mr. K. J. Hooper interjected.

Mr. KNOX: We know the views of the honourable member for Archerfield about Governors and Governors-General.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

At 12 noon,

In accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 307, the House went into Committee of Supply.

SUPPLY

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—ESTIMATES—NINTH AND TENTH ALLOTTED DAYS

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

ESTIMATES-IN-CHIEF, 1976-77

SURVEY AND VALUATION
DEPARTMENT OF VALUER-GENERAL

Hon. J. W. GREENWOOD (Ashgrove—Minister for Survey and Valuation) (12.1 p.m.): I move—

"That $3,994,837 be granted for 'Department of Valuer-General'."

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I have not the slightest intention of allowing the Minister to continue until the Committee comes to order.

Mr. GREENWOOD: The two main responsibilities in the portfolio of Survey and Valuation are the operation of the Department of Valuer-General and the Department of Mapping and Surveying and Office of the Surveyor-General. Both are service departments to the public sector, to other Government departments and to the 131 local authorities in this vast State.

Other activities which concern my portfolio are place names, survey co-ordination and Acts which deal with the registration of practising valuers and land surveyors.

The department was created by the Valuation of Land Act of 1944, which was assented to on 23 November 1944 and proclaimed to come into operation on 1 July 1946. As the preamble stated, its purpose was "to make better provision for determining the valuation of land for rating and taxing purposes and for matters incidental thereto and consequent upon." Prior to the constitution of the Valuer-General's Department, local authorities arranged for the performance of their own valuations for rating purposes. The State Land Tax Department also made valuations for land tax purposes, and to this end employed its own valuers. Valuers employed by that department, however, were concerned with the valuation of freehold land only. The position regarding the valuation of local authorities at that time is now somewhat obscure, but some had not made any fresh valuations for many years. The establishment of the Valuer-General's Department ensured that fresh valuations were made at periodic intervals, and that they were performed, as far as possible, in a co-ordinated manner.

The Act, as originally proclaimed, provided that the interval between valuations should be five years, but this proviso has since been amended to enable valuations to continue in force in normal circumstances for up to eight years. The most recent amendment to the Act provides that in certain circumstances this eight-year period can be extended, and that a valuation of all lands in an area can be performed at lesser intervals than five years.

The Act then provides for professional and impartial valuations to be considered regularly. On the basis of these valuations local authorities' rates are collected. On this point, a point on which there is so much public misunderstanding, let us be clear about one thing: it is the local authority which decides on the amount of rates to be collected from each landowner, not the Valuer-General's Department. The Valuer-General's Department simply determines the unimproved value of each parcel of land. The local authority then uses the unimproved value as a basis for its rating.

What it comes to is this: the rate revenue is collected from ratepayers in accordance with their relative wealth as measured by the unimproved values of blocks of land which they own. So it is a just apportionment which the Valuer-General's Department endeavours to achieve. Although the Valuer-General's decision affects the relative burden borne by ratepayers, it does not affect the absolute value of that burden.

The first 11 area valuations (situated in the Downs district) were proclaimed to come into force and effect on 30 June 1948. The whole area of the State comprised in the 131 local authority areas of the State was valued and in effect on the official rolls of the Valuer-General by 30 June 1966. No areas have been valued less than twice by the Valuer-General; some have been valued as many as six times.

These valuations form the basis for the levying of local authority rates, and for the levying of land tax by the State Commissioner of Land Tax. These authorities, I am informed, collected revenue on the Valuer-General's unimproved values for the year 1975-1976 of $128,006,573.

I have some comments to make on the procedure used in carrying out a valuation, particularly those aspects which guard against mistakes being made, to provide remedies on those occasions when human endeavour falls short of perfection.

The Valuation of Land Act provides ample opportunity to an owner who may feel aggrieved about his valuation to take certain measures to have that valuation reconsidered. He may elect to lodge an objection with the district valuer of the valuation district in which his local authority is situated or with the head office of the department. This must be done within 60 days of the date on which the notice of valuation is posted to him.

The Valuer-General or his delegate then makes arrangements with the owner who has objected, or his representative, to meet in conference at a conveniently arranged location within the local authority. Often the conference occurs on the site. Free, frank discussion is then encouraged in an endeavour to ascertain whether any points relevant

to arriving at the valuation have been overlooked or overassessed. The objection conference conducted by the Valuer-General gives the owner ample opportunity to test the valuation. It is without prejudice and the owner can use the conference for the purpose of ascertaining the manner in which his valuation has been made as well as its relativity with valuations of somewhat comparable lands in the neighbourhood. The process allows the owner to satisfy himself as to the correctness or otherwise of his valuation.

The system is as good as any within the Commonwealth and is as expeditious, as cheap and as informal as, any that have been devised for a landowner. In the vast majority of cases a satisfactory result is reached without the expense or inconvenience of litigation.

After the objection conference the valuation is reconsidered and the decision is posted to the owner, who has a further 60 days to lodge an appeal if he still disagrees with the valuation. The limited number of cases which proceed to litigation in the Land Court from decisions made on objections demonstrates, I believe, the effectiveness of the system provided.

Mr. Gunn: People cannot afford it.

Mr. GREENWOOD: The objection is that people cannot afford it. Of course, the cost of litigation concerns the Government in this, as in many other directions. The whole object of the particular method devised by the Valuer-General's Department is to ensure that people can get a satisfactory solution—a solution which they regard as being just—without the need to go to court. We regard going to court as a remedy that is given to people as a last resort. We are disappointed if a satisfactory result is not achieved beforehand.

May I say in response to the honourable member's interjection something about the efficiency of the department in dealing with objections in the past 12 months. On 1 July 1975, 2,115 objections lodged had not been dealt with. On 1 July 1976, 53 had not been dealt with, and in that year an additional volume of objections—some 7,400; almost a record—came in. I ask honourable members to bear in mind that that was the year in which the Brisbane objections came in. So before honourable members criticise the Valuer-General's Department about the objection procedure, I ask them to bear in mind these figures, which stand as a tribute to the efficiency of the department in going out to the people, hearing their objections and correcting the valuations without the expense of legal procedures. However, the legal procedures are there as a last resort if people are still not satisfied.

Mr. Gunn: Does the Crown ever pay costs?

Mr. GREENWOOD: I will deal with the question of costs and any other points that the honourable member wishes to make in this debate in the course of my reply.

The Valuer-General is now endeavouring to institute a programme that will shorten the periodic interval during which a valuation is in effect to as near to the five-year interval as possible. This is desirable for a number of reasons. The shorter interval will update a valuation sooner and eliminate the large percentage increases which have recently occurred. The more frequent, gradual adjustment seems more acceptable to the public and local authorities than the less frequent but higher increases.

Of course, this is dependent upon funds, and if more valuations are to be conducted at ever-decreasing intervals, more valuers are required to carry out the task. The Government in this, as in other areas, has to determine its priorities, because money spent on additional valuers means less money spent on school-teachers. We never get anything for nothing. So it is for this Government and this Parliament to make decisions on things like the frequency of valuations, bearing in mind that there are hidden costs and hidden sacrifices.

Speaking for the department, I can say that it is anxious to increase the frequency of valuations and shorten the periods which presently apply. The shorter the period, the more chance the valuer has simply to update an existing valuation rather than to make a complete reappraisal. Of course, the shorter the period, the less likely it is that injustices will occur. As I have already said, the effect of valuations is the apportionment of the rate burden in accordance with the unimproved value of land held by the ratepayer. In times of rapid development when some areas of a shire are increasing in value very quickly and others are not, the relative burden of being five years behind may lead to many obvious injustices, which ratepayers are quick to perceive.

While I am on this question of expediting valuations, might I say that a major factor in recent years has been the use of computer technology by the department. During 1969-70 the Valuer-General commenced converting valuation roll information and processing from the manual system to automatic data processing by paper tape punch machines. This conversion was completed during 1975-76, and now these records are stored and maintained on the Treasury computer. During 1976 further modernisation occurred with the installation of four general computer systems machines on direct land-line to the Treasury computer, and this allowed the phasing out of the paper tape punch machines.

The benefits that have flowed from these machines are obvious. In 1975, 264,579 notices were issued in connection with fresh area valuations and several thousands more were issued for altered valuations—valuations

created by subdivision, amended areas, rezoning, change of use, adjusted cane assignments, decisions resulting from objections and appeals, and other maintenance requirements. Maintenance requirements entail an average of 700 major amendments daily on the computer.

In the Supply which the Government seeks from the Committee today, there is provision for the purchase of 13 viewers and one reader/printer to allow the department's sales report to be processed on microfiche, instead of the voluminous paper print-out as is the current practice. This will further greatly facilitate the service provided as well as reduce costs and reduce time in meeting requests.

Some statistics might be of interest when assessing the efficiency of the department. Since 1966, when the whole State had been valued at least once, numbers of parcels have increased by 34 per cent and the monetary amount of valuations by 193 per cent, but the staff employed by the department by only 22 per cent.

There are now over 830,000 parcels of land to be valued in Queensland and of these 471,172 are situated within the 17 local authority areas of the Moreton Region—226,512 within the area of the Brisbane City Council.

During the year 1975-76, new valuations have been issued in 26 local authority areas. These are proclaimed to have force and effect from 30 June 1977. The areas are: Booringa, Croydon, Bauhinia, Monto, Carpentaria, Cloncurry, Mt. Isa, Warwick, Gold Coast, Gympie, Redcliffe, Bulloo, Douglas, Gooburrum, Inglewood, Isis, Laidley, Maroochy, Miriam Vale, Murilla, Quilpie, Redland, Sarina, Tara, Thuringowa and Tiaro. The notices issued were for 147,022 parcels of land.

Inspections have now commenced in 32 local authority areas with the prospect that they will be completed and notices issued during the ensuing year. They are: Cook, Atherton, Eacham, Cairns, Burke, Ayr, Hinchinbrook, Townsville, Nebo, Broadsound, Livingstone, Boulia, Diamantina, Rockhampton, Peak Downs, Barcoo, Biggenden, Bundaberg, Perry, Woocoo, Kilkivan, Widgee, Cambooya, Clifton, Millmerran, Allora, Murweh, Roma, Ipswich, Moreton, Pine Rivers and Beaudesert. The number of parcels of land in these areas is estimated to be 185,587.

In decreasing the time between valuations, the recruiting of staff is of fundamental importance. The department is still having difficulty in recruiting and retaining well-qualified rural valuers. The department recently engaged seven graduates from the Queensland Agricultural College with the Diploma in Business (Real Estate Valuation) and is finding them very satisfactory. It is hoped to look to this source of recruitment again early in the New Year. At the present time there are 34 valuers in training in the department's in-service training scheme.

DEPARTMENT OF MAPPING AND SURVEYING

I pass now to the Department of Mapping and Surveying and may I commence my remarks with a quotation from the United States. In September 1974 a document issued with the authority of the Congress contained these passages—

> "It is difficult for many representatives controlling the destinies of our various political sub-divisions to comprehend that a good quality survey system is as essential to the ordinary development of a community as an efficient water or sewerage system. When the matter is pursued, many will understand that once a good survey system has been established, the cost of engineering surveys and the development of mapping programs, can be reduced considerably.
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> "One drawback that is difficult to overcome is the fact that an integrated survey system, or for that matter almost any survey system, is an invisible asset which the general citizenry is seldom aware exists.
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> "Where such systems have been established, it will usually be found that strong-willed men have prevailed over great odds in obtaining funds and personnel. The public has benefited to the extent of many millions of dollars, though few of these men are recognised for their accomplishments. The rising cost of land, construction of more and more underground public facilities, requirements for protection of the environment, emphasis on land use planning, and the need for fair and equal taxation of property will cause those concerned to realise that the common denominator is a multipurpose integrated survey system.
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> "The development of these engineering structures cannot be achieved overnight—numerous problems must be overcome, and funds must be found to carry them to completion. Yet in the final analysis, special studies and empirical data in combination with long experience, have clearly shown that the tax funds expended for such services will yield to the public benefits far in excess of costs."

That was the considered view of the American Congress on surveying and mapping.

I should also like to refer the Committee to an interesting work published in the "Canadian Surveyor" in December 1972. It is an article entitled, "Economical Aspects of Urban Surveying and Mapping" and it is written by O. J. Marshall and J. W. L. Monaghan. Those authors estimate that for an outlay of $1,000,000 a year on control surveys in the city of Toronto, annual savings of $2,500,000 would be realised in cadastral surveying and mapping (that is, surveying dealing with boundary definitions) with a

further saving of $2,500,000 a year on engineering surveys and related functions. The outlay of $1,000,000 therefore returns immediately $5,000,000 per annum.

I should also like to refer to another interesting article in the "Canadian Surveyor" of December 1972 by A. K. Larsen entitled, "On the Economics of Land and Property Information Systems." Larsen estimates that savings of $15,000,000 a year would accrue from a co-ordinated approach to surveying in the Atlantic provinces of Canada.

I now pass from surveying generally to the savings that can occur as the result of an adequate mapping programme. All development projects need maps. They need them for initial feasibility planning and they need them for the implementation of those plans. The needs of Queensland as a rapidly developing State are probably greater than those of most other States. We need a more comprehensive map coverage and we need it now.

In this area of mapping, experience overseas once again indicates that enormous savings are to be made. In the United States, it was estimated by P. Northcutt that a dollar spent on mapping can yield $18 in benefits to the map user. The detailed argument leading to that conclusion can be found in Volume 38 of "Surveying and Mapping," No. 1, 1968, in an article entitled, "Productivity Measurement in the National Topographic Programme."

In Queensland, professional mappers agree that overseas experience is likely to apply to a very large extent. And what may be achieved is illustrated by a number of examples I would like to mention to the Committee. In the Bundaberg region five cadastral maps are being compiled by provisional methods at a cost to date of $9,000. This sum will virtually have to be written off as wasted when standard mapping is undertaken in this area.

Brisbane flood maps are another instance where time and money could have been saved—about $3,000 a sheet—had standard mapping been available. That my department had suitable maps available enabled a recently commissioned inquiry into sand and gravel extraction from the Pine Rivers to proceed immediately. This saved consultants having to wait for maps to be compiled, and will allow the findings of this inquiry to be available much sooner.

The frequency of large-scale development projects of, say, 200 sq km, is increasing in Queensland. Examples are the Bowen Basin, Bundaberg sugar and coastal studies. These can all be mapped using modern technology. The larger mapping agencies in the State provide this service. However, the direct costs are of the order of $500 per sq km. The indirect costs are also quite substantial, and these can be estimated by using the example of a $20,000,000 water resources development project covering an area of 200 sq km.

From the moment a decision is taken to investigate the feasibility of such a project, appropriate, isolated, specialised mapping at more than $500 per sq km could take 12 months to produce. This 12 months would delay the project a similar time. The cost of such a delay in terms of increased construction cost in times of inflation approaching 18 per cent in the building industry would be $1,200,000. In terms of increases in cost alone, and ignoring the loss of other expected benefits, had $100,000 worth of mapping been available, feasibility could have been assessed a year earlier and the loss of some $1,200,000 would have been prevented. This saving of $1,200,000 would have been sufficient to map half the Moreton region in a form suitable for all conceivable broad-scale development.

At the 11th Congress of the International Society for Photogrammetry held in Lausanne in 1968, Professor H. G. Jerie of the International Institute for Aerial Survey and Earth Sciences, known as I.T.C., opened his address with these words—

> "It is a generally accepted fact that topographic maps, varying in style and content according to local circumstances . . . are an indispensable prerequisite for the general development of a country.
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> "All types of regional development, design of transportation systems, land reclamation and internal colonisation, etc. can only be carried out in an efficient and optimum way, if topographic base maps exist. Topographic maps are also required as base maps for different resources surveys (geology, soils, forestry, hydrology, etc.).
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> "These surveys would otherwise have to be carried out under much more unfavourable circumstances and would result in provisional maps which would not be compatible with future topographic maps."

In 1949 UNESCO requested a panel of eminent cartographers to prepare a report for its use. Here is a section of that report, and it could well be used unchanged in 1976 were a similar report requested now. They said—

> "Topographic mapping is par excellence a public service and therefore a function of Government—whether it is performed by Governmental agencies or under contract. It is a function which calls for co-ordination by Governments within their own boundaries and, in certain aspects also, for supranational co-ordination. Moreover, it is a function which, if performed, will enable national funds to be expended to vastly greater effect.
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> "This, however, is not to say that special mapping for particular purposes should not be undertaken except for Governments, but only that Governments have a clear duty to undertake or direct all that

basic mapping which can provide the topographic information needed by all interests for proper development and administration and which can form the basis of that general and up-to-date picture without which planning degenerates into confusion and frustration."

The production of orthophoto maps commenced in Queensland this year. An orthophoto map is a reprojected vertical aerial photograph where ground details are shown in their correct positions. These maps are being produced at a scale of 1:10,000 and plans are in hand for large scale orthophoto maps to be produced in more rapidly developing areas of the State. Orthophoto maps carry contours and/or land-boundary information as well as the pictorial representation of ground details. They can be produced more quickly and more cheaply than line maps and are very suitable as a basis for medium and large-scale planning and design work. Details of areas covered with orthophoto maps may be found in the appendices of the department's annual report.

Mapping and surveying in Queensland has, as far as funds permitted, undergone rapid change in the past year. Foremost amongst these initiatives has been the restructuring of the old Survey Office. Having been previously detached from the Lands Department, the Survey Office, in December 1975, became the Department of Mapping and Surveying and Office of the Surveyor-General. In June of this year, a proposed restructure of the department was approved, and data collections, processing and distribution have now been channelled through three divisions—Surveys, Technical and Administrative Services, and Mapping. The number of positions on establishment has been substantially reduced. Included in this restructuring was the establishment of three regions—northern, central, and southern—with headquarters at Townsville, Rockhampton, and Brisbane.

The establishment of regions and districts will provide a more efficient service, allowing surveyors in private practice operating in the area and members of the public dealing with the department to have consultations with and ready access to departmental personnel on the spot, without the need of reference to head office in Brisbane. This should also help to reduce the cost of surveys, and I will deal further with costs later on.

The surveying profession has been badly affected by the prevailing economic conditions. We, as a Government, are making a determined effort to maintain employment throughout the profession, and we are doing this in several ways. This year, expanded use has been made of consultants in private practice. The private sector of the surveying profession has always been utilised by the department, mainly on cadastral surveys. It is now the intention to make far greater use, over a wide range, of the private expertise available rather than expand the number of personnel employed in the department.

Funds of the order of $130,000 have been set aside for mapping, and contracts have been let for control surveys in the Pine Rivers and Kingston areas. Further contracts will be let as soon as practicable. In the present financial year, my department will take delivery of a highly sophisticated piece of photogrammetric equipment. It is not intended that the purchase of this equipment should deplete the amount of work available to the private surveyor; the opposite, in fact, applies. As a service to the community, and as a further means of encouraging employment in the profession, this equipment will be used within the department in such a way that work will be available to the private sector. The fast processing time of this equipment will enable these firms to expand their fields of operation in undertaking work that previously was carried out only by Government departments.

The extension of high-order geodetic surveys in the developed and developing parts of the State is a policy designed to establish a framework for a completely integrated survey system throughout Queensland. Such a system will result in cheaper and more reliable surveys for all purposes, from mapping to property definition. The high-precision network in South-east Queensland has been extended north to Gympie, and networks over most cities have commenced.

Section 12 of the Survey Co-ordination Act was implemented this year, with the declaration of three proclaimed survey areas—Toowoomba, Boonah and Beenleigh. Such areas define those parts of the State in which completely integrated surveys are possible owing to precise definition of sufficient fixed co-ordinated points to which all other surveys can be related. All surveys can then be tied in to two of these fixed co-ordinated points. Work to enable the proclamation of further areas is under way in most cities, and is well advanced in sections of North Brisbane, Ipswich and Drayton. Emphasis will be placed on survey co-ordination in the future as one means of substantially reducing the cost of surveys. Details of other activities covered by the Survey Co-ordination Act are shown on page 29 of the department's report.

May I now advert to a number of boards? The Survey Technical Advisory Committee has been formed. It comprises two representatives of the Department of Mapping and Surveying and two nominees from the Institution of Surveyors (Queensland). The idea of this committee is that it can be called upon by me as Minister, by the Surveyor-General, and by the president of the institution to examine technical matters on which we need information. The committee, through its working groups, has produced papers on eight of nine matters referred to it this year. Another advisory group

is the Surveying and Mapping Advisory Council. This has been established to avoid duplication and to facilitate greater co-ordination between those Government departments which are involved in mapping. The council comprises the Surveyor-General and representatives from other Government departments involved in mapping and surveying. The National Mapping Council of Australia has shown great interest in its Queensland counterpart, and has sent an observer to each of the meetings held so far.

In order to cover the largest possible area of interest and to take advantage of all available expertise, a Surveying and Mapping Advisory Committee, comprised of personnel from such places as the University of Queensland, the Queensland Institute of Technology, the Institute of Cartographers, the Institution of Surveyors (Australia) and all interested Government departments has also been formed.

It is also my responsibility to report on the activities of the Queensland Place Names Board. The significant task handled by the Place Names Board this year has been the definition of suburbs in the city of Brisbane —171 were involved. Some initial concern was expressed by residents who felt that long-established locality names would be lost, but once the board's intentions became known the proposed names were generally accepted. Such was the success of the exercise that several other councils have requested similar action by the board. These include the cities of Gladstone, Toowoomba and Gold Coast and the Shires of Albert, Redland, Moreton and Pine Rivers. The annual report of the Place Names Board and the Place Names Committee can be found at page 25 of the department's report.

I have referred to a number of the tasks which my departments are endeavouring to achieve. Additional detail is to be found in the reports which were tabled a fortnight ago. So far as my officers are aware, that was the first occasion when reports from those departments have been tabled in the House.

I am conscious of the fact that it is my duty to satisfy the Committee of Supply so that these Estimates are passed, and that the departments of government for which I have ministerial responsibility continue to function and implement the policies of this Government. In addressing itself to the task, the Committee of Supply is the proud inheritor of 350 years of parliamentary tradition. It is through its control of the power of the purse that Parliament—the people's representatives—can control the Government and, if necessary, bring it to heel. This is the reason why we are able to call our method of democracy "responsible government".

The Government is not independent of the people. It is responsible to the people. The Government cannot pursue any policies it likes. It can only pursue policies for which the people's representatives approve the expenditure of money—and that approval comes through this Parliament and through this Committee. It is fundamental to democracy in Australia and, as I said, has been developed over 350 years of struggle between Parliament and Governments.

It is with a sense of history that I present to the Committee of Supply my first Estimates as a Minister of the Crown. I well know the rights of this Committee and the principles which it bears in mind—principles which every Minister who seeks its approval must bear in mind when approaching the question of Supply. The principles were settled in the time of Charles I and the Government led by Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford. They are these: firstly, Governments must obtain their Supply from Parliament. They must not attempt to raise money by loans or prerogative taxes, whether it be by ship money, sale of monopolies or any other method, if these means are not approved by Parliament. Secondly, if Parliament refuses expenditure on the items on which the Government seeks its approval, the Government must face the people and take the people's verdict.

Only once in Australia's history has a Government attempted to flout this most fundamental principle of parliamentary democracy. And that was 12 months ago when Whitlam's Government tried to evade Parliament's authority. But, fortunately, parliamentary authority was upheld by the Governor-General and Whitlam was forced to obey 350 years of parliamentary tradition and go to every Government's masters, that is, the people of the country.

Dr. Lockwood: Did he get his values wrong?

Mr. GREENWOOD: He certainly got his values wrong.

In coming before this Committee, I appeal to all honourable members—particularly Opposition members—to appreciate that the Government of this country should proceed on a consensus of views expressed by all parties about the importance of Parliament and the place of Parliament.

I hope that as the verdict of history makes us understand better the lessons of last year, and the lessons of the last 350 years, we can all go forward again, supporting the supremacy of Parliament and supporting Parliament's right to send a Government to the polls through the rejection of Supply.

Unfortunately, in this State, the general public's knowledge of the activities of the Department of Mapping and Surveying is somewhat limited.

The following text from the Queensland Resources Atlas illustrates the Department's role in mapping and surveying—

> "Today, cadastral surveying and mapping form only a part of the total demand

for surveying and mapping services. Establishment of large manufacturing and processing industries, development of massive mining operations, and rapid urban expansion have meant that engineering, hydrographic, and photogrammetric surveys and their associated techniques are assuming increasing importance in the contemporary situation. The demand for a wider range of maps reflects the needs of a modern expanding economy for the distribution of information on terrain, boundaries and resources."

The implementation of a programme which will enable us to remain ahead of the State's development will take us at least five years. The mounting pressure from map users, especially local authorities, suggests that urgent priority be given to mapping and surveying so that development costs may be lowered and the State as a whole may begin to receive some dividend from the 18:1 benefit cost ratio flowing from an orderly and efficient mapping programme.

This year a determined effort has been made to upgrade the mapping and surveying facilities of the State. The Department of Mapping and Surveying was created. New organisational concepts were put in train, and far greater use was made of the private resources available. An increased effort has been made to inform the public of the capabilities and products of the department. I am sure that we shall see positive results for our efforts in the coming year. I commend these Estimates to the Committee.

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (12.46 p.m.): In contributing to this debate on the Estimates for Survey and Valuation, I would be foolish and unfair not to pay some tribute to the work of the former Minister, now the Attorney-General. It has been generally recognised that he instigated some reforms—some long-overdue administrative reforms—within the survey and valuation offices. I believe that that only serves to highlight the present anomalous position and the Government's past neglect of its real responsibility, especially in relation to mapping. Even in the area of survey, it needs to be recorded that there are still great deficiencies in the quality and accuracy of maps available for planning purposes.

The Government has made much of its reference back to the Brisbane City Council of the City of Brisbane Town Plan for modification in accordance with guide-lines —guide-lines, incidentally, which have never been made public. The city council has produced a modified town plan which goes far beyond the Government's guide-lines. It is a plan that has been widely acclaimed as a thoroughly responsible piece of professional planning. However, proper planning is being made more difficult by the absence of accurate maps showing contours and buildings. I think the departmental officers here would agree with me that proper planning is made more difficult by the absence of maps of that type. The city council has made requests of the Government, as the mapping authority, but so far there has been no response.

At this stage I compliment the officers responsible for the production of the annual report of the Department of Mapping and Surveying. I have found it to be worth-while reading and very, very informative. Those involved in its presentation have my congratulations. It is one of the few new reports that have proved to be of tremendous value to a member of Parliament who is trying to understand the intricacies of the profession as well as how the department works.

The Estimates before us highlight an extraordinary paradox—a paradox that has far-reaching implications for the future of Queensland and all Queenslanders. We are considering the Estimates for the departments of survey and valuation, yet a few months ago, before Cabinet's last little exercise in musical chairs—or should I call it Russian roulette—it was called the Department of Survey, Valuation, Urban and Regional Affairs. Now, however, the title "Urban and Regional Affairs" has been dropped. It has disappeared—disappeared without trace and without any great public announcement that it was disappearing. I wonder how many Queenslanders—indeed, how many honourable members—really appreciate the significance of what has happened. Here we are considering the Estimates for a rump department, for that is all it is now that urban and regional affairs have been taken out. To really appreciate the significance of dropping "Urban and Regional Affairs", I ask honourable members to cast their minds back. The Minister spoke about 11 November last year, but let us cast our minds back to the last Federal election and the advent of what is now called the new federalism. We have heard a lot about the new federalism; but maybe, now that the honourable member for Barambah and the other State Premiers have heard a little more about it as it has been explained to them by Mr. Fraser, they have discovered that they were sold a pig in a poke back in December last year.

Mr. Houston: Fraser Island.

Mr. BURNS: Fraser Island is a clear example of the new federalism. Connor at least gave them leases on Fraser Island. It is this Federal Government that has taken this industry away from the island and the workers there. But I will not digress, Mr. Hewitt. I see you catching hold of the microphone.

The essence of the new federalism is that the States should reassume responsibility and do their own thing. The message was, "No more centralism in Canberra." That is what new federalism was all about. We were told that we would do our own thing and assume our own responsibilities. The power and responsibility over wide areas of government were to revert to the States.

Honourable members will recall in particular that the Fraser Government made a hasty decision following the election to abandon Urban and Regional Development. It did away with the Department of Urban and Regional Development and cut back on money for the National Sewerage Program and things of that nature. Now we have an emasculated federal hotchpotch called the Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development.

The responsibility for urban and regional development has been passed back to us and now the State department has thrown away the title "Urban and Regional Affairs." It is now the Department of Mapping and Surveying. So much for urban and regional development under new federalism. There is no department handling it federally; it has been handed back to the States and now the State Government has dropped that part of the title. I cannot see in the Estimates that it is to be given any consideration.

Anybody who knows even a little about urban problems or anybody who thinks back to the earlier Federal election will recall that the Whitlam Government was elected because of the problems of the urban dweller. People in country areas were dissatisfied with the drift to the city, and people in Brisbane, for instance, were upset about the problems in the outer suburbs. The honourable member for Salisbury would know the sort of problems that grow in Woodridge and suburbs like that as the result of an explosive increase in population and building with facilities not keeping up with development. That is a fact of life. Whether we like it not, it is a fact of modern-day living.

Reports from round the world show that problems are developing in urban areas and that many urban planners are now pointing to the need to look closely at urbanisation programmes. But the Government in Queensland, which talks so much about centralism and socialism, has decided to abolish that part of the portfolio. It has simply abdicated its responsibility.

These problems have not gone away; they are getting worse. New federalism has not made them go away. What Fraser has said is that the States have to solve them. I wonder what Queensland has done to solve them. Today, the Minister spoke about mapping and took us back 300 or 400 years in history. He is getting very good at doing that. In Tasmania I heard him talking about what happened 300 years ago. The people of Queensland are more interested in modern history—the history of 1976, 1977 and 1978. I do not think they are really interested in living in the past. They are now interested in the future.

I suppose the Government hopes that the people will fail to notice the dropping of "Urban and Regional Affairs" from the Ministry. Looking at last year's Estimates, I could say that it was really only a shell or a sham. Hardly any staff or responsibilities were given to the Minister at that time and its abolition at this time shows how cynical the setting up of it was.

As the Minister said, the State is poised ready to take advantage of our great potential and great growth. It is fair to say that we have great potential. But a lot of the growth has not been created by the Government. In 1975, the Brisbane Statistical Division accounted for 48 per cent of the population, according to the figures of the Bureau of Census and Statistics, and the percentage is growing. It is even more significant that the Moreton Region contains 57.7 per cent of the State's population. During the past 14 years—and it is interesting to note that it has been 14 years of National/Liberal Party Government—nearly three-quarters of the State's growth has taken place in the Moreton Region; in the southern portion of the State.

So much, then, for any balanced development which would have come from planning and urban development and all of the other areas associated not only with this portfolio but also with the portfolio of the Premier, which covers the Co-ordinator-General's Department. The plain fact is that the imbalance in the development of the State has become significantly worse during the term of office of this Government.

We talk of mapping, surveying and the areas which are affecting the ordinary people and which are tied closely to planning, to the everyday human needs and the vital realities of life. We are dealing with the true realities of life—people's surroundings and fundamental amenities. If areas are designed or surveyed so that people live on 8, 12, or 16-perch blocks, as they do in Spring Hill, that decision deals with the people's surroundings, fundamental amenities, fundamental services and beauty, order and harmony—in fact, the embodiment of our civilisation.

In the years to come, if people dig up a city like this, they will look at the planning and layout of the city to see what type of community we were. They will form a picture of our community from the areas of land that they find—the housing developments, the shopping centres, the schools, etc. If no records remain, they will be able to obtain some picture of our civilisation as it is now. I sometimes wonder what sort of picture they will have of some areas in Queensland that have been poorly planned and developed.

When we speak of survey and valuation matters, the really big issue is valuation. Surveys are bound up with the wider question of land use. We have just had one experience with land use and there is another coming up with the Moreton Island Inquiry, in which Mr. Cook is involved. The Premier told me yesterday that $30,000, I think it was, was set aside in these Estimates to be used on the Moreton Island Inquiry. I should like to have a little to say on that matter if time permits.

Valuations and surveys are the mechanical aspects of a wider problem. I should like to refer particularly to the fundamental question of determining the use of land authoritatively after its capacity has been properly and comprehensively assessed. This is a responsibility that the Government has ignored. As honourable members know, Queensland is beset with conflicts over land use between urban and rural users on the outskirts of cities and right up the coast into the sugar lands of North Queensland. Because some of these conflicts between urban expansion and existing rural use have not been determined, valuers are valuing rural land on the basis of expected urban development.

This trend is now quite obvious. In valuing land, people are starting to say, "This land next door has been sold for so much and has been broken up into residential blocks. As a result, your land has a higher value than it would have if it were just an ordinary small-crop farm in a farming area." In some cases this has been caused by speculative subdivision but, in the absence of a responsible determination of the best use of land, developers cannot be blamed for buying land if it is offered to them. Nor can the market gardener or the small farmer be blamed for accepting tempting offers.

Mr. Gunn: Shouldn't it be based on land usage?

Mr. BURNS: Yes; that is what I am saying. If land-use programmes are not drawn up, farmers cannot be blamed for selling their land if good offers are made for it.

Mrs. Kyburz: You can blame councils.

Mr. BURNS: Councils can be blamed, and I think the Government can be blamed, too, because it is a matter of regional and overall planning. I do not think that every small council should be allowed to make decisions on development. With ribbon development along roads some areas are difficult to service with sewerage, transport and electricity. Surely we should have a plan showing in which way development is to take place, as the Moreton Region Growth Strategy Investigation is trying to do at present. We are waiting to see what the State Government is going to do about this question. Will it get down to the nitty-gritty and put some force or value into the study?

What I am trying to emphasise is that in the interests of economy and efficiency the Government has a responsibility to ensure that Queensland's land resources are used to the best advantage and to see that urban development does not take place on valuable agricultural land. It has to see that land of environmental significance is not lost for all time and, for that matter, that mineral resources, including sand and gravel, are not built over. Building should not be allowed in areas in which there are valuable mineral resources. The use of the land and its resources should be properly planned.

This brings me to another aspect of the valuation of land. Recently in "The Courier-Mail" I read a letter by Mr. V. L. Brett, a valuer, of Albert Street, Brisbane, in which he wrote—

> "People are not so much concerned with valuation as with the impost—the rates levied by the council."

I do not think anyone could agree more with that statement. Even if a valuation is increased from $500 to $5,000, it is not the valuation that is the worry but how much it is going to cost in rates or in land taxes. Mr. Brett's letter continued—

> "Therefore, the most important principle is relativity—i.e. the liability to pay rates must be demonstrably fair as among neighbours and property owners generally.
>
> "In the past, the unimproved value basis has served a useful purpose for two reasons—
>
> (a) It was easily understood.
>
> (b) Its simplicity enabled the whole State to be covered by a central valuing authority, the Valuer-General, in quick time—an important consideration where the State Government levies a State-wide land tax."

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

Mr. BURNS: Before the recess I was talking about some suggestions made by Mr. V. L. Brett, a consulting valuer of Brisbane, in the Brisbane "Courier-Mail" which I thought were quite valid. I was making the point that in the past the unimproved-value basis had served a useful purpose for two reasons: it was easily understood, and its simplicity enabled the whole State to be covered by a central valuing authority—the Valuer-General—in quick time, which was an important consideration as the State Government levied State-wide land tax.

Mr. Brett went on to say—

> "But it is no longer simple, nor easily understood. The relevant Act" (this was said on 1 July this year so his suggestions are not out of date) "has been altered (or, in some sections, not altered where it should have been) until a Statutory Unimproved Value today may be the subject of widely differing legal interpretations."

He drew the attention of the people who were reading the letter to a statement by Sugarman J. on 18 December 1952 in the Valuation District of Lismore case in the Land Valuation Court of New South Wales, where Sugarman J. said that the statutory definition of the unimproved value of land was devised in simpler times and it went back to 1895. I think that is true, that it was devised in simpler times and it was easier for people to understand the simple unimproved value system.

Mr. Akers: It has a totally different meaning down there.

Mr. BURNS: Even if it has, I do not think the ordinary person understands what is meant by the unimproved value of his land. I am repeating what Sugarman J. said, and I am making the point that I think it is exactly the same here. I am not going to continue speaking about Lismore, I am making the point as it affects Brisbane. But if it is true in Lismore, why not in Brisbane?

I support the revision of the unimproved value system. A top-level expert committee should be established by the State Government. Meanwhile, we should look at the proposal that has been put forward by the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Alderman Sleeman, and by a large number of other people—not just by him—in recent times after large valuation increases. I saw a statement by the honourable member for Surfers Paradise about a 400 per cent valuation increase on the Gold Coast, and he spoke about the "archaic" system.

Sir Bruce Small: It was 1,400 per cent.

Mr. BURNS: The newspaper must have reported it wrongly because it mentioned 400 per cent.

Sir Bruce Small: It must have been a misprint; it was 1,400 per cent.

Mr. BURNS: That is even worse.

The problem with land valuation is that people tend to look at it in relation to their rates, and when they do that they see it as a tax or a charge on them. Rating is one of the few taxing systems that is not related to one's ability to pay. Most taxes are related to one's income. We find time and time again that old people who have saved their money and kept a little block of land on which to live and bought another small property to rent and thus earn an income are being forced to sell these properties. In fact, when the valuations go up and local authorities raise their rates, their conclusion is that they can no longer afford to retain the land which they have owned for years. In some cases by reason of the valuation system they are forced out of the family home and they have to look for something cheaper. If the family home is left to a person in a single situation, the costs are just too much for that person.

I believe we need a full and open inquiry. I suppose it is easy to call for inquiries, but this is the sort of inquiry that affects every one of us, our own property valuation, our own land valuation and the rates and taxes we pay on our homes. Because it is true to say that a rating and valuation system that might suit Brisbane probably would not suit a western shire or a country area, we ought to be able to have a look at the system. I think it is time the Government sat down and had a look at the question of valuations, rates and other local authority charges that affect the average man and women, the farmer, the businessman and each and every one of us.

As to differential rating—I have talked to people about it and some people suggest that each property should be rated differently, according to its use. Others say that now we have town planning, every property in, say, zone B should have somewhat similar valuations, while every property in residential zone A should have similar valuations. Some people suggest rating by planning zones and others property by property. I am not suggesting I have the answer, but I say that we must start to look for the answer because I believe that most people in the community worry and have a bit of heart flutter every time valuations in their area are reviewed. When they read of the sort of decisions that are being made—decisions that seem to be made on sales of property in the area in which they have lived for 20 years—and land valuations escalate and rates go up as a result of the decision, they worry about it.

I am sure that no-one in this Chamber will disagree and say that people are not concerned and worried about these matters. If that is so, I believe that the Government should look closely at the question and say to itself, "We ought to have an open public inquiry into it." Everybody could then come along and make submissions—people like the Henry George League, who have ideas about what the basis of valuation should be. They could express their views on whether there should be a system similar to the one in Victoria, where various local authorities can make their own decisions on the preferred system of rating, or whether there should be the sort of centralised system that we have today.

In the last couple of minutes available to me, I wish to speak about Moreton Island and the inquiry now being carried out by officers of the Valuer-General's Department. It seems to me that this is one of the areas similar to Fraser Island where it is necessary to consider what is being done. So many inquiries into Moreton Island have been held that I should like to know the total cost of endeavouring to determine what should be done there. I wonder whether the Government is only setting out on a whitewash in regard to Moreton Island.

I can remember the 1972 report on the major islands of Moreton Bay. That was brought down by a committee composed of Mr. Barton, Mr. Healy, Mr. McDowell and Mr. Haley, and it made a number of recommendations. Following that, an inquiry was carried out by Mr. Lickiss, who was formerly the Minister in charge of the department for which Estimates are now being debated. He said that 5 per cent of Moreton Island ought to be mined and 95 per cent of it ought to be retained. The Government was not satisfied with that

decision, so it then had an inquiry carried out by Heath and Associates. They said that 7 per cent ought to be mined and 93 per cent retained. That was very little different from Mr. Lickiss's findings. What happened then? Another inquiry was held. Is the Government not satisfied with 5 per cent or 7 per cent? Is it trying to raise it to 25 per cent or 35 per cent? Is it trying to have a commission bring down the type of report that it wants? It is time that the Government made up its mind not to waste any more money on inquiries.

(Time expired.)

Mr. GOLEBY (Redlands) (2.22 p.m.): Every landholder in Queensland is particularly interested in the activities of the Department of the Valuer-General. If he is not, he quickly becomes interested when revaluations are carried out; he is soon made aware of its existence.

The Minister gave a very clear outline of the activities covered by his portfolio and of the work of the various departments under his control.

Each year, various local authority areas in the State are revalued, and, as the Minister said, the Act provides that each local authority area shall be revalued every five to eight years. In most instances, the Department of the Valuer-General endeavours to have the revaluation carried out as close as possible to five years after the preceding revaluation, but the period can extend to eight years if necessary.

Every time a revaluation takes place, it causes a great deal of upset in the community and we hear many protests. I wonder why this should be. It is interesting to note that although revaluation is carried out by the Valuer-General's Department, it is paid for to some extent by the ratepayers themselves through a levy placed on councils each year.

But one hears the same old story whenever an officer of the Valuer-General's Department walks onto a property. It is a case of, "Who are you? What are you here for?" If any questions are asked, quite often the answers are completely different depending on whether it is an officer from the Valuer-General's Department or a buyer.

A revaluation has been carried out recently and complaints have been made about the value placed on lands within my electorate. I am aware, of course, that it is not the only electorate in which problems have arisen. In many instances, the value placed on land is such that the land would not attract a buyer.

Many problems have arisen with shire valuations since the boom period of 1973-74. Honourable members all know why valuations are needed. Local authority rating is based on the unimproved value of the land; it is also used by the State Government as a basis for land tax. In addition, if it becomes necessary to raise finance by mortgaging a property, every banker is very interested in the unimproved value of land. However, major problems have arisen since the boom period 1973-74.

The worst-hit areas are the coastal areas, particularly in the south-east corner. At the present time a large section of my electorate is experiencing that problem. I refer to the shire of Redland, where valuations have risen, on average, by 735 per cent. The increase in valuation in some cases exceeds 4,000 per cent. It is impossible to convince some people that such is the true valuation of their property. In most instances there have been very few sales to go by. In the boom period 1973-74 there was an enormous number of sales, but very few have taken place since then. It appears that some property owners have been the victims of an over-zealous valuer who has not taken cognisance of the facts surrounding the case. In many instances any semblance of relativity is lacking or basically non-existent.

Of the 131 shires in Queensland Redland is the smallest, but it is the most closely settled, with a population of approximately 30,000. It has many different features. It has been known for generations as the salad bowl. Early in the '70s this changed somewhat with closer settlement and urban development taking place. However, the shire is still noted for its fruit and vegetable production. As I said, it has expanding rural areas, and large areas are specially zoned for pig and poultry production. Then we have the bay islands of Russell, Macleay, Lamb and Karragarra together with Stradbroke Island with its sand-mining and tourism. We have another area known locally as the catchment area—the area around the Leslie Harrison Dam, which provides the water supply for the shire. The Valuer-General and his officers use recent sales as a yardstick in making their valuations. According to the valuation notices for that shire, the valuations are dated 31 March 1976.

Let me now present to the Committee a close appreciation of all those sections of the community in the various parts of the shire and the various interests particularly concerned in this revaluation. I should like to point out some of the irregularities involved. First of all, there is little complaint about the rural areas. Here, in the main, the relativity is very good. The Act provides that land usage is taken into account in valuing rural land. The Minister would be well aware of that part of the Act. As I said, there is very little complaint about the rural areas, with a few exceptions, of which I should like to mention one or two.

I begin with one on Russell Island. That island has been largely subdivided but there are still some sizeable tracts of land in their rural state. Two or three of those are still being used for rural production. The valuer concerned with making valuations on that

island took no notice at all of the section of the Act that provides for land usage to be considered. Land being used by small-crop farmers has been valued at approximately the same level as developed land adjoining.

Subdivision is not possible on the bay islands at the present time. A council by-law provides that no new land can be brought under subdivision. Honourable members will remember recent legislation which was introduced to allow five different landholders to proceed with subdivision as subdivisional plans had been lodged in the Titles Office and had been registered but no deeds had been issued before the local authority take-over. The council had taken the matter to court and had won. However, the Government saw fit to enact special legislation to allow those particular subdivisions to continue as the land was in the process of being subdivided at the time of the council take-over. I remind the Minister and his departmental officers that Russell Islanders with rural land, particularly those using it for that purpose, have no chance of cutting it up for residential development. There are between 17,000 and 18,000 allotments on the bay islands. Most of them are vacant lots and thousands are up for sale.

In valuing land used for fruit and vegetable production the valuer had little appreciation of the type of farming carried on. In the case of one farmer with a number of land aggregations, which are part of his farming enterprise, the relativity of all sections bar one under banana production was good. The valuation of this area was not based on rural production. The owner was told plainly by the valuer that no-one could say that banana-growing in the Redland district is a commercial proposition. Banana-growing is part of these farmers' way of life and farm aggregation and it provides part of their over-all farm income. I cannot see why they should be discriminated against.

In another instance a farmer who was ill was unable to work his property for some months. After surgery he recuperated sufficiently to continue farming. The valuer did not take his illness into account and valued his property as urban land. This farmer has contracts to supply the fruit produced on his farm to local canneries. Due regard should be paid to the circumstances that landholders are confronted with.

I have said here on other occasions that 50 per cent of broilers produced in the poultry industry come from my electorate. The land on which the poultry sheds are built is given a rural valuation but the balance of the land surrounding the sheds and the family home is given an urban valuation, the argument being that if the farmer is not using all of his land for sheds he cannot claim that he is using it for rural production. When one farmer asked what the position would be if he ran stock on his land, he was told, "The cattle industry today is not viable. How can five to 10 head be part of a rural enterprise?" That is not the point. If only portion of a man's property is used for poultry production, no-one would want to live on or near the balance area. Who would want to live next to a poultry shed? The area surrounding poultry sheds is all part of the farming enterprise. I see no reason why farmers in the poultry industry should be discriminated against in this way. The valuer who was responsible for this discrimination has little knowledge of the industry or its effect on residential living.

Except for the few instances I have cited, the relativity of land values in rural areas, on the whole, has been good. But in the urban areas astronomical increases have taken place in the valuation of residential land. Quite clearly the valuations set take into account the price paid for residential land but, unfortunately, it seems that little cognisance is taken of the fact that the valuation set is supposed to be the unimproved value. In many new estates the Valuer-General's so-called unimproved valuation exceeds the prices paid and the prices being asked for land which are unattainable on the present market. I fail to see how any valuer can fix values in excess of the cost of the land and the development cost and call them unimproved values. As I mentioned, many of the allotments are well and truly over-valued and, if put on the market (as many of them have been), they find no buyer.

I draw the attention of the Committee to the land boom in the bay islands, which I referred to earlier. At the time of that boom, the islands did not come under the jurisdiction of any local authority at all. Land was sold chiefly sight unseen to people all round the world. We have practically every continent in the world represented on the rate books of the Redland Shire—even as remote a place as Iceland. Blocks were bought on the basis of colour brochures and colour-film clips used by the advertising agency of the large developers.

It is interesting that only about 64 per cent of those who purchased land on the islands are presently paying rates. The majority of those not paying rates cannot be traced by the local authority. They have no interest whatsoever in their purchase. They regarded it as a speculative investment, with no rates to pay. They took the punt and hoped that everything would come good. In other words, the investment was a blank cheque, and they just hoped they had invested wisely. Unfortunately, as we all realise, many of them were taken down. Some very high prices were paid in those days of 1973-74. Today, however, it is virtually impossible to sell land on the islands for more than $2,000 a block—and that would be a very choice block, although some choice blocks on the waterfront may realise a little more.

It is also interesting to note that recent auction sales of residential blocks on the island have averaged between $800 and

$1,100 per block. The total valuation on the bay islands is in excess of $27,000,000. The average valuation per block is well in excess of the sale prices being realised at present.

I do not believe that prices paid by people who have never seen the land can be recognised as a true indication of a block's value. I have no sympathy for people who buy land sight unseen.

Mr. Casey: How can he tell whether a person is an absentee owner?

Mr. GOLEBY: How can the Valuer-General tell?

Mr. Casey: Yes.

Mr. GOLEBY: He has their addresses, and from the remoteness of some of them he would have a pretty good idea. I have mentioned Iceland. Other absentee owners live in Singapore, Hong Kong, London and New York. Whatever city one can think of in Europe, there are purchasers there.

Valuations in this area are much higher than the resumption prices paid by the Redland Shire Council—and that was on the Valuer-General's valuation! Many blocks have been resumed, and the resumption prices are far less than the unimproved value on adjoining blocks.

I pass on now to Stradbroke Island, where in the main the valuations have been reasonable. However, at Amity Point the increases have amounted to as much as 4,000 per cent. We know that on the waterfront at Rainbow Channel land is being washed into the sea. That has been happening for many years. Many blocks have been completely written off. They have slipped into the sea and they are no longer visible. Erosion is taking place at a rapid pace. The Government can do nothing. It refuses to do anything. The council cannot borrow funds, because the Government will not approve of any reclamation scheme. The only work that has been done there to try to stop the erosion has been done by the local progress association. But we still find buildings hanging over the cliff—hanging over the sea. I repeat that valuations for that area have been increased by 4,000 per cent—again because, I believe, someone has bought land there, sight unseen, at an enormous price and that is one of the few comparative sales that the Valuer-General has had.

Another anomaly exists in the catchment area of the Redland Shire. The catchment area comprises part of the Brisbane City Council and the Albert Shire areas. Because of an agreement reached between the councils involved, no development can take place there, yet land valuations have increased by 2,000 to 3,000 per cent. The land has no amenities. No industry can be carried on—no farming, no grazing to any extent, no piggeries, and no poultry farms. No subdivision can be carried out. All poultry farms and piggeries have been resumed by the council. There are few sealed roads. The only use to which that land can be put is the construction of one house per block. It is an area where no development can take place. The holdings are acreage blocks and the landholders can do nothing but live on them. Yet because of one or two inflated sale prices the Valuer-General has placed these high valuations on the blocks. I appeal to the Minister to have this catchment area reassessed. The relativity of the valuations in the area is all right but the valuations themselves are excessive, particularly as these people can do nothing with the land. Not even a 32-perch block can be cut out of a 100-acre block or a 600-acre block to be given to a son or a daughter to build a home on. I repeat that the land can be used only for living on. Because it is in a catchment area, the owners cannot even run a few stock or establish a poultry farm or a piggery; rural production is completely out of the question. These owners will be held to ransom with high valuations. I hope that the Minister and his officers will receive a deputation from the chairman of the Redland Shire Council and me so that we can deal with the anomalies in the area.

This will not happen only in the Redland Shire. When Brisbane and the Albert Shire are revalued, the same will occur. These restrictions will be applied by the local authorities concerned. Unless something is done about the Redland Shire valuations, residents living in the local authority areas that I mentioned will face the same plight.

In this area there are many large holdings, some as large as 600 acres. All that is being grown on them at present is timber.

(Time expired.)

Mr. GUNN (Somerset) (2.42 p.m.): I recognise quite a few of the problems connected with the Valuer-General's Department. However, it is not as simple as the Minister makes out. He said that his department values the land within a shire and all that the local authority has to do is strike a rate. How can a local authority strike a rate when urban valuations have been increased by 400 to 500 per cent?

The Laidley valuations, which were recently handed down, would be a great laugh if the position was not so serious. I have lived in that area and have been the chairman of the council there and I know of land in the area which has been increased in value from $200 to $4,000. Some of the land has been on the market for the past five years. I think the owners would gladly sell it for half of the valuation.

While the senior men in the Valuer-General's Department are very experienced, very few officers reach a senior position because developers grab most of the bright

young men who look like making the grade and we end up with a few who have no idea of land usage.

I shall give a classic example. In the Laidley Shire, the value of some of the floodable land, on which lucerne would have to be planted each year, has doubled, whereas the values of some of the Lockyer Creek land, where there could be 6 in. of rain this morning and a bird could not get a bath on the ground tomorrow, have increased only slightly. This is extremely hard to understand. Local authorities have a great problem with rating.

In one instance a 16 hectare paddock in the Laidley Shire was bought by a young fellow. I know the land and would describe it as stony ridge that would carry two ponies. The valuation was increased from $470 to $9,000. This is absolutely ridiculous. If this man could find a buyer, he would get rid of it as quickly as possible. He brought up this matter with me at my office.

I am still not convinced that these valuers who are going out are not valuing on potential. I believe that they are valuing on potential and not on land usage. If they valued on land usage, there is no way at all that the valuations would have increased. This fellow uses the land only to run a couple of ponies and I cannot see that it will be of any real significance to him for many years.

I recognise that during the time in which I have been in this Parliament the Act has been amended and improved. My council suffered badly at one time. We were waiting a couple of years for valuations to be handed down because they were under appeal. The stupid situation was reached in which appeals dragged on and on. I shall give the Committee some indication as to the inaccuracy of the valuations. After an association fought the valuations through the court and had them reduced, the department said, "We recognise that there is a serious anomaly here" and gave across-the-board reductions. That happened in the Brisbane Valley in the Esk shire. Even those who had not appealed found that their valuations were decreased by 17 per cent.

I do not blame the present Minister or the Valuer-General for this situation. I believe it was seen that the valuations should be amended, and that was done. But I am not entirely satisfied with the way in which the Act is being implemented. If its provisions were being carried out as they should be, there would not be the problems being experienced at present. I believe that the stage is being reached in the Laidley Shire when many people will be prepared to give their land back to the shire. One person who came to see me had a small piece of railway land that he obtained cheaply. On the valuation that has been placed on that land, there is no way in which he will ever be able to pay the rates on it. He said, "They can have it back."

It is a serious situation when people are deprived of the opportunity to retain small pieces of land. I foresee the day when elderly people with a couple of allotments will be forced to go as far out into the country as they can or sacrifice the land. It would be a different matter if land subject to such rating was saleable, but in many cases it cannot be sold. I do not think that those who want to own a bit of land should be prevented in this way from doing so.

This situation has come about because young valuers do not really understand the situation. I have spoken with some of them and I think they believe that every landowner is trying to put something over them. I appreciate that it is very difficult for any person to go to a strange area and carry out valuations—without living on the land and knowing what it can produce. It may be all very well to put land into, say, category A or category B, but there are so many factors to be taken into account in producing crops on the land. We simply do not have sufficiently experienced men. I stood for a long time speaking to one young fellow about the land and showing him flood heights. He said, "Yes, we have maps of that." In spite of that, the valuation of all that land was doubled.

To give some indication of just how far out some valuers are, I hark back to the 1968 valuations in the Brisbane Valley in the Laidley Shire. When those valuations went on appeal to the court, some were reduced by 30 per cent. Those reductions were allowed because the land was subject to flooding. Since 1968, up to 50 and 60 per cent of the top soil of that land has been lost. If the young fellow doing the valuations had walked over one property that had been affected in this way, he would have found it up to probably 3 ft. lower than a neighbouring property that had not been cultivated. In spite of the fact that half the subsoil had been lost, properties were doubled in value. Those are some of the things that I cannot understand. I believe that the time has come, although it has proved unpopular when put forward previously, when the shires should think about revaluing downwards. I think it will come to that.

Mr. Akers: Never!

Mr. GUNN: I think it will. I think after the next revaluation a lot of shires will be prepared to revalue their properties downwards. All I can say is that if values keep escalating the way they are, very few people will be able to own land in some of the urban areas. In shires such as Laidley, which has just been through a revaluation, there is no doubt that the value of some urban areas alongside rural areas has increased probably tenfold. I question this, because if we go on sales——

Mr. Casey interjected.

Mr. GUNN: It is all right talking about cockies; the honourable member is always talking about cockies.

Mr. Casey interjected.

Mr. GUNN: I know, but that is definitely wrong. The honourable member might be a long way from home, but he is wrong about that. However, I think that the round-table conferences that have been referred to are a damned waste of time. I have been to quite a lot of them and I am still looking for this reasonable man we all talk about. I can remember, although I suppose it has changed, where all one would get from a lot of them would be the horse laugh. They would say, "Would you sell it for that?" The question of sale does not arise. Why should one have to sell one's property just because of a valuation that is far too high. Recently in the Laidley Shire we saw the valuation of a new development jump from about $300 to $6,000, and yet these poor beggars on these little 10-acre blocks, which are just ordinary pieces of ground, have no electricity or water. I think the developer should have had his throat cut for ever selling those blocks. Some of them have changed hands three or four times because there is always the sucker who will come in and buy them.

I also question the fact that these valuations are based on comparable sales. I know it has been said, "Oh, we just don't go on one sale." I have had the ridiculous situation in parts of my electorate, particularly near the Wivenhoe Dam, where a grazing property has been quoted against a dairying property. This is the sort of situation we see; it is just too silly for words. I think we as a Government have to look at the system, have a long talk about it and see what we can come up with as far as local government is concerned, because I think that when most local authorities receive their next valuations they will be only too pleased to then consider a revaluation downwards, and also to have the valuations done by people who know something about the area. I think we would be far better off, and so would they, if this was done.

I would also like to refer to delays in the valuation of private land by the Valuer-General's Department when resumptions are made by the Main Roads Department. I am not blaming the Valuer-General's Department entirely for what occurs, but I want to mention this because it is certainly worrying me. Perhaps it is the Main Roads Department that is to blame for these delays. I know that the Valuer-General has a lot on his plate and that most of the time his department is understaffed, but we now see the circumstance arising where land is resumed by the Main Roads Department and yet on most occasions it has to get a valuation through the Valuer-General's Department. This takes a long time and we find that people are sometimes waiting for 12 months or two years before they are paid by the Main Roads Department.

We are led to believe that people are taken into account and that there is as little disruption as possible to their lives but, of course, this is not true at all. I have seen some dreadful cases where people have been uprooted from their homes and businesses and no consideration at all has been given to them. I have written some very strong letters to the Minister about this, but I must repeat that I am not blaming the Valuer-General's Department in all cases. Perhaps it would be better if the Main Roads Department did these valuations itself, and if there was a dispute the Valuer-General's Department could then be brought in to make a valuation which it thinks is fair and reasonable.

I would like to pay a tribute to the Minister's Mapping and Surveying Department. As the Leader of the Opposition said, until one reads the department's annual report, one does not realise the amount of work it does. We have seen quite a lot of the department's maps, but I do not think we ever realised the amount of work that goes into them. I appreciate the great value of these maps. I would like to mention the use of aerial photography in mapping. The use of aerial photography enables the quick production of maps. It is a very quick way of producing authentic topographic maps. The Wivenhoe Dam is being built in my electorate, so quite a few aerial maps of the area have been made. As a matter of fact, I have to attend a meeting tonight and give people some indication of what is to happen in their area. My job will be less difficult because I shall be able to use maps produced by the Department of Mapping and Surveying. I shall be able to show people who have lived in the area all their lives very interesting aerial photographs of the region and maps that are very easy to read.

Mapping of flood plains is extremely important. The Brisbane River and other areas in my electorate have already been covered, and I hope that the flood plains in the Lockyer Valley, the Burnett and other areas will also be mapped. Maps of flood plains would be of great assistance, too, to valuers. When valuations are carried out, the valuers usually see the areas at their best, and it is very difficult to persuade them to return when they are under flood. I remember an occasion when I tried to get valuers back to an area during a big flood, and I had great difficulty. As I said, maps and aerial photographs of flood plains would be of great value. It would then be possible to assess areas not only when they were in top condition but also when persons were losing the fruits of their labours. Valuations made on that basis would be of greater benefit to people generally.

I hope that the Government will give serious thought to changing the basis of future valuations, because land values are of

great importance to the man on the land. If care is not taken, small people will be pushed out of land ownership and only those who are very wealthy will be able to own land.

Mr. CASEY (Mackay) (2.58 p.m.): This is the first occasion on which the Estimates of this department as such have been debated in this Chamber, and I take the opportunity to remind the Committee of some comments that I made in March 1975, when the Officials in Parliament Act was before this Assembly and this separate ministry, this separate portfolio, was created. I make it quite clear that my remarks are not intended as a personal reflection on the present incumbent of the office. I think he is a fine fellow —and a good-looking one at that! Perhaps he might have made a better judge than a Cabinet Minister. I do not know; perhaps we will never know.

When the Ministry was increased from 14 to 18 in March 1975, I was critical of the establishment of this as a separate portfolio, and I believe that what has happened since completely justifies the criticism that I then made. At the outset, this ministerial portfolio had attached to it urban and regional affairs. I am still not certain—and I know that many other members are not certain—whether urban and regional affairs are within the Minister's portfolio. That phrase appears in some of the correspondence that comes to us; in other material it does not. Even when a notice relating to the Estimates debate was circulated, it mentioned urban and regional affairs, and the directory relating to ministerial portfolios still shows that the Minister is responsible for urban and regional affairs generally. It is a ridiculous situation —and it was right from the outset—because there is no legislation under which the Minister controlling urban and regional affairs operates.

All legislation that has anything to do with regional affairs is under the auspices of the Premier, and is acted on through the Co-ordinator-General's Department. Nowhere within the Minister's report or in the Parliament generally do we see anything coming from his department relating to urban and regional affairs. At the time it was a little bit of a farce. It was like the statement made by the Premier in 1975 about a separate portfolio for northern development. We have never since seen or heard anything about it. Nothing at all has occurred. To say that the Minister's department also covers regional and urban affairs certainly shows just what a failure it has been.

The Valuer-General's Department is an excellent department. It is well run and I compliment the Valuer-General, Mr. Cook, on the way he has run his department. It is not an easy one to administer, as we have noted from some of the comments today. I compliment the Valuer-General on the publication of what I understand is his first annual report in the present format. The report contains a wealth of statistical data and information relating to values generally throughout Queensland. Certainly it will make an excellent reference publication for members of Parliament and others. The Surveyor-General, Mr. Serisier, has also produced an excellent report, as other honourable members have stated. Before the department was thrown together in this format, the Surveyor-General was attached to the Lands Department and the Valuer-General was attached to the Local Government Department. They had been traditionally in those places for a considerable time.

Because I felt that there was just not a departmental work-load, I decided to examine my own files. I think you, Mr. Miller, would agree that I work reasonably hard as a member of Parliament. By going through my own files I found that the only correspondence I had concerning survey and valuation were a couple of letters from the Minister forwarding new pamphlets that were being put out on the valuation of land. They were quite informative pamphlets, but perhaps they could have been issued by the public relations section of the Premier's Department. I purchased a map for my office through the department. That is probably the biggest part of the whole of my file on that department.

Then I found letters regarding three trips to the North. In a matter of two years since the department has been established, there have been three ministerial visits through various northern areas. I am not knocking that. I think you, Mr. Miller, were on one of those trips. Such trips present an excellent opportunity for persons throughout the State engaged in the work of surveying or carrying out valuations to contact the Minister and the heads of the department and talk to them about particular problems. But surely there is a lot more work involved in this department than just running around the State drumming up business.

I am not the only member who is not adding to the department's work-load. We have only to consider question-time in this Parliament. The Minister for Survey and Valuation is perhaps one of the lonliest Ministers on the ministerial benches at question-time. It is only on very rare occasions when one of his colleagues trots out a Dorothy Dix question on survey and valuation that he gets an opportunity to answer a question dealing with his own portfolio. He certainly gets plenty of opportunities to answer questions on behalf of absent friends—Ministers who are trotting around various places from time to time.

Mr. Melloy: He writes a letter of thanks to anyone who asks him a question.

Mr. CASEY: I wouldn't know; I haven't asked him a question. The honourable member may have asked one and received a letter of thanks. If he did I suggest that he frame it, because it will probably be a long time before he gets another one, judging by the rate at which questions are being

directed to the Minister. I go so far as to say that the portfolio is as useless as a sand-dredge on Fraser Island at the moment.

An Opposition Member interjected.

Mr. CASEY: Mr. Fraser certainly has not looked after his namesake island.

I objected when the Ministry was enlarged to 18, and this portfolio was one that I thought was unnecessary. The Premier should readjust the various ministerial responsibilities and so put this Minister to work on something that is more in keeping with his talents.

I am very concerned about the problems facing pensioners after a revaluation. It is time we gave them some thought. Most of them are very elderly and find it difficult to understand what is happening. The other day I received a letter from an 89-year-old lady whose valuation had been increased tremendously. She had no idea how to object or what her rights were. We must provide an easier format for pensioners to query valuations.

While I said that I am quite happy with the officers and the work done by these two departments, I have some criticism of the work done in the State. The problem may be caused by the legislation and the system that has evolved. A number of difficulties have been created by what seem to be long delays in the survey department, particularly in matters relating to the Crown. In Queensland and other States certain people have taken distinct advantage of this delay to make a considerable amount of money. Firstly, I refer to the Resort Corporation of Queensland and its dealings near the Ilbilbie/Cape Palmerston area. I raised this matter earlier this year and again this morning. Today, the Acting Attorney-General said that the investigation into this matter is still proceeding.

One reason why these land sharks from Sydney were able to sell considerable areas after spurious advertising—and they sold worthless scrip in various areas of the State —was the tremendous delay between the Lands Department and the Survey Office in sorting out an application for freeholding a grazing lease in the Ilbilbie/Cape Palmerston area. Because of the backlog these land sharks were able to do a little bit of work, advertise and ostensibly sell land. People who bought land found that they were issued with scrip in a co-operative—under a loop-hole in another Act—in the Rural Co-operative Development Society. These developers were able to fleece people of money. When the crunch came the money was gone. This happened simply because the survey of a large area of land as national park was not up-to-date.

I accept that this work is not easy and that a great deal of it has to be done. If the Surveyor-General were to say, "We have kept working as we should," I would accept his word, but somewhere along the line we must tie up the ends to ensure that when delays occur land sharks cannot get in and make excessive profits from selling land. If the Surveyor-General's Department was again under the control of the Lands Department, perhaps we would not have this trouble with delays between one department and another. There would be constant, close liaison and one Minister would be responsible for lands and surveys. If the portfolio is split up and the departments reallocated again, the Surveyor-General's Department may go back to the Lands Department.

I believe that an altogether new approach should be adopted for the Valuer-General's Department. I suggest that it should have its authority and scope strengthened and should be established on a similar basis to our Ombudsman; that is, completely divorced from any departmental establishment. I say that for a considerable number of reasons. Time after time there are hassles about resumptions of land, leases and so on. There are differences of opinion on valuations between local authorities. Indeed, local authorities themselves require the Valuer-General's Department to give them valuations when they acquire land for street widening, sewerage easements and various other purposes.

The local authority offers the landowner a small amount and then asks the Valuer-General for a valuation. Unimproved value is used as the basis. Then the hassle begins. The argument goes backwards and forwards, and then the solicitors move in and have a field day. The dispute goes to the Land Court or some other court. Everybody gets a lot of money out of it except the poor bloke whose land is resumed. Compared with what he might have been able to sell his land for, he finishes up with very little. The local authority has to pay a lot of money, which eventually comes out of the ratepayer's pocket.

If the Valuer-General could be a completely independent authority, like the Ombudsman, he could set a realistic figure, bearing in mind the rights and entitlements of the parties. The same applies in relation to Lands Department leases. At present, the Valuer-General establishes a figure for rating purposes on a piece of land. The Lands Department has a different valuation again. I accept that the Lands Department uses a slightly different basis for leases, particularly on grazing lands and so on. But in that area, too, the arguments go backwards and forwards. In appeals, the appellants use the valuation of one department as a basis for the appeal, and the Lands Department uses another valuation. If the Valuer-General was completely divorced from all the departments, he could be the statutory authority for determining valuations. Even the Lands Department could go to him for its valuations.

I mention, too, land resumptions by the Railway Department. That department would probably have the worst record of any in land resumptions. It has often been guilty of treating landowners in a shocking way. It

offers very low amounts indeed. Again the dispute goes on and on and finishes up in court. I repeat, the only people who gain from it in the long run are the solicitors. The Railway Department hangs on right to the end. If the Valuer-General was an independent authority, he could offer the basis for a quick determination.

That brings me to another factor. I have instances in my own electorate of businesses that will be disrupted by the construction of a new railway line. Those concerned accept that a new railway line has to go through. If they could get a quick determination of the compensation to be paid for the disruption to their businesses, the whole matter could be resolved without any hassle at all. However, the Railway Department hangs on and on. The railway line will be completed, with trains running over it for a number of years, before a determination on the value of the land is finally made.

There are many other departments involved in these matters, such as the Co-ordinator-General's Department. A few moments ago the honourable member for Somerset spoke of land acquisitions in his area for the Wivenhoe Dam. Here again the Valuer-General's Department could be used as an independent valuing authority. We cannot say that it is an independent authority while it is attached to a composite department and is working for and on behalf of the Government. Another authority involved is the Irrigation and Water Supply Department. If we could set up the Valuer-General's department as an independent authority, it would be trusted by the people. With so many Government land acquisitions for instance, for railways, local authority acquisitions and Lands Department ratings, there is a great need for a separate authority, which would be trusted by the people, and all valuations would be seen to be fair.

I congratulate the Department of Mapping and Surveying on its excellent publication, the Queensland Resources Atlas. Many people have been wanting to see such a publication for a long time and it is one of the best State maps that I have seen in Australia. It sets out topography, industry, soil types, geological formations and so many other different features. It is a wonderful publication as it gives everybody an opportunity to know his own State a bit better. I compliment the department on that effort.

Mrs. KYBURZ (Salisbury) (3.17 p.m.): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to speak to these Estimates. Under the previous Minister, the department underwent vast reorganisation. We now have a new Minister and from him we expect to see a continuance of enthusiasm. We know that we will.

Before I attack the Estimates in detail, may I make a few comments in general about the department. I cannot help agreeing with many of the statements of the honourable member for Mackay. Indeed, it is the duty of Independent members as well as of Opposition members to raise these points. It is possibly a little sad that I have to reiterate them.

The fact that Urban and Regional Affairs has been taken out of this portfolio is a matter for the commiseration of every honourable member. The Estimates of Expenditure for this year provide for a large expenditure by the Co-ordinator-General's Department and one can only assume that money has been diverted to it from the department about which we are now speaking. This is the matter of Government policy and has very little to do with back-benchers or with any political party. Wherever the strength lies, the decisions are made. The only way that can be changed is perhaps a matter not so much of lobbying as of placing a great deal of importance on urban and regional affairs.

In these times local authorities are slipping far behind in their responsibilities. Remember that there are 131 of them in Queensland, and many are simply not managing their affairs capably. Whether or not we have to undergo a vast rationalisation of the whole scheme of things in Queensland is not for me to decide, but it is for me to make the comment that there are too many local authorities. Some of them are simply not managing their areas in the way that the people think they should. However, that should not be brought up in a discussion on the Estimates of this department.

I shall discuss later the fact that local authorities decide the amount of rates charged on land. Many previous speakers have mentioned this matter.

I note that the Vote for this department is not a very large one. In toto, it is $10,990,248. For 1976-77 the Department of the Valuer-General requires $3,994,837 and the Department of Mapping and Surveying requires $6,995,411, an increase of almost $1,000,000 over last year's Vote. I believe the increase is necessary, although it is unusual for me to suggest that further expenditure should be incurred. I say this because in so many other Government departments there has been a frivolous waste of public money. When the Estimates of those departments come up for debate I shall be very happy to point out this waste.

I believe that in this particular department a larger Vote is necessary because, as I said, in the Department of Mapping and Surveying modernisation of techniques is taking place. In fact, this modernisation is so very important to the whole of the State of Queensland. I shall bring that matter up later.

Under the heading of "Contingencies" in the Department of Mapping and Surveying I see that an amount of $662,412 was expended in 1975-76 for "Postage, Equipment and Incidentals". I should like to know what is meant by "Incidentals", because that is a heck of a lot of money to go on little things.

Another item to which I wish to refer is, "Mapping and Surveys by Contract". I realise that the department is letting out many contracts to private surveyors. The amount voted for this item for 1976-77 is $360,885. I think that, simply because the department cannot handle all the work that it has to do, that Vote is probably quite fair. What I would particularly like to know is on what criteria are contracts given to private surveyors.

In 1975-76 the Survey Office spent $376,839 on special equipment. I should like details of that special equipment, simply because I find that a great deal can be covered by one or two words in the Estimates. It is rather worrying if we, as Government members, do not investigate, or are not told simply because we have not asked, what money is spent on.

Exactly the same things have taken place in the Department of the Valuer-General. Under "Contingencies", the amount of $884,660 is required for 1976-77 for "Travelling Expenses, Postage and Incidentals". That is a lot of money—almost $1,000,000—and we deserve a breakdown of that amount.

The Valuer-General's Department has a huge salaries bill, which in the next financial year will amount to something a little in excess of $3,000,000. The Department of Mapping and Surveying equally has a large salaries bill, of $4,649,774. I believe it is at the behest of the Government that these two departments have been upgraded and placed conjointly in this ministry. I therefore think that these two departments deserve a greater staff Vote, if necessary, and a greater equipment Vote. I am simply asking these questions of the Minister so that we may know what "Contingencies" covers. I have asked the same questions of other Ministers whose Estimates have been debated. We deserve this information.

I would ask where the money for the Moreton Island inquiry is coming from. Is it hidden somewhere in this Vote in "Contingencies"? I realise that Mr. Cook, the Valuer-General, is a member of that committee of inquiry. Will he serve on it and receive the salary that he receives now? Further, when will the previous Minister's report on Moreton Island be made public? I realise that the former Minister had read the report and made recommendations to the Government. I have not, of course, read the report and I was wondering when it might be released. I realise that this is in fact the third report on Moreton Island that has been prepared.

As I said before, it is very sad that Urban and Regional Affairs has been taken out of this portfolio, because we are having a great deal of trouble with local authorities in Queensland. Many local authorities, as well as being incapable of handling their own affairs, have little idea of how Governments at a higher level than theirs actually function.

Before discussing the Valuer-General's Department, I would comment on the Department of Mapping and Surveying. First of all, I congratulate everyone concerned with the production of the department's annual report. This report is an excellent compilation of facts and it enables every member of Parliament to be cognisant of the activities of the department. The report sets out everything in an easily recognisable form and allows one to realise the importance of mapping and surveying in our daily lives. In the foreword to the report the Surveyor-General, Mr. Serisier, makes some very pertinent comments. One of those that attracted my attention was—

> "Almost all development projects have a need for maps showing information essential to feasibility and planning studies."

I now want to refer to a matter raised this morning by the Leader of the Opposition concerning the Brisbane City Council and the town plan. I believe that the Brisbane City Council has been asking the department to draw up maps of the whole of the Brisbane area, at a cost of over $1,000,000, and that it is asking the Government to meet that cost. If the council wants these maps compiled surely it must be prepared to pay for them. It is not prepared to pay for a lot of other things, and now it tries to cajole and coerce the Government into paying for these maps. Let it do as all other councils have done and pay for the preparation of the maps.

Another point Mr. Serisier made was—

> "Throughout the history of the development of Queensland, the provision of these maps has been undertaken by the Developer, either private or public, as a preliminary activity to the development."

The Department of Mapping and Surveying is now able to take over the production of these expensive maps—although, of course, the cost of them is ultimately passed on to the public. Previous speakers have suggested that this department is not important enough to warrant its own portfolio. The need for mapping, nevertheless, is something that should be brought to the attention of the Committee. There is a need for a co-ordinated mapping programme in the State, and I know that the department is anxious to proceed with it.

The successful exploitation of the State's resources depends on co-ordinated planning —planning that we have not seen in Queensland up to date. I hope that in the future we might see more planning of the type undertaken with the Moreton Region Growth Strategy Investigation—although I very much doubt it. The use of the information supplied on maps will depend very much on the way in which it is presented, so both the gathering and presentation of information supplied on maps is extremely important. Environmental impact studies, growth studies and developmental proposals cannot be carried out

on a sound basis without, shall I say, incisive mapping that provides members of the public with a great deal of information.

The release this year of the Resources Atlas was particularly pleasing. It is excellent, and the department is to be congratulated on its production. Schools in my electorate will, I am sure, make very good use of it. In fact, I have kept a copy for myself because I think it is an excellent volume to have at hand when one wishes to discuss any facet of activities in this State with either a visitor from abroad or a visitor from another Australian State.

The flood maps were also excellently produced, and their release was very timely. All real estate agents should avail themselves of the map that is relevant to the area in which they operate. In reading the real estate advertisements in the newspapers, I noticed that a lot of flood-affected real estate is creeping back onto the market, and I feel very sorry for anyone from outside the State who comes here and buys a house or land in a flood-prone area. Many people do not think to ask. Although "Let the buyer beware" has been a catchcry for hundreds and hundreds of years, buyers are not heeding it. Therefore, I think it is up to the Government to protect them.

The Place Names Board also has an important job, although the criteria by which it is guided are relatively simple. It has three listings—an alphabetical listing, with entries shown in the form required by national mapping; a listing of areas; and general information about place names, which is very important for anyone seeking background information on a place name.

In the section of the report dealing with what has happened in surveying, I was interested to note that throughout the State, with a view to improving efficiency, three regions have been set up. I think that will be of great interest to honourable members, particularly those representing far-western electorates.

A great deal has been said in this debate about the various facets of the activities of the Valuer-General's Department. On a historical overview, Queensland comes out fairly well in comparison with the other Australian States in the manner in which the value of land is determined. I feel quite strongly, as do other honourable members, that although there are anomalies—and there is no doubt about that—the Act is a very fair one. If the present provisions were to be changed, it would mean amending almost the entire Act.

If land is held in unencumbered fee simple, the valuation is determined by its market value, except where invisible improvements have been made by the Crown, a local authority or a harbour board. That is a very important criterion for the valuation of land. I noticed that the former Minister, in a booklet that he issued, specified that if it was desired to change the method of valuing land, that particular determination would have to be changed to site-improvement valuation. One can read into "site improvement" the reclamation of land by draining or filling or with any retaining wall, and that relates, of course, to canal development on the coast.

The former Minister also had some thoughts about changing the system of valuation entirely. In my opinion, a great deal of unnecessary concern is whipped up by local authorities simply because some of them seem hell-bent on destroying the status quo of certain land within their area. I had occasion this year to visit the coastal resort of Yeppoon. Some long-standing residents of Yeppoon feel that they are going to be pushed out of the area by very large-scale tourist development in the future. Alternative schemes for the funding of local authorities have to be investigated. I realise that we cannot do without local authorities. If we accept the proposition that rates and land tax have to be raised—and they are increased on the valuations determined—then we have to reconsider the manner in which they are raised. If we are going to hand over to local authorities certain sums of money, to allow them to operate, ratepayers deserve a greater say in the way the money is spent. The junketing overseas by various members of local authorities and costly advertisements, such as the one inserted in today's "Telegraph" by the Brisbane City Council, are just not good enough. Local authorities are constantly screaming, "We need more! We need more!" When valuations increase local authorities are given a perfect excuse for putting up their rates. The Brisbane City Council is catching up on its other expenditure within the rate rake-off. That is not an easy way of saying that the Brisbane City Council is a mob of sharks, nevertheless, that is really what I am saying. We should direct our minds to the most appropriate type of valuation and come up with a basis that is equitable throughout the State.

(Time expired.)

Mr. K. J. HOOPER (Archerfield) (3.37 p.m.): I wish to repeat what I have said on many occasions in this Chamber: money speaks most languages. It is a fact that land developers believe that money speaks all languages. They even believe it can have the name of a suburb changed. I will give a classic example of that. First of all I want to make it quite clear that I absolve the present Minister for maps from any involvement. The responsibility for this disgraceful sell-out to a land developer rests fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the previous Minister, the present Minister for Justice. I understand that Minister is at present enjoying a Wylie Fancher trip to London organised by that well-know travel firm Bjelke-Petersen Tours, which, of course, is being paid for by the taxpayers.

In September 1975 the Queensland Place Names Board decided that, because of its size and population, Inala should be divided. I pointed out at the time that that was completely unnecessary. As most people in this Chamber realise, Inala is unique.

Mr. Akers interjected.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: Apart from Inala being unique, its residents have a great deal of common sense and discernment. By its geographical location Inala is physically separated from surrounding suburbs. It is an entity and in my opinion it certainly does not need subdividing.

Mr. Jensen: It hasn't got a railway yet.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: Not yet. That is an indictment on this Government; it has not seen fit to construct a railway line into Inala.

Mr. Prest: We will soon get one.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: Of course we will get one with my good representations.

It is true that a number of householders in a small section of Inala themselves adopted the name "Oxley South". Of course that was not recognised by the council, the post office or anyone else. As a matter of fact when residents of the so-called Oxley South gave their address as Oxley South they received their mail 24 hours later than other Inala residents. Letters addressed "Oxley South" went to Oxley Post Office and then had to be redirected to the Inala Post Office.

Mr. Jensen: They should have been charged extra.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: Of course they should. A couple of the residents involved are small businessmen trading in the Inala Civic Centre. They think it is quite O.K. to take the money of the people of Inala but they did not want their friends in the Lions Club or the Liberal Party to know that they live in Inala. Most residents saw through their little ploy.

Most of us know that Thiess Bros. is a multi-national company. Thiess Bros. has entered the scene to sell a large estate containing some 700 blocks in the area bounded by Glenala and Blunder Roads, Rosemary Street, Serviceton Avenue and Inala Avenue.

An Opposition Member interjected.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: I do not know that it is named after Mrs. Kyburz. I think she would have been only a little girl when Rosemary Street was named.

Thiess named the estate Hanley Heights. That name rolls well off the tongue. Certainly for Thiess Bros. it has a much nicer connotation than Inala, but it could not get around the fact that the estate was virtually slap-bang in the centre of Inala. To the rescue came the Queensland Place Names Board at the behest, I might add, of the previous Minister. As I have said, I absolve the present Minister from any involvement in this very shady deal.

Mr. Jensen: Who was the previous Minister?

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: He is now the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General (Mr. Lickiss). The then Minister has not denied his involvement.

I shall now quote from an article in the "Western Suburbs Advertiser" of Wednesday 17 September 1975, in which that Minister is quoted as saying—

> "Having in mind the present future development of residential allotments in the area south of Glenala Road and the continuing expansion of the area known as Oxley South we had to consider a new suburb."

The land the then Minister was referring to was the Thiess Estate, which comprises 75 per cent of the suburb of Durack. The Queensland Place Names Board found an obscure pioneer of the district and named the suburb Durack.

Mr. Jensen: Who was he?

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: I do not know who he was. I have not heard of him. I have been told that he was a pioneer. He must have been in the area a long time ago because nobody in Inala knows of him.

Mr. Greenwood: History is not your strong point.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: If history is not my strong point, I would point out that all the qualities of making a parliamentarian a capable Minister do not reside in the Minister.

To show how ludicrous this has become I shall outline some of the things contained in the new suburb of Durack. The Inala State Primary School—this is to show that I know a little about history—was the first school built in Inala. Because of the rort and racket worked by the Place Names Board it is now in the suburb of Durack. So, too, are the Inala State High School, the Inala Opportunity School, the Inala Sports Centre and the Serviceton State School. I am sure that all honourable members will agree with me that they are not particularly relevant to the name of Durack. I hazard the guess that the Department of Education will soon be under pressure to rename the schools I have mentioned. I assure the department that it will meet with more than it bargains for if it tries to do that.

When the name Durack was announced I asked the then Minister how it was chosen. The Minister gave a brilliant, erudite reply. He told me that numerous people had been consulted. I make it quite clear that, as the local member, I most certainly was not consulted. I think it would have been common courtesy for the elected representative of the area to be consulted. After talking to dozens

of residents I have not been able to locate one who was asked for an opinion. I ask the present Minister to dust off the file and tell me who was consulted. I hazard another guess and say that he cannot do so, and that the former Minister told me a big fib.

Mr. Greenwood: Guesswork is one of your strong points.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: I will lay a shade of odds that no such list exists.

Mr. Jensen: It should have been the Hooper estate.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: That would roll very nicely off the tongue, and I think I deserve that.

I suppose that I should not have been surprised at the influence Thiess has with the Government. After all, the Minister for Works and Housing and the Minister for Water Resources used the Thiess company plane to travel to Gladstone to attend the funeral of the late Marty Hanson. It was rather comical, Mr. Dean. I think you were with me on the occasion when we arrived earlier than anticipated at the aerodrome. Who did we observe furtively boarding the Thiess Bros. plane? Nobody but the Minister for Works and Housing and the Minister for Water Resources! I usually do not tell tales out of school, Mr. Dean, but one of the Ministers made a very obscene gesture to you and me when we observed them boarding the plane.

This Government is not too busy to rename a suburb after one of its principal financial backers, but let us try to get some action on the crooks in the building societies and the real estate agents with their misleading advertisements and the Government is always too busy to act. As I say, the actions of this Government and its backers make Tammany Hall look like a Sunday school.

Mr. SIMPSON (Cooroora) (3.45 p.m.): It gives me pleasure to support the Minister in this, the debate on his first Estimates. Valuation and surveying are each interesting in their aspects. The science of valuation is a very difficult one. It is a considered opinion, based on sales, but calculated in such a way as to withstand a court challenge. That is not an easy exercise. It requires a lot of training and expertise.

I believe that the unimproved value system, which is principally adopted by local authorities for rating purposes, is the best available to us. It is not without its imperfections, but the alternatives bring about even more anomalies.

Recently the Noosa and Maroochy Shires were revalued. Today various members have referred to the amount by which some property valuations in their electorates have increased. That in itself is not the important criterion, especially when a period of eight years might occur between valuations. Where an area is subjected to rapidly escalating prices, that is to be expected. The valuation of one property in my area has increased eightyfold. Really, though, the question is whether the valuation set is the correct one, and in that instance I think it was. The people involved, in fact, were not really complaining. However, within the same area are people affected by that sale who cannot bear the load of the increased rates—people of no great means and people such as pensioners and those who are on fixed incomes. Either they are unable to pay their rates or they find it difficult to do so. Some are forced to sell their properties and move to an area which has a lower rating—until perhaps the valuations there catch up with them. I do not know what can be done in those circumstances; but the problem needs to be looked at. Perhaps shires could be provided with some finance to help overcome the hardship that occurs in those circumstances.

Problems are associated with valuers not knowing whether a property is rural and assessing it on the basis of the highest comparable sale they can find. Thus, some rural properties are assessed on subdivisional potential when in fact the owners may be pensioner farmers. I have in my electorate a pensioner farmer who has urban development moving around his property. He has now been assessed on the basis of being in an urban area. As a result, his valuation has gone up thirtyfold. He does not know what to do. He receives a pension and is conducting a little farming, but his income will not meet the rates that have been levied on him. Therefore, I believe that our valuers should be strategically placed in country areas so that they will be aware of the circumstances of property sales and of those individuals who come in the rural classification.

Because of the downturn in the beef industry, rural farmers have been forced to take other jobs. Sometimes a valuer goes to a hotel and says, "What does Joe Blow up the road do?" He is told, "He works in the sugar mill." In that way he obtains the information and then makes his assessment on the basis that the owner has a rural residential lot of some hundreds of acres. The fact that the poor individual is struggling on his property and has to take another job needs to be looked at sympathetically. The Minister has assured me that he will look into some of these anomalies that arise.

The Valuation of Land Act allows the very good system of having a round-table conference before an owner is faced with the fear of having to pay costs in an appeal against his valuation. A little more help could be given with the grounds of appeal. We should ensure that a fair valuation is arrived at by the court and not restrict the appellant to what he happens to have set out as his grounds of appeal. We should not be technical and say to him, "You did not

put this matter in your grounds of appeal so it will not be allowed." There is room for improvement in that area.

We must make sure that, in the assessment of a value based on sales, the sale price does include the value of improvements. If the value of all fixed and other improvements, such as clearing costs, were deducted from the sale price we might get a negative valuation. There is a problem here but it must be faced and we must come up with a nominal valuation agreed to by the parties for rating purposes.

There appears to be a problem in assessing the valuation of canelands. If I am wrong the Minister can correct me, but it appears to me that the valuer starts with the sale price of a cane farm and deducts the improvements to arrive at his valuation. Having done that, he adds the value of the cane assignment. To me, that seems to be an anomaly. I do not know whether it is stipulated by the Act and that it is the Act rather than the normal mechanics of valuation that is at fault. Obviously, the value of the cane assignment is included in the sale price and the same formula should be used to arrive at the unimproved value.

As sale prices are rising rapidly, we should be looking for more flexibility to reduce the period between valuations to alleviate any hardship.

Smaller increases at shorter intervals would be easier to take than great increases at longer periods. This is a matter that we should be considering as new circumstances arise. I am sure the Minister could follow up this suggestion to meet the situation.

It is interesting to note in the history of not only Queensland but the whole of Australia that many of the pioneers were surveyors. My grandfather was one of them. He was a rare old gentleman who decided to get married at about 60 years of age and so I can step back an extra couple of generations in the history of my ancestors to the days of Burke and Wills. The bushmanship and discoveries of the earlier surveyors are part of Australian history and the accuracy of their work is shown by the fact that their surveys are still used today.

All credit should be given to surveyors, not only the pioneers but those who carry on this work today. They work under extreme difficulties. They survey through scrub and swamps and have to contend with leeches and many other forms of travail. When their work is finally presented on a piece of paper, few people remember the effort that went into preparing it. Someone once said to me whilst stamping through the bush looking for survey pegs, "By gee, the early surveyors must have been bitten by snakes many times when they were going through the bush blazing trails." In fact, a surveyor works so hard with his brush-hook to get through the timber that any snakes that might be there would take fright and go. Surveyors seldom see snakes. This is just as well; if it had been otherwise, there might have been a high mortality rate among early surveyors.

I commend the Minister on the presentation of his Estimates and the vigorous way in which he is going about the administration of his portfolio. It is one that has many challenges and one that I believe could be looked at with a view to easing some of the difficulties that face local government. An equitable basis must be found for the system of setting rates. It is not a pleasant task. Local authorities will not tackle it; they hand it back to the State. In making valuations for rating purposes, we should be conservative. When valuations are made for the purpose of compensation when part of a property is resumed, there should be a separate generous consideration rather than have the appearance of two standards of valuation. The same lenient standards should be used in assessment for rating purposes and for compensation purposes. There should then be a further generous assessment for disturbance. There are many problems, but I believe the Minister will handle them very efficiently.

Mr. AKERS (Pine Rivers) (3.59 p.m.): I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak on the Survey and Valuation Estimates, for which a sum of almost $11,000,000 is required. I am sorry that urban and regional affairs is not included in this Vote, as was the case previously. When the Government was returned in 1974, it was placed under the control of the then Minister (Honourable W. D. Lickiss). I am very sorry that that arrangement has not been retained.

When the Leader of the Opposition began to speak on this subject, I thought he might have been going to make some sense, and I listened to him because I believe it is a very important subject, but all he did was make a whole series of obviously erroneous statements, and then he made another mistake—after which I switched off—when he started comparing the New South Wales system of valuation with that of Queensland. That just shows how little he knows of the subject. Quite obviously someone wrote his speech, and it was obvious that he, too, knew nothing about the subject.

One of the good things one can say about the Whitlam A.L.P. Government—initially, at least—was that it initiated many schemes concerned with urban and regional affairs, although, unfortunately, they turned out to be fairly superficial. If a Federal Minister wanted something done in his electorate, the Government introduced a pilot scheme. They were called pilot schemes so than no-one else could claim that the same thing should be done in his electorate. We found that these pilot schemes included such superficial things as grants for tree-planting in Blacktown. They were not important schemes such as would improve the suburban environment, especially in the Brisbane suburbs of Bracken Ridge, Ferny Hill, Arana Hills, Albany Creek, and probably even more

importantly, the extreme examples of places like Woodridge where there are large numbers of children with no playing facilities. These schemes were not designed to regenerate near inner-city areas such as the suburbs of Spring Hill and Red Hill. The Federal Government did not even look at these suburbs.

To a great extent the McMahon Government lost the 1972 Federal election because it did not understand that there was a problem in the urban situation. Mr. McMahon and his Cabinet ignored the advice of town planners, architects and many others concerned with the environment, who could see the problems and tried to get the Government to take action. Mr. Whitlam's advisers saw that this would be an important election issue, and they clearly covered in their policies what the people of the western suburbs of Sydney and others in similar situations saw as their problems.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Miller): Order! I cannot allow the honourable member to develop his speech along the lines of urban and regional planning. I think he is well aware that urban and regional planning is no longer under the control of the present Minister and I ask him to restrict himself to the Vote for Survey and Valuation.

Mr. AKERS: I would point out that the Leader of the Opposition was allowed to spend most of his speech on precisely this subject.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The Leader of the Opposition did not speak for very long on the matter. He mentioned the fact that it was no longer part of the portfolio. I have allowed the honourable member to mention the subject but he is now developing a discussion on it.

Mr. AKERS: I will continue by saying that I see urban and regional planning as playing a very important part in the valuation of inner city areas, because the valuation is arrived at in accordance with the facilities that are available in central city areas and in suburban areas. I believe this has a very significant effect on valuations, but in deference to your ruling, Mr. Miller, I will not continue. I would just point out that one of the factors used in arriving at central city values is the availability of facilities.

I think it is extremely important that our Government includes urban and regional affairs proposals in its policies. In doing that, it should look at many of the policies initiated by the A.L.P. in 1972, which were very carefully researched. The trouble was that the Government of that time just failed to understand them.

I congratulate the Minister on taking over this portfolio. I congratulated him once before, but since then I have come to understand the control that he has over the department. A Minister can only be as good as the staff he has under him, and in this case there are two very good officers whom I know personally—Mr. Cook and Mr. Serisier—and for whom I have the highest regard.

I have never before seen the appointment of a top public servant so acclaimed by members of his own profession as was Mr. Serisier's appointment. Any surveyor to whom I spoke after the appointment congratulated the Government on its selection of Mr. Serisier to lead the Department of Mapping and Survey.

Mr. Cook is always courteous and always willing to discuss problems. If he had not been as courteous as he is, the Pine Rivers Shire Council would have been in confrontation with him on several occasions. He handles his job very well, and is also a very good travelling companion. Last year and earlier this year, I went on an inspection tour—as you did, Mr. Miller—of many of the offices of the Department of Mapping and Surveying and the Department of the Valuer-General. I learnt then how very important local knowledge of an area is to valuers; I also learnt how much local valuers know about the areas in which they operate. One valuer in Rockhampton—I will not mention his name—impressed me greatly with his basic knowledge of the type of properties that he was valuing. A man who is able to go out to a property and take it over and run it can establish the valuation of that property much better than someone who does not know it, and the valuer in Rockhampton impressed me greatly in that respect.

Of course, valuers are working under difficulties. Many honourable members have criticised the job that the valuers are doing. However, I point out to them that it is very difficult for a valuer to spread himself over a wide range of properties. The last valuation of the Shire of Pine Rivers certainly gave me a good insight into the problems faced by valuers. Although there were some very unhappy people in Pine Rivers, the final result was quite satisfactory. I understand from what the Minister said earlier that the shire is in line for revaluation next year. I am not looking forward to that, because there have been tremendous variations in values in the Shire of Pine Rivers over the last four or five years. A revaluation will create problems both for the Valuer-General and for me.

In its annual report, the Department of Mapping and Surveying sets out quite a few of the different facets of its activities. I congratulate Mr. Serisier and his staff on the presentation of the report, which is excellent. It sets out clearly the facilities that are available, and I am sure it has opened the eyes of many people who did not know anything of the department's activities and made clear to them the work that it carries out. I am surprised that the estimate is so

low. I thought that the department would have been inundated with work and that, therefore, the Vote for this year would have increased greatly.

The need for mapping is evident from the report. Other honourable members have mentioned that already, and in his letter to the Minister at the beginning of the report, Mr. Serisier makes it clear how important mapping is to development. The Minister said that Mr. Northcutt in the United States of America had pointed out that $1 spent on mapping saves $18 on a project. I can confirm that because of the problems that the Pine Rivers Shire Council is having at present in establishing its town plan and dealing with many of the development projects that are under way. The council is spending about $60,000 for mapping of the Pine Rivers Shire; but I believe that this will save hundreds of thousands of dollars in future on land development and construction projects. It will shorten the time that projects take to get off the ground, which is of assistance to those in charge of the projects and means that work can be provided much sooner to unemployed persons.

The annual report refers to some of the advances made in equipment in the last few years. Reference is made to electronic distance measuring equipment, aero-triangulation equipment and laser geodimeters. I understand that in the South Australian Department of Mapping there is a computer into which it is possible to feed a photograph so that a map comes out at the other end. That is the sort of work we should be moving towards here. I understand that the department is very interested in that sort of equipment. I see that Mr. Serisier, who is in the lobby, is smiling, so he must be very happy about it. I hope we get that sort of equipment, because it could save a tremendous amount of time and money.

I am sorry that the Queensland Resources Atlas has not been publicised as much as it could have been. It is an excellent publication.

Dr. Lockwood: It was sold out.

Mr. AKERS: Maybe it was sold out, but generally speaking people do not know what is available in it. I know that "The Courier-Mail" took it on as a project and advertised it. Everyone I have shown it to has been extremely impressed with the information contained in it. I would like more people to know about it. Then we would need the reprint that the honourable member for Toowoomba North is calling for.

The previous Minister (Mr. Lickiss) brought expertise to this portfolio that is unusual in any Government in Queensland or Australia. That expertise was the sort of fillip that was needed to get that department going and enable it to work. The new Minister has brought a different sort of expertise. I believe that that expertise will enable the development of what the previous Minister started into a final product of tremendous assistance to the State.

The Surveyors Board has done an excellent job in controlling the profession of surveying. I believe it needs more control, without completely taking over the profession. I understand that this is probably on the way. I understand that it is proposed to closely follow the South Australian Act.

The Place Names Board has been of great assistance to me. All I doubt is the naming of a place "Fitzgibbon" in my electorate. At the last census it had a population of 16 persons. I wonder whether it was necessary at this stage to give a completely vacant area a name of its own.

I congratulate the Minister and his officers on the work they are doing. I whole-heartedly support the Estimates.

Mr. POWELL (Isis) (4.14 p.m.): I have much pleasure in taking part in this debate. I should like to convey my congratulations to our newest and youngest Minister on the way he has been able to take over the department, one of which I doubt that he had great foreknowledge. He has wholeheartedly devoted himself to his task. I look forward to many years' association with him in his present capacity.

Many honourable members who have spoken in this debate have referred to mapping. I have always been interested in maps. I like studying them to find out what is available in an area. Naturally I am particularly interested in my electorate and surrounding districts; however, I have been astounded at how difficult it is to obtain good topographical and other maps showing clearly where resources are situated. I urge the Minister to do everything in his power to obtain an increased Vote for this department. I am rather appalled, as are other honourable members, to note that only $130,000 is to be spent this financial year on the Mapping Section.

After reading the excellent report circulated to honourable members (and, no doubt, to anyone else who wished to read it), and the introductory letter written by the Surveyor-General, Mr. Serisier, I decided that it might be worth while to look at his empire to see what it was all about. In company with a constituent of mine who has some expert knowledge in this field, I arranged with Mr. Serisier to look over the section. I thank him for his courtesy in showing us around. I was astounded at the antiquity of some of the equipment and the cramped conditions under which officers work.

As I said, I have always been interested in mapping and have some knowledge of the conditions needed to produce good work. I was appalled at the conditions under which the men worked. I realise that it is not the fault of the Minister or his predecessor. While the previous Minister (Mr. Lickiss)

was in charge of this department, he brought to it expertise such as no former ministerial head possessed, as the honourable member for Pine Rivers pointed out. Probably what has been done resulted from his expertise for which we can be thankful. I hope that all honourable members will contact Mr. Serisier and arrange to look at the conditions under which he and his team work. They have a very important task to fulfil.

Presently Queensland suffers a massive waste of resources because of the lack of adequate mapping. Time and again aerial topography, ground control and computations, in addition to map compilation itself, are conducted at considerable expense to enable isolated and particular-purpose mapping to be acquired. Whenever a company wants to engage in development in an area, the first thing it has to do is obtain a map of the area. Like me, most of them experience extreme difficulty in doing so.

If honourable members examine closely the Mapping and Survey report, and the publication entitled "The Index of Topograpical Maps", they will find that vast areas of the State are not mapped adequately. It is essential to have this information. It is silly that every company that wants to undertake development work in Queenslad has to produce its own maps. It is impossible for Queensland to develop as rapidly as most of us would desire if we are unable to provide private enterprise with adequate maps. But how can we possibly do that on a budget of $130,000? Even if we increased the Vote tenfold, probably the section would still be unable to do all the work required. I was pleased to note in the report that private consultants will be engaged to assist the department to cope with the task. That is how it should be done.

I do not think that at this stage the department should be establishing some sort of empire that will become the be-all and end-all in the development of the State, but it is quite obvious that something has to be done. I wish to add my voice and my weight—if the Minister needs it—to assist him in convincing the Government that a lot more money is needed for mapping. Many developmental projects in my electorate have to be commenced quickly, especially in view of yesterday's decision by the Federal Government on Fraser Island sand-mining. However, without adequate maps, those developmental projects cannot get off the ground.

If maps were available, a couple of companies that I have been dealing with would be able to start, certainly in the New Year, and soak up a lot of the unemployment that will result from the Fraser Island decision. I hope that the Minister, with the weight of those members who support him on this issue, can get more money for mapping in the next financial year so that as soon as it is physically possible the whole of the State can be adequately and accurately mapped.

With those few remarks on the mapping side of the Minister's portfolio, I pass to valuation. I am aware that some members who spoke earlier had a few unkind remarks to make about the Valuer-General and the officers who work under his control. Maybe I am the odd man out; maybe I have an odd electorate; but I have very few complaints. That might sound strange. The Shires of Hervey Bay and Isis have recently been revalued. As revealed by the report of the Valuer-General, with 6,368 rateable valuations in the Hervey Bay Shire, only 209 objections, or 3.28 per cent, were lodged. The revaluations for the Isis Shire have just been released. So far only one complaint has reached my office as a result of that valuation.

I think most people realise that valuations are based on the marketable value of unimproved land. The fixing of a figure that will be acceptable to all parties is always a rather hypothetical exercise. It is essential to have a realistic valuation for the purposes of shire rating, bank mortgages, and so on. I repeat that few people in the Hervey Bay area complained, even though, of the valuations that were released for the 1976 year, the percentage increase for Hervey Bay was the highest. It went up by 697 per cent; yet, as I said, only 3.28 per cent of the landowners objected. I think that that reflects well on the way in which the Valuer-General's officers went about their work in that area.

We do have some problems in the Isis area. I expect some objections, but whether there will be more than the 3.28 per cent in Hervey Bay, I do not know. I am aware of one instance in which the valuation rose from $430 to $12,000-odd—rather an astronomical rise, as anybody would admit. One was based on a cane assignment and the other was not. I think the member for Cooroora quite adequately dealt with assignments and cane lands, so I shall not bore the Committee with any further detail.

I thank the Minister for the assistance he has given me. I congratulate the Valuer-General and his officers on the work they do. They have an unenviable task, and those who criticise them should acknowledge their task and remember what they are trying to achieve. One thing I ask of the Minister is that the Woocoo Shire be revalued as soon as possible. Last year the shire boundaries in my electorate were changed. I am sure it is quite well known that I did not appreciate the way in which that was done or the changes that were made. But that is history and we have to wear the decision that was made. The Woocoo Shire has three divisions. What was the old Woocoo Shire is Division 1. It was previously valued in 1966 or 1968.

The new Division 2 of the Woocoo Shire takes in the coastal areas of Burrum Heads and Toogoom and the townships of Howard and Torbanlea. They were revalued last year

as part of the Burrum Shire. There is a tremendous imbalance because, as I have indicated, the Hervey Bay Shire, which was part of the old Burrum Shire, had a valuation increase of 697 per cent. It would be reasonable to assume that the increase in Division 2 of Woocoo Shire would be comparable.

The rating for the Woocoo Shire is particularly difficult at the moment because the shire councillors and the shire clerk have had a tremendous job in trying to strike some sort of equitable rate which would provide a reasonable revenue and against which there would be no violent objection by the people. I hope that the Minister can do something about the revaluation of Woocoo Shire as soon as is humanly possible so that the whole shire is subject to that one revaluation.

The same can be said for Maryborough. A large area of the old Burrum Shire including a considerable area of cane land is now in Maryborough city. I have already gone on record as saying that I do not think it should have been included. However, the decision has been made and unfortunately we have to accept it. Before the change in boundaries we were told that the people in the cane country to the south and east of Maryborough would not be disadvantaged by going into Maryborough city. They find that that is not the case and that their rates have risen astronomically. They are not a bit happy about it. A revaluation of the whole of Maryborough city would certainly solve some if not all of the problems.

I wonder if the Valuer-General is consulted when shire boundaries are changed. I think he should be. Before shire boundary changes are made in the future, the Valuer-General should be consulted so that he would be able to give the Local Government Department some sort of indication of when the new shire so created could be valued as an entity. That is most important. People living in these areas become aggrieved very quickly if a neighbour over the fence is paying twice as much or half as much again in rates as they are and the reason is said by the shire council to be valuations. I do not believe it is. I think it is the management policy of the individual shires. It is important that valuations be made as simultaneously as possible. Obviously the department is doing what it can in that respect.

With those few remarks, I again congratulate the Minister and thank his officers for their support and courtesy. I look forward to further amicable relations with them.

Mr. GIBBS (Albert) (4.29 p.m.): I rise to support the Honourable John Greenwood, the Minister for Survey and Valuation, and to congratulate him on his elevation to the Ministry. I also congratulate his officers on the way in which they perform a job that in many ways is very difficult.

A while ago there was some criticism in the Gold Coast area of their work in regard to place names. I do not think it has achieved any result yet. I hope that they can get to work on the problem and clean it up in the near future.

The department is doing a tremendous job in the upgrading of mapping and in assisting the Minister in his other responsibilities. I commend the public relations exercise at the recent Royal National Show. A good deal of the gear was displayed to indicate to the public what is being done in the upgrading of maps and the making of surveys throughout the State.

The Queensland Resources Atlas, produced by the department, has been a tremendous success. I have presented some copies of it at schools in my electorate and I have others yet to be given out. They have been well received and I know that as time goes by they will play a very important role in the schools and be of great use to the people of Queensland generally. Those responsible for its production are to be congratulated on their fine efforts.

As there has recently been a revaluation on the Gold Coast and, some little time ago, a revaluation in the Albert Shire, perhaps I should speak on valuations. No matter when a revaluation is made, it has a traumatic effect on most people involved. My telephone has been running hot, as I am sure Sir Bruce Small's has been, too, with calls concerning valuations and the results of them. People become very frightened if their valuations are increased to any great extent. They fear that high valuations will mean a great increase in their rates. For those who receive about the average valuation, any increase in rates will hardly be noticeable, and perhaps in some cases they may even be reduced. But there are many areas in which there are what I refer to as lumpy valuations. Here land has been valued on potential or on the basis of odd sales that took place before the Whitlam Government came to power and destroyed much of the economy of the area and reduced the likelihood of sales.

However, when people lodge objections to valuations, they find it a traumatic experience. They do not know what lies ahead of them. Perhaps the Minister will consider giving a little more publicity to this matter. Much of the publicity in the "Gold Coast Bulletin" and the Tweed Heads "Daily News" is misleading to the public. All sorts of confusing statements are made. The Minister could perhaps consider making the facts of the matter known by publicity such as Press releases or even advertisements. I am sure that this would assist to overcome the trauma confronting many people today.

When the Albert Shire was revalued a year or two ago, the valuations of many properties were increased by 5,000 per cent. Much anxiety was caused by valuing land on potential rather than on use. The Albert Shire had to bring in a rural rate, and this in itself caused a great number of

problems. I do not believe that valuations, especially in the Albert Shire, should be so high as to virtually encourage people to leave their properties. They fear that if they were required to pay rates based on valuations assessed on potential, they would not be able to afford to continue to run their businesses or farming ventures.

I know that valuations cause great trouble in the sugar areas of Woongoolba and Norwell. One person there won an appeal that he lodged after having his rates assessed on a rural basis. The Albert Shire is faced once again with having to alter rates from rural to normal rating. Each time this happens it presents its own set of traumas. I made an appeal for the easing of these problems at the time when either the former Minister in this portfolio or the then Minister for Justice put through a Bill to allow objections to proceed with greater ease. Wider publicity should be given to showing people how easy it is to object to a valuation.

I know of a property on the Gold Coast Highway whose valuation has increased from $23,000 to $450,000. I do not know how that can be supported, but that is only one instance of the traumas that people have to face. I know people ask the old hackneyed question, "Well, would you sell your ground for that amount of money?" I ask it myself.

When asked, people sit down and think about it and give a more realistic answer. But it does not help when considering valuations throughout the State, nor does it help when looking at a city property which has perhaps been revalued from $2,000 or $3,000 to $5,000 or $7,000.

Honourable members can imagine what some of the valuations in the inner area of Surfers Paradise based on recent sales are and, with the area's potential for high-rise development, what future valuations will be like. Perhaps it is a pity that council rates are based on valuations. It might be that the Department of Local Government will have to look at some change in the system to overcome the trauma which confronts people every five, six or seven years when their properties are revalued. Perhaps the Minister could generate some publicity on the Gold Coast to try to let people know the correct procedures for objection. The average person there does not know whether or not he has to see some man across a desk or whether he has to spend two or three days in Brisbane. He does not even know whether on the coast there are facilities for lodging objections.

A lot of old people are frightened of what is going to happen when there is a revaluation. For them it is a trauma even to get on a bus and come to Brisbane to try to find their way into some department, so it would be a great help if the Minister and his department could do something to overcome these problems.

If the Minister could do something along these lines for the people in that part of of my electorate covering the Gold Coast it would be deeply appreciated by them. This has already been done in that part of my electorate covering the Albert Shire, where, according to the annual report of the department, things have now settled down and everybody seems to think their rates are reasonable. I congratulate the Minister and his department and thank them for the co-operation they have always willingly given to me and to my constituents.

Mr. BYRNE (Belmont) (4.39 p.m.): It is very important when speaking to the subjects of mapping, surveying and valuation to realise and fully appreciate that in the history of Australia surveyors have always played a very prominent part. I think that many people today tend to forget that the people about whom they read in their social studies and history books like Oxley, Leichhardt, Kennedy, Burke and Wills were not only explorers but surveyors. In fact, had it not been for the devoted work and great foresight of those explorers—those surveyors—much of the present development of Australia would not have been possible. I want to put on record a statement made by Sir Henry Abel Smith at the Fourth Australian Survey Conference at Brisbane in 1958. He spoke of surveyors as—

> "Pathfinders, roadbuilders and Cyclopean architects of a land whose horizons are not yet limited, and whose development no man can assess."

Those words are very laudatory, and they certainly strike the right chord and emphasise the point I wish to make.

A surveyor must be the sort of person—this was certainly true in the past; it is true to a lesser extent today—who has sufficient adventure and interest in him to be able to appreciate the value of the land and realise what the exploratory side of his work involves.

Mr. Moore: He must know, too, how to use a pack-horse.

Mr. BYRNE: Indeed, he must know how to use a pack-horse. He must also have a great understanding of different ways of life. Stories that have been related to me by various members of the profession and officers of the department indicate that in the past 20 years or so the life of a surveyor would indeed have been very hard.

I should like to quote a short section from an article "The Profession of Surveying in Queensland" by S. E. Reilly, in which he said—

> "The welfare and happiness of its citizens depends materially on the orderly and economic development of the State's natural resources, and this is impossible without the maps and plans of its surveyors. Communications need the surveyor to blaze the path; the basis of every stable society, security of tenure, requires

careful demarcation of property boundaries; safety at sea and in the air is impossible without precise location and delineation of dangers and safeguards; no engineering project can be planned until the surveyor has made accurate plans and maps of the site, construction cannot start until the engineers' conceptions have been set out on the ground by the surveyor, who must continually check that the structure is being erected as planned."

Indeed, this points to the fact that it is on this very basic infrastructure that the house and the nation is being constructed—on the plans that exist at a very basic level. Of course, the community does not often see what work is required in the areas of surveying and mapping. Because they are intangible and invisible engineering feats, it does not appreciate these things. When a house is being built, people see the house and know that there must have been planning and construction for it. But they do not appreciate that, before the house could be constructed, there had to be surveying and mapping, proper delineation of properties and proper understanding of engineering designs. The public has difficulty in appreciating why the cost of surveying and mapping should be borne by the community generally.

The fact is that if mapping and surveying do not receive the economic boost that they need, development projects, house construction, engineering construction and road construction will never be started. The public must be made more aware of that. All developmental projects need maps for initial feasibility planning. Without them, the task is hopeless, fruitless and pointless. It is easy enough for us to say, "We need to develop a certain area", or for any department to say, "We are going to put a road from point A to point B, and somewhere along that road—at point C—we are going to construct a bridge, and we are going to do various other things that are needed", but unless there are proper maps and plans and surveying beforehand, it is impossible to start.

If the department responsible for certain construction had to do all the preparatory work, without reference to a specific department that had priority to accumulate all the information, it would mean that every department engaged in construction and development would have to carry out its own mapping and surveying, and that would be tantamount to absurdity. Suppose there were 20 departments carrying out construction and development work in some manner, shape or form and they all carried out their own surveying. In effect, they would be doing twenty times the work which could have been done once and for all in a properly co-ordinated manner. It would then be available not only to the departments but also to the private sector, and it would save an enormous amount of money, improve efficiency and result in a lower unit cost.

It is important with a good quality survey system that there should be orderly development. There must be an appreciation of the fact that it is as important to the community as any other efficient system that operates, whether it be electricity, water, sewerage or any other service unit. Surveying is just as much a service unit as any of those.

Mapping and surveying are now under one department and come within the portfolio of Survey and Valuation. As a member of the Minister's committee, I have been most impressed in the time I have been associated with him in discussions on legislation and in meetings with surveyors and valuers throughout the State. I was similarly impressed with his predecessor, who, with his professional expertise and personal understanding, brought to the department an enormous impetus, an impetus which is evident in discussions with departmental officers. There appears to be a marvellous cameraderie and rapport in the department. That is the sort of feeling that is necessary in a department if it is to operate efficiently. The new image of the Department of the Valuer-General and the Department of Mapping and Surveying is one that many other departments could seek to achieve. Unless a department has a full appreciation of its objectives and how those objectives can be achieved, it has difficulty in attaining efficiency and achieving the Government's goals. From seeing the work being done by those departments, and the work and the role of the Minister, it is obvious to me that there is a direct intent to clearly establish the objectives and to work out the means and mechanisms to ensure that those objectives are attained. With those two guide-lines, and with Mr. Cook as the Valuer-General and Mr. Serisier as the Surveyor-General, we can be certain that Queensland will be very much to the fore in valuing and surveying in Australia.

Queensland is unique among the Australian States. I suppose the other States could say that, too. From Queensland's point of view we have specific problems with surveying and valuation which the other States do not experience. We must realise that the economic impost which the department in Queensland is going to experience should be a greater percentage of total Government expenditure than is necessary for that purpose in the other States. That arises specifically from the one single point that we are the most decentralised State in Australia. I realise that Tasmania, too, may be regarded as decentralised because most of its population is in two major cities. But Queensland is far in the lead as the most decentralised State. That imposes very heavy economic imposts on us. It means that the mapping and surveying work must cover not only the metropolitan area of Brisbane and certain provincial cities, but the whole State.

Associated with that is the difficulty caused by the differing climatic zones in this State, which other States do not experience. Climate

has a great deal to do with acquiring the information necessary to produce the maps that are so needed for development. A problem arises with aerial photography in Queensland which does not arise so much in other States. First of all, enormous distances have to be covered in Queensland. Because of our weather patterns, there is not a clear consistency of blue skies. Perhaps there is work to do in Cairns when the aircraft is in Roma. At that time there could be cloud in Roma. The cost to fly from Roma to Cairns is great, and on the way from Roma to Cairns perhaps no photographs can be taken. By the time the aircraft gets to Cairns, a storm might have come up and, meanwhile, the skies have cleared in Roma. Although other States might consider it better to buy their own aeroplanes, I do not think that would be a sensible approach in Queensland. The department's use of the plane would be limited by climatic conditions.

The greater use of private enterprise for survey work and valuations, and in the hire of equipment, is excellent. It connotes forward planning and sensible thinking in the running of the department to ensure that valuations, survey work and mapping are carried out expeditiously, which will be of enormous benefit to the community. Anyone who says that we can put off necessary valuations, survey work and mapping is burying his head in the sand. Anyone who says that we can postpone those things is virtually saying that we can afford to postpone future development of the State, that we can afford to hold back the development of various industries and the developmental capacity of the State. I hope that the people who say those things will realise that they are wrong, that it is not right to use the money simply in areas where the results are more tangible and where the public can see that it is being spent. People who hold these views do not appreciate the enormous future economic burden on the State.

The Minister pointed out in his speech that the United States found that $1 spent on mapping can yield $18 in benefit to the map user. It is clear that the money should be spent now, and I believe that Government departments are responsible for spending money at the right time. Perhaps I could make my point best by paraphrasing a quote used by the Minister in his speech. It was taken from the 1949 UNESCO request and was to the effect that topographic mapping is a public service, a function of government, a function which calls for co-ordination by governments, a function which will enable national funds to be expended to vastly greater effect.

Governments have a clear duty to undertake or direct all the basic mapping which can provide the topographic information needed by all interests for proper development and administration and, without which, planing degenerates into confusion and frustration. Indeed, it was that sort of confusion and frustration that existed in valuation when local authorities were responsible for determining their own valuations.

People who raise objection to valuation across the State would have raised far greater objections in the past because of the total inefficiency and the clear corruption which existed when valuations were done by local authorities. By co-ordinating valuation across the State, these problems are overcome.

Like the honourable member for Isis, I say that despite the new valuations I have not received a large volume of complaints from my electorate. Virtually, my electorate comprises urban or semi-urban sprawl and valuations are somewhat similar. There are no areas of open space that can be valued according to potential or any other norm. To a large extent people have not complained. The only real complaint by people about valuations at any time concerns the fact that, because valuations have changed, councils impose a heavier rate burden. Because someone says that land is valued at figure A, I cannot see why people should say, "I would prefer my land to have a lower valuation." Complaints against valuations are based simply on the conclusion that the council will increase rates.

To explain my point, I refer to the rate increases earlier this year. That was a great big rip-off perpetrated by the Brisbane City Council on the people of Brisbane. It had the enormous hide to say, if you will excuse this cross-reference by way of analogy, Mr. Row, "We can't afford to let the State Government take away our electricity because it will mean a much heavier burden on the community." Yet the council has been subsidising its electricity charges and so forth by these rapid and enormous rises in rates. It is not being honest with the public.

To the people who complain about their valuations, certainly within the metropolitan area, I make this clear statement: "To be told that your land is worth more is no heavy burden to bear. The heavy burden arises through councils, arbitrarily or otherwise, using those figures to impose a higher proportion of rates on the citizens." There is no need for them to do that. All they have to do is strike a lower rate. If they want more money, they will take more.

A Government Member interjected.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: Don't let them interrupt you. You are going well.

Mr. BYRNE: I am thankful for the comment of the honourable member for Archerfield. He shows greater integrity, common sense and knowledge on this occasion than he normally shows—certainly when he is making his own speeches.

I think it is fairly clear from what I have said that a great deal of praise is certainly due to both this Minister and to his predecessor, as well as to the heads of the

departments we are discussing. I believe they are fulfilling to a very pleasing degree their functions. One hopes that other departments will learn from them.

I conclude by saying that members of Parliament must look to the future, and certainly a very heavy burden is imposed on the Minister to convince the Treasurer and his other Cabinet colleagues that Queensland must prepare for the development that will occur between now and the next century. To facilitate that, the theoretical infrastructure must be completed through surveying and mapping so that development can occur and not be hindered—held back in time and held back in money—simply because the groundwork has not been completed. I repeat that before a building can be constructed there have to be the plans. Until the plans are in hand, nothing can be built. A general parameter is this: if we do not have the survey work done and maps prepared, we do not have development in Queensland. One thing must be a priority of this Government and this Minister: to see that the surveying work is done and available for other departments so that Queensland's developmental needs can be adequately provided for.

Mr. HALES (Ipswich West) (4.58 p.m.): In rising in the debate on these Estimates, I wish to make a few comments on the Act under which the Valuer-General works. To assist me, I asked the Parliamentary Library to carry out some research on the matter. The Valuation of Land Act of 1944 was amended in 1946, 1947, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1953, 1958, 1959, 1970, 1971, 1974 and again in 1975. As a result, it is a great conglomerate at the moment.

As one who has been involved in the real estate field, and for many years associated with valuers and surveyors, I believe that, although surveying is not a contentious field, valuing certainly is. There is an oft-quoted statement that half-a-dozen valuers would give half-a-dozen different figures on the same property, and they would all claim to be right. On more than one occasion I have seen valuers with different arguments for valuations on the same property going to court to prove which one is right and which one is wrong. It seems to me that it is not the exact science that some people believe it should be.

The former Minister (Hon. W. D. Lickiss) had a great understanding of his portfolio and many advances were made in the department while he was there. I am not taking anything from the integrity, intelligence and diligence of the new Minister. I believe that he will do as good a job as his predecessor.

The Act that the Valuer-General works under is quite anomalous and it should be changed entirely. I believe that in a few minutes I can prove things are happening that perhaps should not happen and that rating values are upset at the moment. What the Government should do—and I request the Minister do it—is bring in a new Act to provide for site value instead of unimproved value. The population as a whole would be able to relate to site value better than unimproved value and appreciate what a property is really worth.

The Act provides—

> "12. Unimproved value. (1) For the purposes of this Act, 'Unimproved value' of land means—
>
> (a) In relation to unimproved land, the capital sum which the fee-simple of the land might be expected to realise if offered for sale on such reasonable terms and conditions as a bona fide seller would require."

That is fair enough. The section continues—

> "(b) In relation to improved land, the capital sum which the fee-simple of the land might be expected to realise if offered for sale on such reasonable terms and conditions as a bona fide seller would require, assuming that, at the time as at which the value is required to be ascertained for the purposes of this Act, the improvements did not exist."

It seems to me to be almost impossible to do that and it is a legal fallacy to have a person look at a block of land and try to convince himself in his own mind that improvements do not exist. It has been said to me by valuers that they are supposed to value land as it was when Captain Cook sailed up the coast. It is beyond my comprehension how anybody could have such an imagination.

Mr. Lowes: Do you think that the use to which the land could be put should be considered?

Mr. HALES: I would think so, but I think that site value is the answer and that people could relate site value better than unimproved value. The Minister has acknowledged that I have asked before—and I ask it again—that an Act be introduced specifying site value rather than unimproved value.

Mr. Moore: You should only pay rates for the services you get.

Mr. HALES: I believe in what the honourable member says, but that matter is not covered by this debate. I am quite sure that Mr. Row would stop me if I spoke about rates and councils which are very very inefficient at the moment.

Mr. Marginson: There was a letter in our local newspaper today.

Mr. HALES: Actually there were two of them.

Section 12 (2) (c) commences—

> " 'Improvements' means, in relation to land, improvements thereon or appertaining thereto, whether visible or invisible . . ."

Now we are talking about improvements which are visible or invisible. That would include filling and trees knocked down by grandfather, but who could prove that he did knock them down? As I said, the Act contains many anomalies and I believe that the only solution is to specify site value.

There is a great anomaly in the city of Ipswich, particularly with mining. Under the system of unimproved value, the Valuer-General is required to determine what a block of land is worth. In many situations a block of land is either worthless or has a debit value rather than a credit value. Many blocks of land over which there are mining leases have great holes in the ground from open-cut operations or perhaps slag heaps on them and they could not be given away. I repeat that it is my contention that there should be debit valuations as well as credit valuations. There are many places in Ipswich in which underground mining was carried out by coal companies before the turn of the century and which even the Mines Department does not know about. This, too, should have some effect on land values. There are so many imponderables and anomalies in the Act that it should be changed and there should be a reversion to site value.

I conclude by congratulating the Minister on his administration of his portfolio. I know that valuers and surveyors in his department have a great deal of admiration for the two Ministers that they have had in the last couple of years. Once again I urge the Minister, if he possibly can, to bring down a Bill to bring about site valuation, and to do it as quickly as possible.

Hon. J. W. GREENWOOD (Ashgrove—Minister for Survey and Valuation) (5.7 p.m.): It is not my intention at this stage to cut off any further debate. There are, I understand, two or three other members who wish to speak. I seek this opportunity to reply to those who have entered the debate so far because it is necessary for me to leave the Chamber in about 20 minutes to fly to Melbourne in order to attend a ministerial conference tomorrow. I shall deal with the speakers substantially in the order in which they spoke, although there will be occasions when I shall move from one to another.

The Leader of the Opposition led the debate for the Opposition. He made some points about the abolition of the Urban Affairs portfolio. I say "abolition" because that was the way in which he expressed it. Other speakers, too, referred to the same point. I think every member is concerned to see that adequate finance and adequate effort by our civil servants are directed at the enormous problems confronting us in the rapid development of urban regions. We would also wish to see that adequate attention is given to regional development and to the necessary co-operation with local authorities.

The error into which many members fall is that they think that because a few words were lopped off a ministerial title the Government was therefore not doing anything in that field. In fact, the Government has been doing a great deal in this field for many years through the Department of the Co-ordinator-General, which, of course, is one of those departments of State that come directly under the Premier. As we have seen recently in the publication of the excellent strategy reports on the Moreton region, that work is continuing and is bearing fruit. We should not be deluded, by an alteration in title, into believing that necessary work is not being done by the Government.

Another point made by the Leader of the Opposition concerned the Moreton Island inquiry. He said that some $30,000 was allocated in this set of Estimates for that inquiry. That, of course, is true. That sum is allocated to take care of the legal fees of counsel assisting the inquiry, and any other fees that may be necessary. It is, I know, a matter of some concern to all of us that adequate public contribution be made to the process of government.

More and more we are using environmental impact statements as a basis for informed public discussion. We have seen how in the United States these environmental impact statements, after being circulated, are then discussed before a tribunal. But one area in which I think we must concede the Americans have the edge on us is in the efficient way in which they conduct these inquiries. For example, an inquiry into the Alaskan oil pipeline, one of the largest environmental issues that have confronted the United States in recent years, took a total of six days! three days sitting in Alaska and three days, I think, sitting in Washington. During those six days the inquiry started its sittings at 9 in the morning, finished at about 10 at night, and dealt with about 60 witnesses a day. So they do have something to teach us in this regard, and if we as a community wish to preserve the very important part that public inquiries can play in the governmental process then we are all going to have to learn methods of saving money. I do not think that we can achieve the advantage that we would all like to achieve from environmental inquiries if they turn into the traditional Australian institution, the royal commission, taking many, many months and consuming an enormous amount of the taxpayers' money. Something we all have to look at seriously is an inquisitorial method of holding public inquiries rather than the ordinary adversary system, which, I am afraid, is proving to be so expensive that we may not be able to afford many more of them unless some reforms are instituted.

The Leader of the Opposition then passed on to advocate an inquiry into the method of rating and the methods of valuing land for rating purposes. He suggested that the

Henry George League might have a valuable contribution to make here, and it would best be made by some form of a public inquiry. I am afraid I cannot agree with the Leader of the Opposition on this point. It is part of the ordinary job of Governments to look constantly at methods of improving the system, and I know that my department is doing it. I will welcome any suggestions from the Leader of the Opposition, as I would welcome them from any other member of this Chamber or any other interested citizen. But this process will continue and I do not think that it it is necessary to put the taxpayer to the expense of a public inquiry to do what in the ordinary course of events is the Government's job.

The honourable member for Redlands was the next speaker, and he made a number of very valuable points concerning the Moreton Bay islands. He brought to the attention of the Committee the fact that a number of people on the islands feel that they have not been fairly treated. My thanks to the honourable member for that, and I suggest that he ask those people to lodge objections so that an experienced and senior valuer will go down there and discuss the matter with them. If our experience in other areas is any indication, it is likely that this form of procedure will achieve a very large measure of satisfaction amongst those who feel that they have been unfairly treated.

The honourable member also mentioned that he would like to lead a deputation to me to discuss problems in the catchment area in his electorate, and once again I would be very pleased to do that at the first convenient opportunity for the honourable member and his constituents.

He also raised the difficulty of using boom prices for Moreton Bay islands as a reliable guide to the true unimproved value, that is, the value that a reasonable purchaser would pay for that land. Of course, this is a problem which valuers are confronted with every day, and they take a great deal of care in order to avoid it.

One particular problem that was mentioned during the debate is that overseas purchasers who had never even seen the land would pay high prices for it and that these high prices would then be taken into account in fixing valuations. My valuers are a little shrewder than that. Naturally, they suspect the reasonableness of purchase prices arrived at in such a way, and all overseas or interstate buyers of this particular land were sent a circular that had as its object finding out whether the purchaser had inspected the land before purchase or on an occasion since, whether he had inspected it by air or by sea, or whether he had driven around it in a car. The valuers asked the purpose of the purchase—whether it was merely investment, or whether it was intended to live on the land—and they went into many other details. They asked the purchaser's opinion, for example, as to whether he thought it was a drainage-problem area—what his belief was in that respect. And after collecting a great deal of information from these people, they came to the conclusion that in fact the prices put upon the land by these interstate and overseas purchasers were very unreliable indeed, and they were very largely, if not entirely, disregarded.

I seek leave to table the letter and the circular annexed to it.

(Leave granted.)

Whereupon the honourable gentleman laid the documents on the table.

Mr. GREENWOOD: The next speaker in the debate was the honourable member for Somerset, who made a number of points. He also referred to experience in his own electorate, where a number of people had felt that they had not received a fair valuation. Once again I say that anybody in that situation should lodge an objection and that objection will be dealt with.

The honourable member used as an example what occurred some time ago where appeals dragged on for some time and, after one particular association had fought an appeal through the courts and won, the Valuer-General said, "We recognise it", and gave across-the-board decreases in valuation. Now, I was not altogether certain whether the honourable member was being critical of the Valuer-General's Department when mentioning that particular response. I think his point was that it could not have been a true valuation to begin with. I would have thought that that was obvious. If the court, having heard all the evidence, came to a conclusion different from that of the Valuer-General, then, of course, the Valuer-General's Department would accept what the court said and, accepting what the court said, then endeavour to adjust other values in the district so that they all conform, one to another, and that there is fairness and justice between them. A man who has not appealed should not be disadvantaged when, some time after he receives his valuation, a court hands down a decision which indicates that part of the basis was wrong. I do assure honourable members that whenever that sort of thing happens my department will act very quickly to accept the court's decision and to implement it in other valuations throughout the district.

Mr. Marginson: There are quite long delays.

Mr. GREENWOOD: I take the honourable member's objection about delay. There are many reasons for it. Without emphasising the point, I do say that on some occasions the objectors seek adjournments to suit their own convenience, but that is not the whole story. We have six members of the Land Court, and they work extremely hard. If an objector disagrees with their decision

then, of course, he has the right to go to the Land Appeal Court. Necessarily this all takes time. If the Valuer-General's Department improves its efficiency this year at the same rate as it improved it last year, the likelihood is that we will be having so many valuations, and consequently so many people wishing to object, that we will also have to do something about expanding the Land Court and the Land Appeal Court. So it is perhaps a vicious circle. But I suppose we have to do these things one at a time.

The honourable member for Somerset said that in his view round-table conferences were a waste of time. Once again I regret that I cannot agree with him. That is not the experience in other parts of the State; in fact, the reverse is the experience. The annual report of the Valuer-General's Department indicates that in the last 12 months many round-table conferences with objectors resulted in a reduction. The precise figure is that in 3,701 cases there was a reduction in the valuation. Those people certainly did not feel that it was a waste of time for them to go through the objection procedures laid down by the Act. I thank the honourable member, and other members, for the tribute paid to the Department of Mapping and Surveying.

The honourable member for Mackay made a number of interesting points, one of which related to the problems confronting pensioners. Of course, this is a matter which is in the mind of every Minister and every departmental head.

An Honourable Member: And back-benchers, too.

Mr. GREENWOOD: And members of this House. Pensioners do have special problems, arising from the fact that many pensioners are elderly people who are not as mobile as other members of the community. Many of them have health problems and financial problems. It is always a cause for concern that administrative procedures which might be quite satisfactory to 80 per cent of the population are not necessarily satisfactory to pensioners and senior citizens in the community. I am talking now about the machinery for lodging objections. If it is difficult for a pensioner to come and collect a form, if he or she can arrange for a telephone call to be made to the Valuer-General's Department, the form will be posted out. That is one practical step that is available to assist pensioners.

The honourable member referred to setting up the Valuer-General in a position similar to that of the ombudsman, and made a number of points about the independence of the Valuer-General's Department. I had thought that the Valuer-General's Department was an independent department, in the sense that the professional judgment of the valuers, although subject to consideration by more-experienced valuers higher up the hierarchy, is certainly not interfered with by the ministerial head. It is certainly not interfered with by me. The administration of the Valuer-General's Department, on the other hand, is subject to the ministerial head. This is right and proper, because although it is fashionable nowadays to talk about establishing independent tribunals—giving people power independent of political direction—when we analyse it we find it means power exercised independently of Parliament. And power that is exercised independent of Parliament is power exercised independent of the people. Over a long period we have struggled to overcome just that.

Mr. Casey: The Auditor-General is independent of Parliament, but he has to report back to Parliament.

Mr. GREENWOOD: I take that point. That independence may be satisfactory in the case of someone like the Auditor-General, but when we are dealing with the day-to-day running of a bureaucracy, that day-to-day running deserves day-to-day supervision, and that day-to-day supervision by Parliament must be through Ministers responsible to this Parliament. Perhaps the honourable member and I will have to differ on this aspect.

The honourable member for Salisbury raised a number of matters and requested details on the contingency items which have been prepared. They are extremely lengthy and, rather than go through them now, which would take up considerable time, I will give them to her in the form of a letter. The honourable member also referred to the Moreton Island inquiry. I think I dealt with most of her points in my earlier remarks.

She complimented the preparation of flood maps. I thank her for that. It is interesting to compare her remarks on that subject with some of her other remarks about the money that can be saved if more money is invested in adequate mapping. As it so happens, the figures are these: if we had had adequate preliminary mapping, the flood maps could have been produced for about $31,562 rather than the $91,581 that they cost. Everywhere we look savings can be effected by adequate mapping.

The honourable member for Salisbury spoke of the use of site valuation rather than unimproved valuation as a basis for rating. She also commented on the operations of the Valuer-General's Department.

I shall skip a few speakers at this stage to refer to the contribution made by the honourable member for Ipswich West, which was along similar lines. My personal view coincides with that expressed by the honourable member. But we cannot proceed with undue haste in this area. I have already discussed these problems with quite a number of local authorities. In the next few months

I propose to discuss them with my committee. At this stage it might be better to seek the views of local authorities in a more formal way.

As all honourable members will appreciate, the problem arises in this way: if two vacant residential blocks of land, side by side, are being sold by a developer for $8,000, a person looking at them might be pardoned for thinking that the unimproved value for each would be $8,000. There they are, without a single improvement on them. However, one of them might have been created by filling a gully. If that cost $2,000, then, applying the principles of valuation, the unimproved value of that block is $6,000 whereas its apparently identical neighbour is valued at $8,000. It does seem to be anomalous that for all time two neighbours living side by side should pay different amounts in rates; that the man on the block of land that was a gully should pay rates on only $6,000 whereas his neighbour pays rates on $8,000. These are problems that are being looked at. However, as I said before, one cannot go too fast in upsetting long-established methods that have been accepted by local authorities all over the State for many, many years.

The honourable member for Archerfield made a point about the place name of "Durack". He complained that the renaming should not have occurred and that it might involve the renaming of some schools in the Inala district. For the information of honourable members, I say this: the pressure to change the name came from residents of Inala who lived east of the main Inala development. They wanted another name. They were using "Oxley South", but that seemed to the Place Names Board to be a rather unimaginative solution. A local newspaper then invited the people who lived in that area to suggest new names, and "Durack" was suggested by a local resident. Very quickly it gained support, because that is the name of a pioneering family in the area who owned Archerfield Station—a family which I understand, although I have not been able to verify this, is connected with that famous Western Australian pioneering family of the same name.

After the suggestion gained momentum, it was widely publicised. It was publicised in "The Courier-Mail" and the Government Gazette. Plans illustrating the board's intention were displayed, in the Western Suburbs Magistrates Court, the Holland Park Magistrates Court, the Inala Post Office and the plan room in the Department of Mapping and Surveying. But, more to the point, they were published in the "Western Suburbs Advertiser" on 17 September last year, which carried a very full article on the suggestion. In that article objections were invited. In that article the honourable member for Archerfield stated his case. He hit out at the suburb proposal and disagreed with it. Might I say that he could not find more than one person to agree with him. So the situation is that the locals wanted a new name of some sort; one of the local residents suggested "Durack"; they supported it; it was widely publicised; the honourable member for Archerfield objected to it and opposed it; and only one person agreed with him. On that basis, the Place Names Board went ahead and named the area "Durack", and its action has been widely accepted and widely applauded. It is said that there might be some problems relating to the high school. It would not be the only high school in Brisbane which is inside one suburb and carries the name of the adjoining suburb. I do not really think that it is a practical problem.

The only other note I have on the speech of the honourable member for Archerfield concerns a reference he made to Tammany Hall, an institution apparently of some importance to him but irrelevant to the operations of my department.

The honourable member for Cooroora made a number of very useful contributions to the debate. What he reminded us of in one part of his speech is of great importance, that is, that the surveyors are the pioneers of our society. It is as important today as it was 100 years ago to ensure that the surveying profession is in a vigorous, healthy condition and able to do its job of pioneering this developing State of ours.

The honourable member remarked on the desirability of reducing the periods in which valuations are carried out. Of course, we can do it now under five years, but five to eight years is the ordinary span. Again I say that a great deal depends on the staff available, and a great deal depends, too, on the sort of valuation that is required.

Valuation of land on an unimproved basis, particularly if the reform of site valuation is introduced, is relatively easy. In some parts of the world—for example in many parts of the United States—the valuation is done on an improved basis and the computerised information is so detailed that from it one can even tell whether or not a house has doors on its garage. This could happen here, too, but it would require a lot more money.

The honourable member for Pine Rivers made a number of points. He expressed thanks to the Surveyors Board. I heartily endorse those remarks and shall convey them to the board.

Like many other honourable members, he expressed personal thanks to the Surveyor-General and the Valuer-General. Need I say that I heartily endorse those remarks? I have much greater reason than anyone else in this Chamber for knowing how great is the debt of gratitude that every Queenslander owes to these very distinguished servants of the Crown.

The honourable member for Isis referred to the need for increases in the Vote and for increases in the amount of money to be

spent on mapping. He said that he was shocked to see only $130,000 was available and that if the allocation were 10 times that amount it still would not be enough to do the task. It may be of interest to honourable members to know that we have tried to seek some comparative statistics from other countries with problems similar to our own. We thought that Canada, with its vast distances, would be perhaps a fair comparison. The United Kingdom, of course, and the United States and others spend many millions of dollars, but Canada, in an area comparable to Queensland, spends approximately $19,000,000 a year on mapping. So that if we multiplied the $130,000 by 10, we still would not be close to the mark. His comment is verified by the Canadian experience.

The honourable member for Albert asked for more publicity to be given in the Gold Coast area to enable people to be better acquainted with their rights. I repeat my earlier remarks that if elderly people have any problems they have only to telephone the Valuer-General's Department and objection forms will be posted to them. I might also say that yesterday I had with a journalist from the Gold Coast a lengthy conversation in which we tried to sort out some of the problems that are being experienced by people in that area.

The honourable member for Belmont, who is one of the members of my committee, made a contribution to the debate on a number of points. I think I have already dealt with most of them. I thank him for making those points.

The honourable member for Ipswich West also made a contribution in which he dealt with site value. I have already dealt with that point. I thank him, too, for his contribution.

I regret that I will be unable to deal with the points made subsequently in this debate. However, the Leader of the House has undertaken to do so on my behalf.

Mr. MILLER (Ithaca) (5.42 p.m.): This morning the Leader of the Opposition called for an open inquiry into valuations and surveys. This afternoon I support his call for such an inquiry. Irrespective of the source of any suggestion, if it is good it should be supported. All who have spoken this afternoon have expressed their concern over valuations and they cannot all be wrong. Because so many have this concern, the legislation that we have introduced must be wrong.

I want to make it quite clear that I am not attacking the Valuer-General or his staff. I have in fact the greatest respect for Mr. Cook and his officers; but they are controlled by the legislation that we introduce and pass here. They can do nothing about changing it. If they do not agree with the legislation and we are not prepared to alter it, they cannot do so.

In addition to supporting the call by the Leader of the Opposition for an open inquiry into valuations, I call for a new valuation for Brisbane. I believe there are a number of reasons why there should be a new valuation for this city. In the first place, I refer to the modified town plan. If it is passed in its present form, it will not be permissible to build units on allotments of 24 perches in residential B areas; but allotments of 24 perches have been valued by the Valuer-General as residential B lots. If the modified town plan comes into effect as it stands at present, that land can be used only for single residential homes. That alone is sufficient reason for a revaluation of Brisbane.

There are many other reasons for a revaluation. There are many anomalies in Brisbane. I have just appeared before the Land Court on behalf of one of my constituents. I did so because, in the first place, she has bad eyesight and, in the second place, I did not think she could present her case herself. Someone said this morning that it costs too much to appeal against a decision of the Valuer-General. I refute that statement. The Government has made it easy for anybody who does not agree with a value placed on a property by the Valuer-General to fight the Valuer-General and his department. That is what I did and I found that it involved no cost whatever.

We appealed against the decision of the Valuer-General. We had a discussion with departmental representatives. They came forward with a lower valuation but that still did not suit our case. I shall explain that in a moment. We have now been to the Land Court. All this has cost this woman and me nothing. We have been able to fight the Valuer-General and his department right through to the Land Court without one cent in costs to the woman concerned. I cannot understand how some members can talk about the costs involved if people wish to fight the Valuer-General's Department. I have found the Valuer-General's Department helpful in every regard if one disagrees with their valuation. They are working under guide-lines set down by this Parliament. They do not want to go out and say to somebody, "Well, you're an age pensioner but I'm not going to help you because you are an age pensioner." They would like to help; they are human beings the same as we are. They feel sorry for old people, too; but they are obliged to follow what we decide in this Chamber.

And so I suggest we should have an open inquiry, but as that will take a long time, I want a revaluation of Brisbane in the meantime.

This open inquiry would enable people from every walk of life to come forward and make suggestions as to what they believe should take place.

In his reply to the previous speakers, the Minister spoke of a number of other countries.

New Zealand is the closest one I can think of, and it has three different forms of valuation. To me that is a bit awkward, and I would not like to see that system operating here. But the local shires or councils can decide which form of valuation they want for their shire or city.

First of all, we have the improved value, then an assessed annual value and then what is referred to as land value. I prefer the site value, which has been suggested by a number of members here today. That appears to be the fairest and most honest way of valuing any city. I will tell honourable members why in a moment.

I could be completely wrong in what I am suggesting, but how better to find out if I am wrong, if the honourable member for Ipswich West is wrong or any of the other members of the Committee who have suggested it are wrong than to have an open inquiry to allow the Valuer-General to put forward his point of view, to allow the private valuers to put forward their points of view, to allow people who have problems like those I have on my plate to come forward and talk about their problems and to allow local authorities to come forward and talk about their problems? Through an open inquiry all these things can be thrashed out, and if I am wrong, if the honourable member for Ipswich West is wrong and if all other members are wrong, then let us accept what the open inquiry comes back with. I do not think anybody in this Chamber will set himself up as God Almighty, knowing everything there is to know about every subject that comes up in this Chamber. We want the experts, the people with problems, to come forward and tell us what they think about the legislation under which the Valuer-General and his officers have to operate.

The first case to which I wish to refer is that of a woman who had land taken from her which I believe has been used for a private purpose. I have referred to the episode before, but I now want to talk about the valuation of that land because this woman was left with only 14.1 perches of land. I have a letter on file from the Brisbane City Council saying that in the event of her house being destroyed by fire that woman cannot rebuild, nor can any person who purchases the property in the future. But, operating under our legislation, a valuer went out—under our legislation all land is valuable—and he put a valuation of $4,000 on that land. After we appealed the valuation was reduced to $3,300. Previously, when she owned 18.6 perches of land, the valuation was $2,200. With 18.6 perches of land she could have rebuilt at any time, but I suggest that 14.1 perches of land is valueless on the open market. The only value of that land would be if the next-door neighbour wanted to buy it to add it to his piece of land, and if you were the next-door neighbour, Mr. Kaus, would you offer some ridiculous figure for 14.1 perches of land? Nobody in his right mind would offer $3,000 for 14.1 perches of land when he knew that he would be the only person who would be interested in buying it. I suggest that not one member would buy that property knowing full well that if it burnt down he could not rebuild; yet the Valuer-General put a value of $3,300 on the land.

When the case went to the Land Court, the valuer gave as an example a 24-perch block of land in Agars Street, Rosalie. That block of land was part of an area that formerly housed St. Martin's Church of England and which had been broken up. It was a beautiful piece of land, and the Valuer-General valued it at $4,200—a difference of $900 between a beautiful 24-perch block of land in Agars Street, Rosalie, and a 14.1-perch block of land in Milton Road, Milton, on which the owner could never rebuild if a fire occurred. Not only could she not rebuild; she also has it in writing that the council will not allow her to proceed with the development of the flats that she has begun.

That is the type of anomaly that we should not allow to exist; that is the type of anomaly that we should do something about. Every member of the Committee who has spoken in the debate today has said the same thing; he does not know the answer. But surely if an inquiry is held and all the experts come forward, we could find a better system than the one now existing.

I have here a letter from a person who lives at East Brisbane and owns a block of flats at McIlwraith Street, Auchenflower, in which there are four 1-bedroom flats. In 1969 his block of land was valued at $6,320; today it is valued at $19,200. He tells me that the land next door is also valued at $19,200, and that in 1969 it was valued at $6,020. Under the existing legislation, the Valuer-General cannot do anything but put an identical value on those two blocks of land because they both have units on them.

On the first block of land there are four 1-bedroom units. They are old units, converted from a house. The owner may let them for 12 months of the year; he may not. The block next door has on its eight strata-title units. They are either occupied by the owner or rented full time, because they are very fine new units. However, as I said, both blocks of land have been valued at the same figure. What does that mean? It means that the man who has complained to me now has to pay 25 per cent of his gross rental from four 1-bedroom units to the Brisbane City Council for general rates—not for water rates or cleansing rates, but for general rates—and it is going to cost him an additional $163 a year for each flat just for general rates. But on the property next door, where there are eight strata-title units, the increase will be only $80 a year for each unit because of the number of units.

This is not the fault of the Valuer-General. It is a residential B area, and both pieces of land are being used for residential B purposes. However, if we are concerned about the people who own properties and rent cheap flats, we must do something about the situation. Housing costs will continue to increase and the prices of old units will double each time there is a valuation. What will happen? Units of that type will be unoccupied and the owner of the property will lose money.

Surely it is essential to have site valuations. The valuer will then be able to look at a block of units and say, "There are four 1-bedroom units on site. The owner will receive only so much in rent. We cannot expect any more in rates." If he looks at the property next door and sees eight strata-title units, he will say, "I can value this higher because the potential is there, whereas it is not on the first site." Under our legislation the valuer's hands are tied. He can't do anything about it. I am suggesting that we do something about it. We must have an open inquiry. We have to be able to convince the people that they are not being robbed. One woman, a widow, who rang me up is paying such a high figure that she is thinking of closing down a small flat attached to her house. Her property has been valued at the same figure as the high-rise strata units. How can a person with one small flat ever hope to meet the increased charges? It will be cheaper for her to close the flat down. Initially she had the flat constructed because as a widow she could not afford to live in the area without some additional financial assistance. The very assistance she has tried to get, we as a Government are now saying she can no longer have.

Mr. Lindsay: A scandal.

Mr. MILLER: It is scandalous. That is why I am calling for an open inquiry. I am hoping that more members will call for an open inquiry. Many members today have spoken about the problems of valuation but they have not called for an inquiry.

In the short time remaining to me I wish to refer to the Surveyor-General, his staff and the private surveyors in this State. As a member of the former Minister's committee I had the opportunity to get to know the Surveyor-General, his staff and many of the private surveyors throughout the State. I have the greatest respect for each and every one of them. We have heard very little complaint today about the Surveyor-General or his staff. That is understandable with so many problems in the Valuer-General's area. If any section of the community has undersold itself, it is the surveyors of Queensland. The honourable members for Belmont and Cooroora referred to the past history of surveyors in Queensland.

I congratulate the Institution of Surveyors on attaining its centenary. That might be why so many members have referred to the surveyors today. Surveyors were named by the honourable member for Belmont. Surveyors like Sir Augustus Gregory, who has had a park alongside Milton School named after him, did the groundwork in the early days of the colony. That sort of groundwork has gone on and on through the history of Queensland—the untold, unsung deeds of surveyors under hardships that many of us would not like to face. The Institution of Surveyors has placed a time clock in Gregory Park, Milton. It will be there for the benefit and use of children at the Milton School. I believe it will always stand there as a memorial to the surveyors of Queensland, particularly Sir Augustus Gregory.

The type of work they did has been recorded in history, but unfortunately very few people in Queensland know the facts; they are not told enough about them.

It is a pity that the schools do not refer more to the surveyors who worked so hard in Queensland—men like Cunningham, Lockyer and Stapleton. They all gave important service to the infant colony. Expertise gained over 150 years of work in the State is continually being applied for the benefit of the State and the community. The advice surveyors have offered has provided practical solutions to countless problems associated with the development of Queensland. Perhaps their greatest fault is their reticence to claim credit for these solutions. Their role as doers and not talkers tends to work against them in this age—an age where those who speak out are listened to irrespective of the quality of their comments.

To give the profession effective corporate responsibility, the Institution of Surveyors was formed in 1876. It is worth noting that 100 years later the institution thrives and continues in the role envisaged for it by its founders. Amongst other things, the institution provides a forum where the corporate views of surveyors can be conveyed to the Government and to the community. It is very interesting to note that, only a fortnight ago, a public seminar was held in Townsville on group housing and in Brisbane on the town plan. These seminars sponsored by the institution have always been well supported by the community. The people recognise that members of the institution work in the interests of the community rather than for themselves.

[*Sitting suspended from 6.1 to 7.15 p.m.*]

Mr. ROW (Hinchinbrook) (7.15 p.m.): In joining the debate on these Estimates I firstly congratulate the Minister on his appointment to this portfolio. After such a long debate today I have no doubt that he accepts his portfolio is somewhat contentious. Land valuations have had a long history of creating trauma for those affected by them.

I noted that the Minister said in his opening remarks he believed that the absolute values of land were not affected by the

unimproved valuations determined by the Valuer-General's Department. I do not know that I can agree entirely with that. Probably the most contentious issue is whether the absolute valuation is not affected by the unimproved valuation. Another contentious issue is whether the criteria that appear to be used, at times, in making valuations are entirely consistent, while, at the same time, they have a great deal of influence on the absolute valuation.

Without being unduly critical of that aspect of the Minister's portfolio, and with due respect to the Valuer-General and his officers, I believe that a concerted effort should be made to meet the wishes of the people, the Government, commerce and industry on land valuations.

On several occasions today reference has been made to the conferences that are available to aggrieved people before they resort to court action to contest valuations. To some extent I agree with the honourable member for Somerset, who said that some of the conferences were inclined to be abortive. The criteria used in determining the validity of arguments at these conferences may not be soundly based, and sometimes the outcome of conferences is pre-empted by the attitude of the representatives of the Valuer-General's Department, who seem to be too prone to use the catchcry, "What would you sell your land for?"

Many people who contest land valuations have no intention of selling their land and are not interested in its market value. They are interested only in retaining it as a viable proposition for business or agricultural pursuits.

As my former occupation was concerned largely with the valuation of cane lands, and because of the limitation placed on this debate by pressure of other business, I shall confine my further remarks to valuations as they affect cane land. I have referred to this on other occasions when the Estimates of this department have been discussed. After consultation with sugar authorities in Queensland, it seems that the dilemma confronting people who own cane lands persists. In spite of assurances given by the previous Minister that this matter would receive every possible consideration, it is still a highly contentious issue in the sugar industry.

Because the sugar industry is under strict statutory control, it probably has peculiarities that are not found in any other industry. That applies also to the sale of land assigned for the production of sugar cane. The bone of contention seems to be that a notional value is placed upon cane land, or potential cane land, particularly that which is held under common title or under common description which, although not assigned to cane production, has the potential to be assigned.

To some extent the profitability of the sugar industry is used as a criterion in the determination of unimproved values. When land is eventually assigned to the production of sugar cane, it comes under the control of the statutory authority, which is the Central Sugar Cane Prices Board. In effect, that restricts the amount that can be placed upon the land as an absolute value. Sometimes the unimproved value is so close to the absolute value under the curtailment of the statutory authority that an anomaly exists. It is my intention in this debate to try to point out to the Minister—and to his officers who are presently in the lobby—that that is still regarded by sugar authorities as a very serious anomaly.

The value of cane land and its potential productivity are not dependent upon whether that land is improved by being assigned for sugar-cane production, but rather upon the success, skill and diligence of the person who is working it. Therefore, if a notional valuation is imposed upon land because it may produce a crop that is considered to be profitable, that has nothing whatsoever to do with its unimproved value. I reiterate that its value is entirely in the hands of individuals. As with any other enterprise, some individuals engaged in cane-growing are successful and some are not. Those who are not are faced with the same valuation on their land as those who are successful. If, as I suspect, that is the criterion used in the valuation of cane land, then it is wrong and should be corrected. It should have been corrected long ago. I respectfully suggest that the Minister and his officers should take a very much closer look at this aspect than they appear to have done.

I have information that this year one sugar-growing shire was revalued and the unimproved value of some cane land and potential cane land was increased by 300 per cent. I do not know how anybody can justify that, particularly in view of the fluctuating fortunes of the market. The income of the industry is now dependent on the sale of more than two-thirds of its production on overseas markets, which fluctuate rather wildly.

I stress that the valuation of cane land should not be considered in any different light from the valuation of any other agricultural land in the State. It is claimed that some agricultural industries are not as profitable and not as strictly controlled as the sugar industry. On the other hand, most of those industries have the opportunity of unlimited production. When markets are available and prices are high, most rural industries in this State are able to produce to the limit of the markets available, but that is not the position with sugar. Its production is controlled by a preconceived idea of what the market might be. Quotas are not increased frequently. That is another reason why the valuation of cane land should not be given special consideration but should be brought back to being treated as ordinary agricultural land.

Another aspect that is greatly disturbing is those cane lands which are situated in the environs of towns and cities. We find frequently in a revaluation that the valuation of sugar-cane land that is considered will be available in the near future for urban subdivision is suddenly increased to the valuation that is put on subdivided urban land. This immediately puts the farmer in the position where he can no longer afford to pay the rates on that extremely high valuation. This seems to be a very contentious matter. From what I can ascertain it has not been dealt with adequately by the Valuer-General's Department despite reassurances from former Ministers. I make that my main contribution to the debate.

There is one other aspect of the Estimates to which I shall refer briefly—the Department of Mapping and Surveying. Like other honourable members, I appreciate the role played by surveyors and this department in the development of the State. It has been a major one and is to be applauded. I understand that one group of surveyors that plays a major role in the affairs of the State is seeking greater recognition. I refer to the engineering surveyors, particularly those engaged by local authorities and the like. I understand they do not enjoy the same status as other surveyors. I would appreciate comments from the Minister on whether it is intended that they will be given greater recognition and whether their association's status will be raised.

Hon. T. G. NEWBERY (Mirani—Leader of the House) for **Hon. J. W. GREENWOOD** (Ashgrove—Minister for Survey and Valuation) (7.27 p.m.): Firstly, I thank the honourable member for Ithaca for his contribution this evening. He raised certain pertinent points concerning the operation of the Valuer-General's Department, for which I thank him.

He said that there should be an inquiry into valuations. I heard the Minister for Survey and Valuation say earlier this afternoon that the Act was being examined and that he was prepared to look at any suggestions from both sides of the Chamber.

The honourable member expressed his concern that in relation to the modified town plan there are certain anomalies in the Act. He said also that there were no undue costs incurred in fighting the Valuer-General in the courts.

He referred to a fresh area valuation of Brisbane being undertaken as soon as possible. I understand, and I advise, that this is a two-year job and has only just been completed. It has been in effect for less than five months. The Valuation of Land Act requires an area valuation to be carried out at intervals of a minimum of five years and a maximum of eight years unless special circumstances arise. Shorter periods may be desirable, but this would be costly, unless area valuations which were due in other parts of the State were deferred, and more valuers would need to be engaged. The Valuation of Land Act provides that no alterations can be made during the period that an area valuation is in effect, unless certain events occur, such as the sale of part, damage by flood, public works carried out, increase in cane assignments and others.

One of the others is covered by the provision in section 13 (2) (i), which enables the Valuer-General to alter a valuation if in his opinion such valuation should be altered when a town plan is implemented or amended. Whilst the Valuer-General has this enabling authority, the appropriate time to carry out such valuation alterations would be immediately after a new modified town plan is approved. I understand that senior officers of the department have been studying how the new town plan and ordinances will affect the valuations they have made.

As to the valuation of a small area of land of 14.1 perches at Milton, there is a building on the land receiving the usual services. Therefore one would expect that the owner must pay some rates. The legislation provides that land be valued on its existing usage. However, consideration is also given to the area in making this valuation. Because of a resumption by the Brisbane City Council, this area is very small. There are many small areas of this nature in older suburbs of Brisbane such as Spring Hill. I do not think I should say more about this at the moment because an appeal to the Land Court against the valuation has been heard and, so far as I know, no decision has been given.

Reference was made to revaluation of the site of a block of units at Auchenflower. This area is evidently zoned residential B (multi-unit) and residential B land is valued as such, no matter whether there are two, three or 10 units on the site. However, if there is a single dwelling-house on the land it is valued only as residential A (single unit). This is under the provisions of section 11 (1) (vii) of the Valuation of Land Act 1944–1975.

Finally, on behalf of the officers of the Department of the Valuer-General and also the Department of Mapping and Surveying I thank the honourable member for the very kind things he said about them. Might I also add that I and the officers of the departments I have mentioned appreciate his sincerity and the efforts he has made on behalf of his constituents, particularly those not able to fend so well for themselves in contesting their valuations.

The honourable member for Hinchinbrook said that he was inclined to believe that objections were abortive. Last year the Valuer-General dealt with about 9,460 objections, of which 3,700 resulted in reductions, 5,560 were disallowed and 195 were withdrawn. I think objections do serve a good purpose by providing an informal and free-of-cost method of discussing the valuations with the Valuer-General or one of his senior

officers. Further, the conferences may, at the discretion of the Minister, be chaired by an independent person appointed by the Minister.

The honourable member also mentioned cane land situated near a city. The Valuer-General is required to value this land as rural land and any potential for subdivision or industrial use is to be disregarded when valuations are made.

I will take the steps necessary to ensure that the matters raised by the honourable members for Ithaca and Hinchinbrook are brought to the notice of the Minister for Survey and Valuation.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! By agreement, under the provisions of the Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 19 October, I shall now put the questions for the Vote under consideration and the balance remaining unvoted for Survey and Valuation.

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

Survey and Valuation—

	$
Department of Valuer-General	3,994,837
Balance of Vote, Consolidated Revenue and Trust and Special Funds ..	7,715,411

Progress reported.

ELECTRICITY BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (7.36 p.m.): I move—

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

When the Bill was introduced I gave two undertakings: firstly, I would look at any matters raised during the debate on the introduction of the Bill that I did not answer in my reply and would answer them at this stage; secondly, that comments would be invited from known interested parties and, as the Bill would be a public document, any other people who were interested in making submissions with regard thereto would be able to do so before the second-reading debate. It seems that I covered most of the points raised during the introductory debate in my reply on that night but there are two or three points that I want to say a little more about.

The Leader of the Opposition asked, in fact, why we needed any new legislation to reorganise the industry. The simple answer is that one Act is always easier to administer than five Acts. But that does not give the whole answer. It is true that many of the objectives of the new legislation could have been achieved under the existing legislation or at least by amendment of it. However, it would not be possible to do all that we want to do without some new legislation. Because of this and the desirability of having a consolidated Electricity Act we moved along the lines we have.

One of the most important things which will come from the reorganisation of the industry is that the authorities supplying electricity in Queensland will all have their respective charters defined in the one statute. The Southern Electric Authority of Queensland is at present covered by separate legislation. This is heavily biased towards the fact that the variable interest stock of the authority was, at the time the authority was created and for many years thereafter, its principal source of outside funds. Circumstances have changed. The right to issue this stock no longer exists. In any case, it had become much less important in the financial structure of the authority by the time all the then issued stock was converted to secured stock in 1975 than it was when the Act was passed in 1952.

Many of the procedures of the Electricity Department of the Brisbane City Council are governed by the City of Brisbane Act, or, in some circumstances, the Local Government Act, rather than by an electricity supply Order in Council. Most of the existing electricity supply Orders in Council in the Greater Brisbane Area date back to the old local authorities which existed prior to 1924. Some parts of the city are not even covered by an Order in Council. From these few remarks, it will be clear that there has never been a consolidated Order in Council governing the supply of electricity in the city of Brisbane.

My comments about the Southern Electric Authority and the Brisbane City Council show clearly that the electricity supply industry is fragmented. This applies not only to its administration but to the financial and human resources available to the industry. The reorganisation proposals recognise that the industry is one which is best covered by a single enactment of the State Parliament. The vital day-to-day function—the provision of a reliable supply of electricity at the cheapest possible price consistent with such reliability—will be the responsibility of decentralised and independent statutory authorities constituted under the Act.

Another point that was raised by more than one honourable member was the vexed question of whether there should be concessional rates for electricity supplied to the aged, the sick, deserted wives and others in unfortunate financial positions. I think that it would be most undesirable to saddle the electricity boards with a responsibility to be arbiters in social problems as well as running an efficient electricity undertaking. Clearly, where help is required to meet the electricity bills of the needy, it should come as a social service and not by way of concessional tariffs to some people within a particular class of electricity consumer.

The honourable member for Belmont asked for an assurance that the headquarters of the proposed South East Queensland Electricity Board would be in Brisbane. I cannot give this assurance. It is a matter for the board when it is constituted. However, I feel sure that the board will show good sense in its selection of a headquarters, and, at the risk of being facetious, I feel I can assure the honourable member that the board is unlikely to pick Toogoolawah or Tugun for its headquarters when more than three-quarters of its consumers will be within a 20-mile radius of the Brisbane G.P.O.

Now to the comments received. Copies of the Bill were sent, either by me or at my direction: to interstate statutory electric authorities to see that the reciprocal provisions which apply throughout Australia, especially as regards approval of electrical articles, have not been prejudiced in any way; to all electric authorities in Queensland, including the Brisbane City Council; to the permanent head of each State Government department; to the Electrical Workers and Contractors Board; to the industrial unions that have members who are employees of the commission or in the electricity supply industry; and to the Electrical Contractors' Association.

Interstate electric authorities and the State Government departments have indicated either that the provisions of the Bill do not adversely affect the existing relationships of the authority concerned with the Queensland electricity supply industry or that matters agreed in consultation prior to the introduction of the proposed legislation have been faithfully translated into the provisions of the Bill. However, there is considerable opposition to the principles of the Bill from certain interested parties. The Brisbane City Council and the Roma Town Council are still opposed to the provisions of the Bill which will divest them of their electricity undertakings. These objections go to the very basis of the legislation. In adopting the principles incorporated in the Bill, the Government was satisfied that the collective interests of electricity consumers in Queensland would be better served by the arrangements included in the proposed legislation than by a continuation of the existing arrangements.

The regional electric authorities have all submitted comments. Basically, these authorities support the principles of the Bill. Several of them do ask that the basis of nomination of members of the boards be changed. However, no changes are proposed. After all, the Government has already agreed that the majority of members of the electricity boards be local authority nominees and that one of the members so nominated shall be chairman. I am very firm in my belief that the two additional members who will be appointed by the Governor in Council on the basis that they have experience and qualifications that will be of advantage to the board will contribute greatly to the efficient administration of these new authorities. As far as the generating board is concerned, it will be representative of the whole of Queensland, and also the Government will have the opportunity to appoint people who have a real contribution to make as members of that board.

I have carefully considered the other representations from regional electric authorities and will be proposing several amendments arising from the comments received. I have instructed the Commissioner for Electricity Supply to write to each electric authority giving a detailed answer to its submission and, in particular, explaining why I have not accepted certain suggestions made.

As this Bill is intended to consolidate the law relating to the organisation of an industry which supplies one of the most important items used by us in our everyday existence, it has naturally created much interest and there has been and still is some very strong opposition to some of our proposals. For this reason I am heartened by the letters of unqualified support for the general principles of the legislation that have been received from the chairmen of the Capricornia Regional Electricity Board, the Wide Bay-Burnett Regional Electricity Board and the Northern Electric Authority of Queensland.

The Southern Electric Authority of Queensland has made several suggestions, some of which have been accepted. The basic objections of this authority are, firstly, that there are too many restrictions on the autonomy of the electricity authorities to be constituted under the proposed Act and, secondly, that some of the powers vested in the commission, particularly as regard loan-raising, should also vest in certain electricity authorities. My answer to these submissions is that the inclusion of checks and balances is fundamental to our British system of Government, and the performance of regional electric authorities and many other statutory authorities outside the electricity supply industry shows that a most efficient and effective service can be given to the public, not only in electricity supply, but in many fields of public endeavour while working within the guide-lines proposed. As far as loan-raisings are concerned, I am satisfied that it is better to vest loan-raising in the commission and to let the electricity authorities get on with their real job, that is, generating and supplying electricity in the most efficient manner and at the lowest possible cost consistent with an acceptable standard of reliability of supply.

The Southern Electric Authority of Queensland and some local authorities in the area of the proposed South West Queensland Electricity Board object to the formation of this board. I am adamant that the constitution of this board is necessary, and I find it very hard to understand the attitude of those local authorities which are, in fact, asking the Government not to put its policy of decentralisation into effect as far as their own area is concerned—in other words, to

concentrate in Brisbane the power of decision-making with regard to electricity supply for their area. I am sure that it is just a case of what you never had you never miss, and that the local authorities concerned, once they have experienced the right to participate in the workings of their own local electricity board, will be the first to object if a Government in the future seeks to amalgamate their area with that of the South East Queensland Electricity Board. The Southern Electric Authority has raised several other points but, as in the case of the regional authorities, I have examined every point made, given a decision on it, and told the commissioner to write explaining my reasons.

I appreciated receiving the submissions of the three trade unions which have availed themselves of my invitation to comment. The Electrical Trades Union makes no bones about its opposition to the basic principles of the reorganisation. However, the Association of Professional Engineers accepts the principles involved and has sought clarification of some minor points. Its comments highlighted the need for one amendment which will be proposed. The submission of the Municipal Officers' Association labours a point about some of the assurances which have been given to employees which it is just impossible to translate into legislation. Do not think that I fail to appreciate the association's concern for its members and, once again, I endeavour to put the minds of not only the members of that association but all the employees in the electricity supply industry at rest on these particular points by reiterating that—

(a) No employee will be required to change his place of residence on account of the reorganisation of the industry;

(b) Every employee will retain his existing classification while he continues to be employed in the electricity supply industry (unless, of course, the employee requests for personal reasons a reclassification to a lower level); and

(c) Finally, not only will the employees' existing continuous service and leave rights be preserved but in some cases anomalies which exist at present will be rectified.

All three unions seek employee representation on electricity authorities to be constituted pursuant to the Act. The Electrical Trades Union goes so far as to seek employee representation on the consultative council. The Bill as it is drafted precludes an employee of the commission or of an electricity authority from being a member of the generating board or an electricity board. I consider that this provision should stand. While I recognise that there is a trend towards direct participation by employees in management, I do not feel that this principle should be introduced into the area of governmental or semi-governmental employment piecemeal. If, and when, this principle is accepted as Government policy it should have universal application in these fields of employment.

Employee representation and union representation on the boards of the various electricity authorities are two entirely different matters. I have looked at the question of union representation carefully and have decided not to make specific provision for it. However, this does not preclude the Government from appointing a person actively engaged in the trade union movement as a member of the board of any of the authorities to be constituted under the proposed Act. In fact, it is probable that from time to time a local authority or a group of local authorities will nominate a member who is so engaged for membership of an electricity board. In addition it would also be competent for the Government, if it is convinced that this is in the public interest and in the interest of the board concerned, to select a union representative as one of its own appointees to a board.

Now to the question of electrical workers and contractors. The Electrical Workers and Contractors Board has made a few suggestions. These are to make the definitions of electrical fitter and electrical mechanic more clear. This is important because problems do arise at times in defining the extent of a fitter's work.

It is in the field of licensing of electrical contractors that the most persistent representations have been made. Although these come in the main from the Electrical Contractors Association, which represents only about 600 of the 1,600 contractors, there is no doubt that this association is the only one which is representative of contractors' opinions. We recognise it as such by providing that it is the body which nominates the contractors' representative to the Electrical Workers and Contractors Board. The other representations have come from six electrical contractors who are members of the association and from the Toowoomba Electrical Contractors Association. These people are diametrically opposed to the principle of the Bill which allows a competent tradesmen to obtain an electrical contractors' licence if he intends to contract part time. I have met representatives of the association and have carefully examined their submission and have also carefully looked at the pros and cons of the decision on which the stated Government policy is based. Having taken all the factors into consideration, I feel that on balance the Government's decision was made on sound grounds and I do not intend to propose any amendments to these provisions.

The association is also not happy about the provisions for inspection of electrical work. Specifically it is concerned about the requirement to test and give a certificate to the consumer in respect of any additions and alterations performed by an electrical contractor. I explained the inspection provisions of the Bill in some detail in my

introductory speech and we heard the pros and cons of the situation debated by the honourable member for Cairns and the honourable member for Murrumba. I have listened to the representatives of the contractors association and certain installation inspectors on this point. The Municipal Officers' Association has raised some questions about it and the Electrical Trades Union, without opposing the principle, has some reservations about it. As I have already said I have looked carefully at both submissions of the contractors' association, and while I feel that, on balance the Government's proposals to allow part-time contractors are correct, I have, as a result of my consideration of this matter, absolutely no doubt that the Government's proposals are the proper ones. The electrical contractor is, or should be expected to test his work and to certify that it complies with the wiring rules.

There could be odd cases where he is carrying out some intricate wiring work or the like, or working in, say, a hazardous location, where he is not completely familiar with the requirements of the wiring rules and he wants his work checked by an installation inspector from the electricity authority. For this reason I will be proposing an amendment to provide that a contractor may, at his expense, have any installation work which would not otherwise need to be inspected, inspected by the electricity authority before connection. In these cases there should be no demur from the consumer if he passes this cost on. However, I emphasise that under the proposed provision the contractor can, if he so desires, have all his work inspected; but I feel that he should be competent to handle the testing and certification of the normal installation work in the manner provided in the Bill and not burden the customer with the cost of an electricity authority inspection.

I have received one other detailed submission, which was from the Institution of Engineers, Australia, which seeks to restrict the commissioner's job to a graduate and the positions of general managers of the electricity authorities to professional engineers, and seeks that professional engineers should, as of right, be represented on the Electrical Workers and Contractors Board and be permitted to carry out certain electrical trade work and to obtain electrical contractors' licences. I rejected all these submissions. The professional engineer (unless he has previously completed a trade apprenticeship) is just not qualified to perform trade work. This has been established in an appeal to the Minister under the existing Electrical Workers and Contractors Act on the basis of specialist evidence given by a practising professional electrical engineer before a qualified legal man (a retired stipendiary magistrate) who heard the appeal on behalf of the then Minister. As to giving contractors' licences to professional engineers—how can we do this and refuse a licence to a building contractor or to a plumber? The Act requires the contractor, or one member in the case of a partnership, or the supervising officer of a body corporate which has as one of its objects the performance of electrical contracting work, to be an electrical mechanic. If we are to have licensing at all, surely this is a reasonable requirement.

I have spent a fair amount of time in letting Parliament know about the comments we have received on the Bill and the action we propose taking. As I have indicated, I have several amendments to propose at the Committee stage. I conclude with the general comment that I feel that the Bill sets the framework for a very efficient electricity supply industry and provides for the regulation of the general electrical industry in such a way that the interests of the consumer will be properly protected.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (7.59 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"Omit all words after 'That' and add the words—

'the Bill be read a second time after a referendum has been held by the electors of Brisbane and the Bill has been amended to suit their wishes.' "

Mr. Lane: Queen Street mentality!

Mr. HOUSTON: It is true that local authorities other than the Brisbane City Council are involved. Naturally, of course, they could also have referendums if they so desired. I am not trying to force onto any local authority anything that it does not want. The only local authority that has contacted me with regard to a referendum is the Brisbane City Council. If other local authorities have contacted the Minister, that is their business. I suggest that this amendment, if carried, would not preclude his having a referendum conducted in any other local authority or supply authority area.

I know that country members have not contacted their local authorities; if they had, they, like the Minister, would have made some reference to it. The only local authorities he referred to were the Brisbane City Council and the Roma Town Council. Naturally, if the people of Roma want a referendum, I support their attitude.

Mr. Goleby interjected.

Mr. HOUSTON: If the honourable member wants to move an amendment, he is quite welcome to. We do not want to exclude a council that wants one or to make some council have one if it does not want it.

A Government Member: We have to deal with your amendment before we can have a go.

Mr. HOUSTON: That is not so. If my amendment is defeated and the honourable member wants to move another one, he

can. Government members should not fall into the old trap of each waiting for his own amendment to come along and each one of them being defeated whereas, if they acted collectively, the amendments would be carried. What I am suggesting is that they carry this amendment and then move a further amendment to include any local authorities they may have some interest in or may have had some communication from. That is the correct way to do it. I am being generous by saying that, because, as a local member, I am giving them a chance to do something for their own local authority areas. What I am doing is for my own local authority area and that is the Brisbane City Council.

The Minister introduced this Bill. It has been studied by many members of this Assembly. He has now foreshadowed some amendments that he will move at the Committee stage. At that stage no-one will have a chance to sit down and really consider what the amendments mean either to the clause concerned or relative to other clauses. Those honourable members who have studied a Bill will know that quite often an amendment to one clause has a direct relationship to another clause which is perhaps 100 clauses away. I believe that the Minister is virtually steam-rollering this Bill and his amendments through Parliament. He certainly will not be giving anyone the opportunity to look at the amendments or the consideration that I believe members should be given.

Why did the Government plan to have such a major Bill brought on at this stage? The Minister has said that it is a major Bill and I agree. He also said that this Bill concerns many other pieces of legislation. He said that the legislation has been worked on for years. The programme was that we were to start on legislation after 10 o'clock tonight.

A Government Member: Who said that?

Mr. HOUSTON: That is the programme that the Government Whip and the Government Deputy Whip transmitted to us. It was to be dealt with after the Estimates.

A Government Member interjected.

Mr. HOUSTON: Not only the Business Paper; I am taking the word of the Whip and the Deputy Whip. If they are telling untruths to this Assembly, they should be dealt with.

Mr. Akers: Did they say after 10 or after the Estimates?

Mr. HOUSTON: After the Estimates. Let us look at the plan.

An Honourable Member interjected.

Mr. HOUSTON: There was no gag. Are honourable members saying they were all gagged; that they were all told not to speak on the Estimates after half past 7?

Government Members interjected.

Mr. HOUSTON: Well, why didn't they get up and speak? Because they were gagged! It has come out finally. Government members were gagged on the Estimates debate so that the debate on the Second Reading of this Bill could start at about half past 7. This Bill was surely worthy of at least a full day's debate. That is the important point. What is wrong with sitting on a Friday? We have sat on Fridays for years. I believe that this Bill is of such importance that at least a whole day should have been devoted to it.

Government Members interjected.

Mr. HOUSTON: There is plenty of noise from National Party members now, but they will not be keen to debate the Bill.

Mr. Elliott: Is this your maiden speech as Deputy Leader?

Mr. HOUSTON: If the honourable member were sitting in his usual place in the Chamber, I would accept his interjection. The point is, of course, that he is not really interested in electricity charges. He is not interested in country people. He professes to represent a country area but all he gives it is lip-service. My main concern is for the people of this State who will be affected by the Bill.

Let us now look at some other points. Brisbane City Council aldermen are elected by the citizens of this city. They are elected on a full franchise and they are full-time aldermen. They represent the major political views in this State; they represent the Labor Party and the Liberal Party, and I suppose some of them have certain affiliations with the National Party—although no-one in a major city today wants to admit to such an affiliation. Those aldermen are elected representatives and they have been conducing the Electricity Department very efficiently.

Mr. Gibbs: Taking a big rip-off, too.

Mr. HOUSTON: The honourable member cannot prove that. If he could, I am sure he would be on his feet doing so. If profits are being made, at least they are being spent by and for the people of Brisbane.

The State Government has no mandate from the people of Queensland to bring down this Bill, nor has it any mandate from the people of Brisbane to take this step. Thousands of people in Brisbane today signed petitions asking for the holding of a referendum to determine whether or not the city council should be allowed to keep its own undertaking.

Mr. Katter: How many thousands?

Mr. HOUSTON: At least 15,000, perhaps 20,000—I do not know exactly. But I will say that there were over 15,000 signatures a few hours ago. Anyone who has spent any time chasing signatures knows how hard they are to get. There was spontaneous acceptance of these petitions.

Mr. Camm: You were just saying how hard it is to get signatures.

Mr. HOUSTON: It is generally hard to get them, and the fact that there are so many indicates the spontaneous response from the people of Brisbane of all political parties. The Government has no mandate for what it is now doing.

Mr. Jones interjected.

Mr. HOUSTON: I can remember a petition being presented here on which the signatures all looked alike. It was received by Parliament, too.

In 1969, when presenting the policy speech of the Australian Labor Party, I said—

> "An A.L.P. Government will introduce a subsidy scheme to level electricity costs in Queensland. We will not tolerate a situation where some Queenslanders are charged 2½ times as much as others for an essential commodity such as electricity. The Commonwealth produced a scheme to stabilise petrol and oil charges and the State has a direct responsibility to act in regard to power."

Mr. Katter: Your Government took that off.

Mr. HOUSTON: Yes, and yours has not put it back. At any rate, under that scheme the citizens of Brisbane were not asked to subsidise other users of petrol. The subsidy came from the common pool of Consolidated Revenue and one consumer was not asked to subsidise another. I went on to say—

> "No realistic decentralisation plan can operate when people and industries are priced out of huge areas of the State on electricity grounds.
>
> "A Labor Government will make a direct grant each year to this scheme and the result will be reduced electricity accounts for businessmen, primary producers and country residents generally.
>
> "The scheme will be a positive contribution towards decentralisation and happier living conditions for every man, woman and child in our rural areas.
>
> "A State's prosperity is gauged by the benefits that flow to its citizens.
>
> "We cannot claim to be reaping the rewards of Queensland's great natural assets when so many of our people are facing crippling electricity costs in every quarter.
>
> "First action under Labor's plan will be taken in the areas worst affected. The scheme will be expanded to all sections of Queensland where electricity costs are well above the metropolitan level."

Mr. Katter: What are you reading?

Mr. HOUSTON: I am reading from the policy speech I had the privilege to deliver on behalf of the Labor Party at the time when the honourable member was a member of the D.L.P., so he would not have taken any great interest so far as the National Party was concerned. The important question that I want to ask is: what would happen——

An Honourable Member interjected.

Mr. HOUSTON: I did not say he was in the Communist Party. I do not believe in looking for Communists under every stone and accusing people of being Communists. That is Government propaganda——

Mr. Katter interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Flinders will refrain from persistent interjections, otherwise I will have to deal with him. All honourable members will have the opportunity of speaking during this debate. I ask that all honourable members be heard in silence.

Mr. HOUSTON: I know that you will allow the debate to continue until the early hours of the morning, Mr. Speaker, if members want to speak, and I hope they do because there is plenty to be said.

Mr. Herbert: We would like to hear your leader. Where is he?

Mr. HOUSTON: I am glad the Minister asked that. Our leader is up in Maryborough trying to do something for the people the Minister's Government has cast to the wolves. The Premier came out and said, "It's not our responsibility; it's the responsibility of the Federal Government", whereas our leader is in Maryborough now doing what he can to assist the people. That is where our leader is, and I am proud to say he is looking after the people of Maryborough better than the Government ever did. Anyway, let us have a look again——

Mr. Camm interjected.

Mr. HOUSTON: I know the Minister wants to side-track me, but let us have a look at what he had to say in reply to the policy speech I delivered on behalf of Labor. I have a newspaper report here which is headed, "Camm opposes standard costing". The article read—

> "It would cost $6 million a year to give the rest of Queensland the same electricity tariff as those of Brisbane, the Mines Minister (Mr. Camm) claimed yesterday."

A miserable $6,000,000 the Government refused to supply to give the people of Queensland, in 1969 or 1970, equal electricity tariffs throughout the State. The figure of $6,000,000 was not mine, the figure was the

Minister's, and no doubt he got it from his departmental officers, who must have calculated it. The article continued—

> "And, Mr. Camm said, this amount would increase annually." (Anyone would know that). "He said the Opposition Leader (Mr. Houston) was not aware of the implications of his proposal for uniform charges throughout the State, particularly as he had promised uniform charges would not cost city dwellers a cent more."

And I did! I assured the people of Brisbane that we were not going to tax them to pay for somebody else, that we would take it out of Consolidated Revenue, as the Government does in paying for many other things.

Mr. Katter: It's the same thing.

Mr. HOUSTON: It is not the same thing, as I will go on to explain to the honourable member. A person with a large family would certainly use more electricity than a person living on his own, and a person with a high income and very little responsibility for dependants would not be affected. But with general taxation, the money comes from those with the ability to pay, and we receive our funds from the Commonwealth Government in the form of tax reimbursements. That is why we suggested the subsidy should be paid from Consolidated Revenue. The principle of charging one person to help another in the same field is wrong. I will prove later on that the Government has adopted the same principle in many fields.

The article continued—

> "Describing a subsidy scheme to enable equalised charges throughout the State as 'unrealistic', Mr. Camm said this could not be done without seriously affecting the Government's obligations in other directions.
>
> "The desirability of uniform tariffs throughout the State was recognised, and there had been considerable progress in this matter since electricity supply had been regionalised."

Of course, he said then—and I must give him credit for it—that, because it would cost $6,000,000, he was not prepared to do it by using State Government money from Consolidated Revenue. But he was prepared, and is prepared now, to make the citizens of Brisbane, Toowoomba and other areas pay for his rationalisation scheme. The point is that this is another instance in which the Government is not prepared to do things but wants full credit for them. It is not prepared to spend any of the State's money, but it is prepared to say, "This is a great scheme, provided the people somewhere else pay for it."

Let me turn now to the legislation itself. On many occasions honourable members refer to legislation as being "of great importance". As I said, this is of great importance. On other occasions they refer to legislation as "extensive". As I said, I am sure this is extensive. In this case, one can use both terms quite freely, because the Bill is virtually a complete consolidation of existing legislation covering electricity, its supply and use, and also lays down the guide-lines for administration of the electrical industry and the generation, distribution and use of electricity for many years to come. It is a substantial piece of legislation, consisting of 447 clauses and six Schedules. It embodies and supersedes the Electric Light and Power Act, the State Electricity Commisison Act, the Regional Electric Authorities Act, the Southern Electric Authority of Queensland Act, the Electrical Workers and Contractors Act, the Northern Electric Authority of Queensland Act, the Gladstone Power Station Operation Agreement Act and various parts of other Acts that concern the electrical industry. It reduces eight statutory authorities and 13 local government undertakings to one generating authority and seven distribution boards.

As one studies the ramifications of this legislation, one wonders where this Government is heading. As honourable members know, on many occasions it has condemned socialism and socialistic activities. It has stressed the need for competition; it has stressed the great virtues of private enterprise. Now, in this Bill, it has created a monopoly. It has created nationalisation on a level never before introduced by any Government in this State. Honourable members opposite should never again speak against nationalisation. They have created the greatest nationalised industry that this State has ever seen.

By this legislation, the Government has taken from local authorities and local boards the whole of the electricity undertakings of this State. I believe that there is a lot of value in having a uniform generating authority in this State. With powerhouses being built on coal-fields and on certain water-ways, they are now situated thousands of miles apart. I think it is reasonable and correct to suggest that they should be linked together physically. Therefore, they should have uniform control. In my opinion, that is reasonable and right. However, distribution is a different matter altogether.

Mr. Katter: Why?

Mr. HOUSTON: It is often said that empty vessels make most sound, and it is very obvious who is the most empty vessel in this Chamber.

Mr. Katter interjected.

Mr. HOUSTON: I suggest that the honourable member listen to someone who knows more about electricity and electrification than most members of this Assembly. I had the privilege of teaching the subject for quite a few years, so I think I know a little bit about it.

As to generation—it is true that a modern generating system should have tie-in links. It is also true that for cheapness of production it is essential to have, if possible,

one powerhouse supplying a fairly high consistency of load and another powerhouse having sufficient spare capacity to be able to come to the assistance of the first one in times of peaks.

Mr. Gibbs: What about Collinsville?

Mr. HOUSTON: The honourable member can argue Collinsville as much as he wishes when he rises to his feet. I hope that when he does he will support the people he is supposed to represent, not the big business he usually represents.

This is not a case of the worker versus big business but a case of the whole electricity industry being considered as one unit. The Minister said that he has received submissions from various organisations. Honourable members all heard them. Time after time he rejected the suggestions and advice from professional and trade organisations. I do not know where he is getting his advice from. No doubt those who advise him are conscientious and capable people, but they are not experts in every field. When other fields come into it and in those fields there are experts, I believe their opinion has to be listened to.

As I said, I have no fight at all with having generation under centralised control. There is one idea about generation that I want to kill straight away. I refer to the general idea that if there is a coal-field in an area it is a good idea to put a generation unit there, irrespective of where the load is. If a powerhouse is too far away from its centre of load there can be tremendous losses in the line carrying the power from the powerhouse to the distribution centre. The Minister has not told us that when Gladstone is on full load in Brisbane there will be line losses of $7,000,000 a year in distribution. That is not a small amount.

Mr. Lester: They will improve things gradually.

Mr. HOUSTON: The more power that is used, the greater the losses. That is how foolish the honourable member is. In many fields the more that is sold the greater the return per unit, but with electricity the more that is used the greater are line losses during transmission.

I have spoken about generation. With distribution there is a different set of circumstances altogether. We have had very efficient distribution by the Brisbane City Council and, no doubt, by other authorities. It is true that there has been a difference in charges. That is why in 1969, 1972 and 1974 the Labor Party said, "We have to do something about it." Of course, that is not what the Bill is all about. That is only one facet of the Bill. As to distribution —there are many ways of doing it. One way, of course, is not the way the Government has chosen.

The Bill is a consolidation of many Acts. The powers, functions and duties of the commission cover wide ramifications. I would say that its responsibilities have increased, but its over-all duties have diminished. I do not want to refer to particular clauses but I want to make clear some of the responsibilities of the commission. When we consider the duties of the commission, we have to realise just what power the commission has. If a complaint comes to a member of this Assembly from a constituent, the member usually handles it through the appropriate department. If a person living in Brisbane has a complaint about electricity distribution, he goes to the local alderman. A person living in another area might go to his member of Parliament or his representative. When a decision is made the people may not be happy with it, but they abide by it.

The Bill sets out that, amongst other things, the Commission—

> "(a) shall plan the supply of electricity throughout Queensland so far as such supply may be reasonably and economically possible and regulate and co-ordinate such supply and matters related thereto;
>
> (b) may, when and so often as it thinks it necessary so to do, and shall, if at any time it is thereunto directed by the Minister, prepare and submit to the Minister a plan—
>
> (i) for a co-ordinative program for the improvement and extension of existing undertakings;
>
> (ii) for the interconnexion of undertakings;
>
> (iii) for the carrying out of all such other matters and things as are authorized or required to be carried out under or in pursuance of this Act irrespective of whether the carrying out of any such other matter or thing is a power, function or duty of the Commission or of an Electricity Authority or of any other body constituted under this Act;
>
> Each shall determine the prices to be paid——"

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I trust that the honourable member will come back to the second reading.

Mr. HOUSTON: I could give it off the cuff but I want to be sure that the Minister cannot say I took one word out of context.

Mr. Lane: You are taking over from Burns again.

Mr. HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I do not mind fair interjections; in fact, I like them. But when an honourable member who does not know the first thing about electricity interjects, I would not say that he is "charged"—that would not be complimentary to him—but I wish he would listen so that he might learn something.

The commission has tremendous power. It is the final authority on the whole of this legislation. The point is that the commission is in fact one man; the commissioner constitutes the commission. That means that when decisions are made by other authorities (which I will talk about in a moment) they come back to the commissioner, who approaches the Minister and he, in turn, goes to the Executive Council. The powers of the commissioner are laid down, and, no doubt, we will discuss them. Perhaps more time will be absorbed in that way.

Mr. Hinze interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Hinze: I said, "You don't call them commissioners; you call them commissars."

Mr. HOUSTON: The Minister knows more about the Russian system than I do. I have to give that to him. He has studied it and he practises it.

The Bill provides for the setting-up of a generating board to control the generation of electricity. It shall consist of the general manager of the generating board, the commissioner and the under-secretary, who will be ex officio members, and five other members, all of whom shall be appointed by the Governor in Council. Certainly, three of them will require residential qualification to cover combinations of electricity boards, and two of them shall be so-called consumer representatives. They, again, are to be nominated by electricity boards. Incidentally, seven regional boards are to be created. The first group will consist of the Far North Queensland Electricity Board, the North Queensland Electricity Board and the Mackay Electricity Board. The second group will comprise the Capricornia Electricity Board and the Wide Bay-Burnett Electricity Board. In the southern part of Queensland there will be the South East Queensland Electricity Board and the South West Queensland Electricity Board.

Although the generating board will appear to be fairly representative of the electricity industry, it will have two major weaknesses. The first is that decisions of the board may at any time be rescinded or suspended by the Governor in Council. So in fact if any decision is made by the board on the spending of money or anything else and the commissioner on the board does not like it, he may appeal to his Minister, and that is the end of that. Incidentally, the general manager of the generating board shall be appointed by the Governor in Council, so he will also be subject to the Government's policy decision.

Mr. Camm: That is right.

Mr. HOUSTON: The Minister is admitting that, although there is a generating board, if the Governor in Council—the Minister, in other words—does not like a decision made by the board he can rescind it.

Mr. Hinze: What's wrong with that?

Mr. HOUSTON: As long as we all know where we are going and as long as the Government members do not go out to the people of Queensland and say, "You can have no fear. We have set up——"

Mr. Lane: You'll never be able to talk to the people of Queensland again after this performance.

Mr. HOUSTON: Why don't you use the microphone so we can all hear you? You're not on points duty directing traffic now. You are supposed to act responsibly in this place.

Mr. Lane: I'm doing a better job than you are.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. HOUSTON: The second point I make —and I am sure that this will make the honourable member for Merthyr very happy indeed—is that the workers should have representation as well. I know that he would object to that most strongly.

Mr. Lane: You'd never get into that group, would you?

Mr. HOUSTON: I believe that there should be representatives of the unions. It is not a bad principle. We hear Government members going out at election-time——

Mr. Lane: You never did a day's work in your life.

Mr. HOUSTON: The honourable member would know; he is the expert! He knows what "no work" means. I only know what "work" means. But I ask him to listen to me. I don't want him to get thrown out. I know that if I accept his interjections much more, Mr. Speaker, you will have to throw him out. He has been thrown out once. He wants to create a record by being the first Government member to have been thrown out twice.

Mr. Hinze: Who was the other one?

Mr. HOUSTON: He was the first one himself. No, I am sorry; I am underrating the Minister. He set up a colleague to get him thrown out.

I wish to quote from a journal that the honourable member for Merthyr and the honourable member for South Coast would respect. I respect it, too. I refer to the "Manufacturers' Monthly" of 15 October 1976. The article is headed "More promotion of worker involvement. Frustrated unions may use avenue for action." This is the important thing, and I ask all of the good Liberals and National Party members to listen to this—

> "In his 1949 policy speech, the then Mr. R. G. Menzies promised that if the Liberal and Country parties were returned to office

he would introduce a scheme of profit-sharing for workers in industry."

That was back in 1949. This passage continues—

"The non-Labor parties were elected, but in the ensuing 23 years no attempt was ever made to implement the Menzies promise, and very little has been heard of the subject since.

"Last month, the general manager of CSR, Mr. R. G. Jackson"—

another gentleman whom I am sure we all respect—

"who is also a member of the Reserve Bank Board, told the annual convention of the NSW branch of the Liberal Party that for industrial democracy to work there would have to be a genuine sharing of power.

"Trade union involvement in industry, he said, would mean that the trade unions would have to become part of the business system, committed to its success, instead of being outside it, and free to confront its direction and existence."

Surely those two gentlemen had very clear thoughts on the subject before they made their statements. I completely agree with them. I believe that by involvement through their unions and through their elected representatives the workers are being made part and parcel of the whole show. Surely much of our industrial trouble today could be avoided if management and workers could get together more. And what better way is there of management and workers getting together than by both sitting on the same board? After all, there are some very efficient and capable people associated with the trade union movement.

Mr. Hinze: Jack Egerton is, isn't he?

Mr. HOUSTON: Jack Egerton is a responsible person, yes. I mightn't agree—I don't agree—with all that Jack Egerton happens to say, but he is a responsible person.

The distribution of electricity goes under the control of electricity boards, and as I said, there are seven of these. The electricity boards shall consist of the commissioner, two members appointed by the Governor in Council, but to be known as appointed members, and five known as nominated members, who must be members of a local authority having its area or part of its area included in the area of the electricity board and they shall also be residents in the area of the electricity board.

The Government has a problem here. Which local authorities or how many are represented depends upon the Governor in Council. If the Minister does not like a local authority or does not like the political colour of that local authority, it could be that it will not get any representatives on the electricity board. It will be as simple as that.

We have heard the statements in this Chamber against the Brisbane City Council. We saw the Government's performance against the Labor Federal Government. Anyone who opposes the Government is called a Communist or a Communist sympathiser. I warn local authorities to become united and to make sure that their representative is the one who gets the seat on the electricity board. After all, it is a very important part of this whole operation.

Again, the weakness is that if the electricity board makes a decision that the Minister does not like, it is scrubbed. Yet these boards are supposed to be independent bodies. How can they be independent bodies when in fact they will act virtually at the discretion and direction of the Minister? If they come up with a decision that the Minister does not want—whether it be on finance or anything else—the Minister, through the Governor in Council, can completely wipe it.

If the Government is going to set up public bodies and go to all the trouble that it appears to be going to here, whereby it has set down that they will be representatives of certain areas and certain places, surely they should be given the autonomy to conduct their own affairs—within Government guide-lines. The Government has a responsibility and a right to say, "This is the policy. These are the guide-lines." That is quite proper. But once that authority is given, the Government should not start playing around and interfering.

We know that the Minister goes further in this Bill, and I hope Government members are aware of it. If he does not like a decision and if the authority—either the generating board or the electricity board—does not like what the Minister has rejected and tries to buck, the Minister can sack it.

Mr. Lester: Are you trying to do away with the voice of Parliament? That is what you are trying to do. You are trying to let the authorities take over. We want a say in it. We are in Parliament.

Mr. HOUSTON: Of course.

The Government lays down the policy but it should not say to the board, "Watch what decision you make or we will bring it up in Parliament and you will be sacked." That is not the way it should operate. But the Government has a stranglehold on the electrical industry. It is totalitarian. Local government is a very responsible form of government. Its members go to election the same as we do. But what I always think is queer in that the Government is always blaming Canberra. It talks about every Federal politician as if he is an enemy—and the way it treats local authorities is no different.

Mr. Lester: Correct. We give them plenty of subsidies.

Mr. HOUSTON: The Government has been cutting down subsidies since it came to power. The rate of subsidy has been reduced. Under the new federalism scheme that it has so heartily agreed to the local authorities will get less and less as time goes on.

In general, this is the reorganisation of the generation and distribution of electricity. That is what the Bill sets out to do. At no stage has the Minister explained why it is necessary to take distribution from the Brisbane City Council or why it is necessary to have seven and not eight distribution outlets. It is obvious that the Government wants the profits from electricity in Brisbane and to use the Brisbane consumer to subsidise other areas of the State. In its endeavour to penalise the Brisbane consumer it is also penalising the other consumers of other areas, such as Toowoomba. I agree that in many areas of the State the cost of electricity is too high, and the Government has a responsibility to reduce it. I believe that this should have been done by means of a subsidy to the distribution authorities in the purchase of their bulk electricity. The use of subsidies to level out inequities or to assist certain areas is a well-established principle. The principle of subsidies to railway users has long been established. It is not long ago that we heard in this Chamber members of the National Party calling out for a subsidy for fruit growers. All members who have fruit growers in their electorates were saying, "We want a subsidy for the fruit growers." They actually used the word "subsidy". When an industry or the carriage of its products by rail is subsidised, where does that money come from? It comes from Consolidated Revenue.

Mr. Katter: I have never asked for any subsidies.

Mr. HOUSTON: Of course not; the honourable member does not represent his electorate properly. I am not fighting with the fellow who asks for subsidies in an attempt to help the people in his area, but I do say that we should be consistent. If subsidies to rail-users are right, as I submit they are, certainly subsidies to users of electricity are also right.

We all know that the Government grants subsidies in many fields. Just a few moments ago one member said that local authorities were being given plenty of subsidies. He also used the word "subsidy". So what would be wrong with giving a subsidy to the distribution authorities? I see nothing wrong with that, and that should be the policy. If it was the policy, we would be supporting that part of the Bill. There are other parts of it, of course, that we do not want at any price.

If the Labor Party had been given the opportunity years ago, we would have had such a subsidy scheme under way. It is regrettable that people in country areas have had to wait so many years before they have had anything done for them.

There are many aspects of the Bill on which I could speak but I intend to refer to only a few in the hope that the Minister or his advisers will consider amendments. I believe that by the time the Committee stage is reached it is too late to press for amendments. Far too often do we hear Ministers say, "It is too late now to do anything about that. We will have a look at it in the future." But like the promises of Mr. Menzies in 1949, we are still looking for those things to happen.

Mr. Moore: What was that? What did he promise?

Mr. HOUSTON: I am glad the honourable member has woken up——

Mr. Moore: You will see soon whether I am awake.

Mr. HOUSTON: I know the honourable member is awake, because I can see him shaking.

I am sure the honourable member will agree that, whilst electricity is a very great friend that assists everyone tremendously, it can also be a death-dealing enemy. The most important persons mentioned in the Bill are electrical inspectors. They have many responsibilities. They can inspect and test periodically and, in special cases, inspect the electric lines and other work of an electric authority, electrical installations and the supply of electricity given by an electric authority and of the holder of a licence under specific provisions of the Bill. They may also check electrical articles and disconnect any piece of electrical equipment if they think it is unsafe. But the person who is classified as an electrical inspector is not required to have any electrical qualifications at all.

Mr. Katter: Scandalous!

Mr. HOUSTON: And yet the honourable member is endorsing it. What about the honourable member for Windsor, who is an electrical ticket-holder himself? He should know; he has been trained. He knows the dangers of electricity. He sits there quietly now, and by his silence endorses the fact that an electrical inspector can do all these things without being required to hold a ticket.

Mr. Moore: Do you suggest we do the debate together?

Mr. HOUSTON: I tell you what, it would definitely improve your submission. I am sure that the honourable member for Windsor would support me in my submission

that an electrical inspector should not on any account interfere with any live installation at all unless he has an electrical ticket, unless he is trained. I am concerned not about the snob value of a ticket but about the fact that the man is not trained. That is the only point I am making. We also know that in another part of the Bill, which I will not quote, he is given the authority to give resuscitation to a person affected by electricity. It lays down that he will be trained in resuscitation techniques, but nowhere in the Bill does it suggest that he will be trained to handle a person who is hooked up on a live line. Those honourable members who have had the misfortune, as I have, of seeing a person hooked on a live line would not wish to ever see it again. I have seen a human being—a mate, a friend—hooked on a line. If that happens he has to be removed quickly. An untrained person would try to grab the person and pull him off.

A Government Member interjected.

Mr. HOUSTON: Every day people are killed trying to rescue somebody else. They do it without thinking of their own personal safety. But the point I am making is that nowhere in the Bill is it stated these inspectors have to be trained in the handling of electricity. I say to the Minister that that aspect of the Bill has to be changed.

All that is needed is a simple amendment stating that the person who is given the job of electrical inspector—I have no fight with allowing someone to do the job—must have an Electrical Workers and Contractors Board certificate. My point is not that he has to be a fitter, mechanic, linesman or jointer but that he has to have a ticket or be qualified through engineering training to be able to do things associated with safety. After all, one of the things that make electricity different from everything else is the safety angle.

Mr. Moore: If you don't mind me saying so, you don't know what you are talking about. You will be shown up as a dill.

Mr. HOUSTON: If the honourable member can do it, he is quite welcome.

Mr. Moore: Don't worry, I'll do it.

Mr. HOUSTON: All I am hoping after that remark is that it is not the member's Bill.

Mr. Moore: It is.

Mr. HOUSTON: Oh, my God! Now I am really worried. Another point I want to make about the electrical inspector is that he has complete control as far as inspection is concerned. We also find that an industrial inspector can be made an electrical inspector for certain purposes.

Mr. Moore: "Made" an inspector?

Mr. HOUSTON: I do not want to argue, and I do not want to quote from the Bill, but if the honourable member looks at page 19, line 22, he will see what I am referring to.

I believe that as a matter of urgency this Bill should be amended to ensure that no person can hold the position of electrical inspector and carry out the duties as specified unless he has a certificate of competency. This Bill re-establishes the Electrical Workers and Contractors Board. All members of that board must have electrical certificates, which is quite right, yet we have the position where an electrical inspector is not required to hold such a certificate.

Under the Bill, a member of the commission, an electricity board or a generating board would lose his position if he was convicted of an indictable offence. Here we have two different standards. A member of a board has to be convicted of an indictable offence; yet the Premier has already laid it down that a person who is suspected of having drugs or smoking a pipe, or something like that, irrespective of what the charge is or what the fine is, loses his job.

The Act sets up the Electricity Supply Industry Consultative Council, which is to be constituted by the commissioner, the general manager of the generating board and the general manager of each electricity board. Again, there is no workers' representative. The operative word, of course, is "consultative". Although it is a consultative council, it has no power; it acts purely in an advisory capacity. We are going to take the time of these people—very responsible people—but they are being given the right only to suggest to the Minister.

Briefly, the Bill is designed to give to the Governor in Council complete power over the generation, supply and distribution of electricity. And if any member of the House thinks that means Parliament, he should think again, because members of this Assembly, particularly members of the Opposition, cannot even obtain answers from Ministers. Of course, we know exactly where the power resides.

Mr. Katter: He is trying to keep the House going till the referendum is under way.

Mr. HOUSTON: The referendum is going very well. I have no doubt that another few thousand have been added to the list. If the honourable member had studied Standing Orders, he would know exactly what the position is.

Mr. Katter: I know what it is.

Mr. HOUSTON: The honourable member need not stay in the Chamber; he may leave if he wishes.

The Minister had quite a bit to say about the inspection of electrical work once it has been completed, and I am sure that the

honourable member for Windsor also will have something to say about it. The Bill lays down that new work is to be inspected not by an electrical inspector but by an installation inspector, a man who holds a certificate from the Electrical Workers and Contractors Board, and I believe that is right. But when it comes to additions, the Minister has said, for some unknown reason, that they need not be inspected.

Again, a complete lack of knowledge of the realities of life is shown. If a person calls in an electrician to add power points, an electric motor, or anything else, to an existing installation, it is possible for him to interfere with the existing installation. The Bill lays down that the electrical contractor is the man responsible. If he does something wrong and causes the death of somebody, it is too late to begin blaming the contractor or his employee.

Mr. Moore: Why not blame him?

Mr. HOUSTON: Well, it is not of much benefit to the person who has been killed to take the contractor's licence away.

In my opinion, it is an essential part of safety to have re-inspected all installations that have been attended to, added to or altered in any way. It is not good enough to lay it down that the consumer has the right to ask for an inspection. Quite often a consumer is not inclined to do that, because he is frightened that his jug cord might be condemned or some other part of his electrical installation might be affected. I cannot see the consumer coming forward voluntarily and asking for the electrical installation to be checked, because it is not likely that he will know he is responsible for doing that. How many people will actually have a copy of the Bill in their home so that they will know the responsibility put on them? Tens of thousands of installations are carried out by competent contractors with no problem at all.

Mr. Moore: They're never inspected, either.

Mr. HOUSTON: I am not going to admit that. The honourable member might know more than I do. The law provides that they should be inspected. If they are not inspected, the Government is not enforcing its own laws. The point is that they should be inspected.

We have a Small Claims Tribunal. Time and time again people appear before that tribunal to complain that their motor vehicle has not been repaired properly. Quite a few cases are dismissed by the tribunal, but some of the claims are upheld. Very often the amount owing to a competent tradesman is reduced by the tribunal because the workmanship has not been 100 per cent. But usually there is no danger to life. There might be a little bit of danger associated with the use of a faulty motor vehicle, but usually what is wrong can be seen. But if a mistake is made with an electricity installation, it could be critical. It is human nature for one to become a little careless if no check is made on work carried out. The mere fact that an inspection can take place keeps competent people on their toes.

The Minister referred to the contractor's licence. The original legislation dealing with the electrical contractor's licence provided—

> "(d) that he intends and is able to undertake contracts for electrical installation work."

In other words, he has to guarantee that he is going to do contracting work—that he is not going to be an employee for 40 hours a week and a contractor over the week-end. He has to guarantee that he is going to set himself up as an electrical contractor. There is no fight with that, either. One of the things that the Electrical Workers and Contractors Board took into account was the fact that to be a contractor he had to say that he was going to be virtually full-time in the electrical industry either in a shop or as an employer or contractor as such. But for some reason best known to the Minister he has cut that provision out of the Bill. He has decided to allow anyone at all, as long as he has a certificate from the board as a mechanic or fitter, to be given a contractor's licence. That is not the type of safety control we want in the electrical industry.

Couple that with the fact that additions will not have to be inspected by anyone. Additions will be carried out not by a contractor who is doing that sort of work professionally for a living, but by a person who wants an extra couple of bob, for example, a fellow who gets his licence in Brisbane and starts moving about the countryside from town to town. That is the type of thing the Minister is leaving open. The contractors association contacted the Minister and me, and it made a very substantial case. I suggest that the Minister not interfere with the existing situation. The present legislation was drawn up by experts. We debated it in the House for a long time, and time has proved that it was successful legislation.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I should like to draw the honourable member's attention to the fact that he should be speaking to the amendment. I have allowed him great latitude. The amendment was moved by the honourable member.

Mr. HOUSTON: That is right, but I want the people of Brisbane to vote in a referendum, and one of the terms of the referendum will surely be, "Should our electricity work be inspected?"

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I remind the honourable member that that is only supposition at this time.

Mr. HOUSTON: I am making a case for the Minister to answer. I must either do it this way or speak on all of the clauses later. The Minister may take his pick.

Another anomaly in the Bill concerns the selling of electrical gear. The Bill provides that electrical gear can be sold by anyone. One problem today is that people can go into any retail establishment and buy electrical switches and other fittings and install them. If an electrical contractor sees that they are not fitted properly, he will not touch them, but an electrical inspector who comes in—this will be one of the referendum points—will see what is wrong. Surely we will not require an electrical contractor who calls to install an electric point in my house to look at every installation to see if it is right or wrong. What would he charge people for that? His fee for putting in the additional point, or an inspection fee?

There are many other points in the Bill that are worth debating and, as time proceeds, I shall certainly have more to say. I suggest to the Minister that he should agree to our amendment. The people of Brisbane would like an opportunity to express their views by way of referendum. Once the other local authority areas know that the Bill has been delayed, they will ask for referendums to be held in their areas. What happens is in the Government's hands. If it wants a referendum, it has only to say so. It has the numbers.

A Government Member interjected.

Mr. HOUSTON: The views of the Brisbane City Council can be sought.

Mr. Katter: You are saying Brisbane will make the decision and the rest of us can go hang.

Mr. HOUSTON: At present it looks like the honourable member's crowd have made the decision and the people of Brisbane can go hang. I am for the whole of Queensland. I want all the people of Queensland to be given an opportunity. The only people who have come to me asking for a referendum have been members of the Brisbane City Council. I suggest to the House that this amendment should be carried. I will then support honourable members in their attempts to involve their own areas.

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (9.3 p.m.): I second this amendment for a number of reasons. Like the honourable member for Bulimba I believe it is vital that we have the right to decide what happens. This comes back to the right of the people of Brisbane. Personally, I would rather have the referendum mentioned in the amendment we moved involve all the people of Queensland and not just the people of Brisbane. However, as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said, this will allow other people who want a referendum to come in on it. No doubt when the various people throughout the State realise that local authority representation is being taken from them, they will say that they want the same thing.

The important thing that we require is a delay in the passage of the Bill. Members of the C.R.E.B. in Rockhampton have pointed out to me that there are a number of queries to be raised. In principle, they support the legislation, and so do I. I believe in the rationalisation of the electricity industry in Queensland. But there are some problems. Irrespective of our own parochial wishes and the political advantages to be gained from doing something, we have a responsibility in this Assembly to be State members, not merely the member for Rockhampton, the Gold Coast, Warrego and so on. We have a State responsibility. I speak tonight as a State representative.

If honourable members were honest with themselves they would be concerned. This Bill was introduced on 14 September 1976 and already the Minister has foreshadowed a number of amendments tonight. We don't know what they are.

Those Government members who bother to go to their caucus meetings may know them, but I wonder whether they realise their ramifications and whether they have gone to their electorates and said, "This is what the Minister proposes to do." Many, many months have been spent drafting the legislation. It has been discussed with unions and with authorities. But suddenly there is need for some amendments. I wonder how many Government members have had a chance to read them.

I ask those who were here a few years ago to think back to the Group Titles Act that passed through the Chamber. After points were raised by Opposition members, Government members backed us and said, "Let's have a delay. Let's have another look at this." On that night, after two delays on that legislation, the then Minister brought forward a massive number of amendments. It was the then member for Clayfield, I believe, who got up and did something about it. When the Minister realised that he had Government members opposing him, he backed down. When Opposition members were supported by Government members, the whole matter was delayed.

There is very good reason for delaying this legislation—and more reason, as the member for Bulimba has said, to give the people the right to have a say. After all, it does affect them. As I said, I have taken the Bill to people in Rockhampton and they have called into question 27 clauses. They will not have their questions answered tonight. This legislation will go through by reason of numbers unless members put principle first and support the amendment that has been moved by the Opposition.

We can understand that Brisbane people are concerned because of the financial aspects. I suppose this is of great concern to members who represent Brisbane electorates. However, that is not the only consideration. Local authorities will have their representatives on the various boards almost wiped out by the proposed legislation. I

will not refer specifically to the Bill—I know that I am restricted to speaking to the amendment before the Chamber—but if members look on the last page of the draft Bill they will find that the south-east area will have numerous shires represented by one or two people. In the Central Queensland Region, all of the Central West—from Jericho to Boulia and down to Birdsville—will have one representative. The Government is grouping together 10 shires and saying, "All you deserve is one representative, who will be paid for one day per month as your representative on this board." The people in those areas are probably saying, "Fair enough." I wonder if Government members have thought about it—and that is another reason why they should consider very, very carefully the amendment moved by the honourable member for Bulimba.

Mr. Hinze: How would the people of Rockhampton vote? Tell us that.

Mr. WRIGHT: I believe they would support it.

Mr. Hinze: Don't be stupid. They pay 50 per cent more now.

Mr. WRIGHT: Of course they would support the legislation. The Honourable the Minister doesn't understand what the legislation is about. As country members, we would have to support it.

Mr. Hinze: We're talking about the amendment.

Mr. WRIGHT: I understand. The Honourable the Minister has difficulty——

Mr. HINZE: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member for Rockhampton is supporting the amendment and I asked him how the people of Rockhampton would vote on this amendment.

Mr. WRIGHT: I accept his explanation; but, as we all witnessed, if the Minister for Mines and Energy had not told him what to say, he would not have known what to do. He can thank the Minister for pulling him out of a tight spot. He was trying to make out that the people in Rockhampton would oppose the legislation, which is totally ridiculous. We would support the legislation.

Mr. Hinze: You are supporting the amendment.

Mr. WRIGHT: Of course I am supporting the amendment.

Mr. Hinze: You're having two bob each way.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. The Honourable the Minister, the honourable member for Merthyr and all other members will refrain from persistent interjections.

Mr. WRIGHT: I thank you for your protection, Mr. Speaker. The point was well made, I think. We all know that the honourable member for South Coast misunderstood the position.

Let me return to some of the points I was making. I said before that 27 clauses have been challenged in Rockhampton. They are not opposed, but challenged and questioned, requiring clarification. One of the most important of these relates to safety. Honourable members will recall that the object of the Bill involves the generation, transmission, distribution of supply and related matters of safety. A very important matter raised by the member for Bulimba was pointed out to me. In his speech at the introductory stage, the Minister, speaking of the number of accidents or instances of electric shock, used the words "almost unknown". What he actually said was—

> "It is unusual (in fact, a better description would be 'almost unknown') for a person to receive an electric shock from additions and alterations which have been connected by a certified electrical worker. What is now proposed is that the electrical contractor who carries out additions and alterations will be required to give both the consumer and the electric authority a certificate that the work is up to standard and has been tested for safety."

This is one of the main points taken up by those in my area. They started to go through some of the files. I do not mind divulging that these are people who are involved in this area. They are employees of the C.R.E.B. and they are concerned about the safety aspects of this legislation. The Minister used the words "virtually unknown."

Mr. Camm: Fatal accidents.

Mr. WRIGHT: About three years ago faulty work caused a fatality near Maryborough. The Minister said "unknown" yet a person died. It has been claimed—and this can be backed up statistically—that approximately 75 per cent of installations that have been inspected are faulty, that contractors are made to rectify these faults, and that this is only because of the inspections that are carried out.

It is also common knowledge in our area that a southern contractor working in the Central Region is receiving a memo for nine out of 10 installations that he carries out. I think this point was made by the honourable member for Windsor. Many of the electrical contractors do not know what they are doing and do not tell us the extensions and the additions. There is another known case in the Clermont area and no doubt the honourable member for Belyando would be aware of it. An electrical contractor's employee actively connected a set of consumer mains causing a person to receive an electric shock. It was not a fatality

but the Minister did not talk about fatalities; he talked about electric shocks, faults or problems being unknown.

Mr. Katter: Your speech is going to come as a shock in Rockhampton. I will read it there.

Mr. WRIGHT: I hope the honourable member does; I really do; because it will give me the publicity that I require. The people in Rockhampton expect their members to represent the State and not only them on their parochial issues.

Mr. Katter interjected.

Mr. WRIGHT: If only the honourable member would take the hair out of his ears —I know the dye is hard to control but at least he should do something about it— then he would understand what I say. I stated clearly in the first part of my speech that I would prefer a State referendum and as the honourable member for Bulimba said if ever local authorities want a referendum——

Mr. Katter interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I warn the honourable member for Flinders for the last time I will deal with him under Standing Order 123A for persistent interjections.

Mr. WRIGHT: That is a very wise ruling, Mr. Speaker, because he is certainly becoming intolerable.

In the Central Region, inspectors are carrying out five jobs a day and they believe that is the maximum quantum that can possibly be expected if their inspections are to be thorough. In southern areas, 12 to 19 inspections a day are being made. Now it seems that these inspections will no longer be required.

There are also other problems relating to faulty installations. We had the case of a live wire being left exposed under a house in Rockhampton causing a person to receive an electric shock. In the Miriam Vale area another live wire was left exposed. In one instance given to me by one of these fellows, there were 19 faults on one job alone. Yet it seems now that the Minister's attitude is, "It does not matter. We are not concerned with safety." We should be concerned with those aspects. We are talking about the safety of men, women and children. It is not good enough to leave the responsibility for safety with the electrical contractor. Statistics show that electrical contractors do not carry out their job in every instance. We have statistics to show that there are constant faults and that people have in fact died or been injured because of faulty installations.

I stress the other point, too—about representation. Surely the local authorities will scream when they start to consider the representation they will have on the boards. In the Central West 10 local authorities will be represented by one person. In the South-east Region, the position is not much better. Indeed, the problem exists right throughout the State. One or two men will represent many people through their local authorities. This is not good enough and is another reason for supporting the amendment for a delay and a referendum.

Other matters that have been raised with me relate to: the supply of electricity; the interpretation in the Act of what is initial supply as regards inspection; clarification about charges upon consumers for the random checks or the inspections to be made under Division III; and the random checking in toto and exactly what will be involved. Penalties, too, must surely be important to us. What will be the penalty on a contractor who fails to carry out the requirement, (when he is in fact asked to carry it out under the Act) to notify that work is ready for inspection?

It is now a quarter past 9 and I have just been told that we have in the vicinity of 20,000 signatures to petitions that a referendum be held. Surely that further substantiates the claim that there is merit in holding a referendum and merit in delaying this legislation. I simply ask those Government members who will speak later to point out any advantages to be gained from pushing the Bill through. They do not understand the foreshadowed amendments. We have been told in fact that they are secret. I challenge any member to tell the House, without first going to the Minister, exactly what amendments are being proposed. I do not believe they know.

Mr. Akers interjected.

Mr. WRIGHT: Oh, come on! The honourable member underestimates the intelligence of people if he thinks they will be pushed into something because of an advertisement. He does not understand.

I second the motion because of the advantages that it would bring to the people of Queensland as a whole and, more specifically, because of the rights that it would give to the people of Brisbane. I want to see this legislation passed—that is a personal view—but I believe there must be clarifications and we are not going to get them unless the Minister delays the legislation. I therefore ask members to support the amendment moved by the Opposition.

Hon. R. J. HINZE (South Coast—Minister for Local Government and Main Roads) (9.17 p.m.): What a great oration we have heard this evening from the Deputy Leader of the A.L.P., who has come back from the never-never! He had to make some sort of an impression, so, of course, he came forward with his great diatribe on behalf of the A.L.P. in the absence of his leader, who is up at Maryborough expounding on goodness knows what.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: Are you speaking for the motion or against it?

Mr. HINZE: The honourable member for Archerfield would not know even if he were listening. I was most impressed with the amendment moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. He is Deputy Leader for the time being; it will not be long before he puts the skids under Tommy. He has been round here long enough to know what things mean.

Mr. HOUSTON: I rise to a point of order. Is the Minister speaking from the correct place in the House?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is speaking from the ministerial benches.

Mr. Houston: Come down the front so we can see you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is entitled to speak from his own bench.

Mr. HINZE: If you upset me, I'll bring the microphone over there. It makes no difference to me where I speak, because what I am saying is intelligent.

It was good to see the honourable member for Bulimba making a great comeback. The hero of the A.L.P.! All I can do is give him my congratulations on his elevation to the position of Deputy Leader of this defunct A.L.P.—11 members, 10, 9, 8——

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will return to the principles of the Bill.

Mr. HINZE: I was astounded when the honourable member for Rockhampton seconded the motion. When I look around at the depleted ranks opposite, I feel I would like to ask them one by one where they stand on this matter. Where does the honourable member for Cairns stand on it? Does he want a referendum? How would the people of Cairns vote on this issue? Does the honourable member for Port Curtis really want a referendum? He will have his opportunity to say how the people in Port Curtis would vote. And what of the honourable member for Rockhampton? There are two or three members from the Brisbane area who see some benefit for their electorates from the Bill. I shall leave the honourable member for Sandgate alone because he is a jolly good friend of mine and a sensible gentleman.

I have to remind the honourable member for Wolston that the people in his area are already paying 8 per cent or 10 per cent more for their electricity, and people in the Gladstone area in Port Curtis are paying 50 per cent more. But the honourable member does not want this benefit to flow——

Mr. Jones: That's not true.

Mr. HINZE: Of course it's true, and the honourable member knows it. So does the member who seconded the motion, the honourable member for Rockhampton. He is known as "20 cents each way". He wants to get the benefits of seconding the motion to force a division, but he knows the people of Rockhampton will not get the benefit. If he does not know, why did he not have a good look at the amendments before he rose to speak. Honourable members should have a look at this advertisement in today's "Telegraph". It reads—

> "Electors of Brisbane: Help save your city!
>
> "We want you to have your say on this issue."

Paid for by whom?

Mr. Wright: Did you give a donation to it?

Mr. HINZE: Yes. I will read to the honourable member what the Local Government Act provides. I do not know whether he knows anything about it. He should; he has been here long enough. The Local Government Act states that a local authority shall, where directed by the Minister, and may, if it receives a petition from 10 per cent of the electors in its area, take a poll of the electors on matters relating to local government.

Mr. Marginson: If you approve.

Mr. HINZE: The honourable member cannot have 20 cents each way either, because in Ipswich the honourable member's electors are paying 10 per cent more for their electricity now. The intention of the law is that by taking a poll in the circumstances I have mentioned the local authority obtains an expression of opinion whether it should or should not exercise a particular function of local government.

The law goes on to provide that where a local authority takes a poll on a particular issue and the electors vote against it, the Governor in Council may, by Order in Council, prohibit the local authority from taking the action in question for a specified time. In the present case there is no question whether the council should or should not exercise a particular function. The Government is exercising its legislative power for the purpose of divesting the council of its electricity undertaking. Therefore it is considered that the taking of a poll on this issue would not be relevant. The matter is one for the Government, and not one depending on a decision of the council. That is very simple.

Mr. Wright: Who wrote that for you?

Mr. HINZE: I will tell the honourable member who wrote it for me.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. HINZE: I do not know whether honourable members opposite will ever get to these benches over here. Frankly, I do not think they will.

Mr. Jones: We will.

Mr. HINZE: Not in my lifetime. There is no way in the world, because there are only 11 over there now and that number will drop back to 10 when the honourable member for Bundaberg gets the skids put under him by you fellows. I do not think the Opposition will be over here for the next 50 years. If Labor members do attain the Government benches, won't they take cognisance of some very responsible and capable people.

I was asked who wrote that explanation for me. It was none other than the Director of Local Government in the State of Queensland, Harold Jacobs, and if he does not know anything about the Local Government Act, no-one does. The only reason I entered this debate this evening was that between 6 and 7 o'clock I was subjected to an attack by members of the A.L.P. on the Brisbane City Council, suggesting that I was at fault to some degree, and so I am here defending myself as the Minister for Local Government, and I have the support of my director, who provided me with the authentic information I quoted. Of course, if honourable members opposite ever attain these benches—which they never will—they would not take notice of Harold Jacobs or people like Doug Murray. They would push them aside as they do with everyone else.

Mr. Marginson: It wasn't so many years ago that you opposed them and would not have them on.

Mr. HINZE: I did not hear the honourable member.

Mr. Marginson: Before you were a Minister you opposed them.

Mr. HINZE: I have always respected the ability of Harold Jacobs. I have been in public life for 25 years—15 years in local government and 10 years in this Parliament, including two years as a Minister. I have spent 25 years in public service to this State, and if I do not know something about local government, I should not be here. I am not like some of the grubs opposite who have been here for only a very limited period and want 20c each way.

The honourable member for Rockhampton even rose and seconded the motion, which would act against the interest of the people living in his own electorate. He is prepared to see the people of Rockhampton paying more just for the significance of saying he seconded the motion. What a foul deed! There is no way in the world the honourable member could possibly expect to be returned for the seat of Rockhampton.

Mr. Wright: Shame on you!

Mr. HINZE: Shame? Of course it's a shame.

Honourable members have to make up their mind whether they are Queenslanders or whether they believe only in the city of Brisbane. As I look at the benches opposite, I see members from all over the State of Queensland—from Cairns right down to Brisbane. They know as well as I do that they are not being truthful, that they are not being honest. They are only putting up a sham fight on behalf of their mates in the Brisbane City Council. As for Syd McDonald, he, too, is having 20c. each way, because I saw a report today that he wants to oppose the Government on this particular issue.

All I ask honourable members opposite is this: do they want the benefits that will flow to this great State? I look across the Chamber and see the honourable member for Port Curtis and the honourable member for Cairns. They well know the development that is taking place throughout the State. Do honourable members opposite want development to benefit the State as a whole, or do they want it all to flow to Brisbane? I get the impression that honourable members opposite are having 20c each way. They are not fair dinkum in supporting the amendment moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and seconded by the most dishonourable member for Rockhampton.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (9.26 p.m.): I do not intend to accept the amendment. It says—

> "That the Bill be read a second time after a referendum has been held by the electors of Brisbane and the Bill has been amended to suit their wishes."

One local authority out of the 130 local authorities in Queensland!

Members are now being asked by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the honourable member for Rockhampton, who seconded the amendment, to withhold the Bill until it conforms to the wishes of the people of Brisbane. For four years we have discussed this Bill with local authorities, regional boards, and the Brisbane City Council and the aldermen. I have had meetings with the Lord Mayor and with Alderman Thomson, who is the chairman of the council's Electricity Committee. We have discussed in detail the Bill and what we intended to do. Why should a local authority wait till the last day, when it has been indicated publicly that the Bill is to be presented, to try to force a referendum on the people of Brisbane and hurry them into making a decision that the council itself should have made two or three years ago if it desired to oppose the principle of the Bill? The Bill was introduced and it lay on the table for five weeks. The council and anyone else who wished to object could have conducted a referendum during those five weeks, instead of waiting until the last day, yet they now come along and endeavour to upset it.

I was quite intrigued by the remarks of the honourable member for Rockhampton, who seconded the motion. He said, "We want it held up until we know what the

amendments are." How the hell can he find out what the amendments are before the Bill has been accepted? I am not going to take them over and give them to him. They are amendments that will be made to the Bill when the clauses are being considered. There is no way in which the honourable member can find out what amendments are to be made to any Bill before they are submitted to the House.

Mr. Houston interjected.

Mr. Wright interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CAMM: I have no intention of departing from parliamentary practice by divulging before the Opposition has accepted the Bill what the amendments will be. Honourable members opposite will have the opportunity at the Committee stage of moving any amendment they wish to any clause of the Bill.

Let me examine the amendment moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I do not intend at this stage to reply to the honourable member's contribution, because he went right through the Bill; I will deal with it in detail when we get back to the second-reading debate. I shall confine my remarks now to the amendment that the honourable gentleman moved.

Let us look, Mr. Speaker, at the principles of the Bill. If one studies the history of the electricity industry in Queensland, one finds that 30 or 40 years ago the industry was conducted by the local authorities right along the coast and also in western areas.

Mr. Jones: And paid for by the ratepayers.

Mr. CAMM: Yes, and paid for by the ratepayers—that's for sure.

Then it was found that it was more suitable to form them into regional boards. The honourable members for Cairns and Rockhampton should know that well. The boards were formed so that they could have over-all control of the distribution of electricity within their own region—not only for the people who lived in the town that was generating electricity but also for country people. We had regional boards formed in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton and the Wide Bay area. Then the generation of electricity was taken away from those boards. The Northern Electric Authority was formed and the generation was put in the hands of men appointed by the regional boards. That has worked successfully in that area.

The people in Cairns have been content and willing to have a uniform tariff in the Cairns area right through to Cooktown and the Atherton Tableland. All the hinterland areas beyond Cairns enjoy the same tariff as the people in Cairns. The people in Townsville with their own generation station were prepared to equalise the tariff with the people living in the Dalrymple Shire, right out to the town of Winton. The people in Winton pay the same price for electricity as the people in Townsville. The people in Mackay were quite prepared to have a uniform tariff throughout the surrounding shires of Proserpine, Nebo, Mirani and Sarina. They all pay the same electricity tariff. The people in Rockhampton were quite prepared to have a uniform tariff extended right throughout their region, right down to Wandoan. The people on that regional board were prepared to take over the central-western electricity boards, with their tremendous debts, which they are paying off. The people in Rockhampton were prepared to do this; the people in Mackay were prepared to do it; the people in Cairns were prepared to do it.

But now we have the honourable member for Bulimba telling Queensland that the people of Brisbane are not prepared to do what the people in these other cities have done in the electricity industry. He is trying to tell the people of Queensland that this is the policy of the Labor movement. He is saying, "We will keep Brisbane isolated, and because of the concentration of population in this particular city we will be able to enjoy cheaper electricity." I would like to know if that is the official policy of the Australian Labor Party in this State. If that is its policy the honourable members for Cairns and Rockhampton can say goodbye because they will never be able to win a seat in a country area of this State.

Why aren't they magnanimous? Why don't they take a leaf out of the book of the people in other cities? Why aren't they big enough to share the benefits the people of Brisbane have with people in the far western regions? They are quite prepared to accept the advantages of a giant power station built in Central Queensland, and when we get the grid interconnected completely they will be quite prepared to share the cheap electricity that will be generated in the hydro stations in Cairns and Tully, but they are not prepared to share the advantages of a concentration of population. To my mind that is a most selfish attitude, and one that will not be endorsed by the majority of people in this city. Certainly it will not be endorsed by the people in the south-east region of Queensland, where a board will be formed to administer the distribution of electricity in this part of Queensland. That is the reason why I cannot accept the amendment.

The Brisbane City Council waited for five weeks, until the last day, to initiate this referendum. The honourable member for Rockhampton spoilt it all when he said, "We want to know what the amendments are so that we can abide by the wishes of the people of Brisbane." He wants to know what the amendments are before the Bill is presented so that he and his colleagues "can abide by the wishes of the people of Brisbane."

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted (Mr. Houston's amendment) stand part of the question—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 37

Bjelke-Petersen	Lindsay
Bourke	Lockwood
Byrne	McKechnie
Camm	Miller
Cory	Moore
Deeral	Muller
Elliott	Neal
Gibbs	Newbery
Goleby	Powell
Hales	Row
Herbert	Simpson
Hewitt, W. D.	Small
Hinze	Turner
Hodges	Warner
Hooper, M. D.	Wharton
Kaus	
Kippin	*Tellers:*
Lamond	Akers
Lane	Katter
Lester	

NOES, 9

Dean	Yewdale
Houston	
Jones	*Tellers:*
Kyburz	Hooper, K. J.
Marginson	Prest
Wright	

PAIRS:

Knox	Burns
Campbell	Melloy
Sullivan	Jensen

Resolved in the affirmative.

Mr. McKECHNIE (Carnarvon) (9.44 p.m.): We have just witnessed one of the most disgusting exhibitions that this Parliament has ever seen. The alternative Government of the State tried to move an amendment that the Bill should be deferred until a "referendum has been held by the electors of Brisbane and the Bill has been amended to suit their wishes." I want to emphasise the last few words of that amendment—"to suit Brisbane's wishes". It must surely be the official policy of the A.L.P. that the Bill that we are endeavouring to pass tonight should be passed only if it suits the wishes of the people of Brisbane.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. W. D. Hewitt): Order! I draw the honourable member's attention to the fact that the amendment has now been disposed of and it is now out of order to speak to that amendment. He must now speak only to the Bill.

Mr. McKECHNIE: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You were patient with me for the first minute or so. I noticed also that Mr. Speaker was patient with other honourable members a while ago.

In speaking to the Bill, I think it is fair to say that from the newspapers and from listening to what is going on in Brisbane today it is obvious that the attitude of the A.L.P. is that this Bill can be passed only if it suits the wishes of the people of Brisbane. This has been spoken about in the papers and generally by word of mouth in Brisbane.

We have always thought that the A.L.P. is a party interested only in Brisbane. Its sponsorship of this petition in Brisbane proves this thought beyond doubt. I repeat that it wants to see the Bill passed only if it suits the wishes of the people of Brisbane. It is endeavouring to convince them to sign a petition to try to embarrass the Government. All sorts of steps are being taken to delay the passage of this Bill. The honourable member for Isis was approached in the City Plaza today and, without even being asked whether he lived in Brisbane, was asked to sign the petition.

The rural areas, particularly western rural areas, will be accommodated in this Bill. It is rather terrible of certain people to suggest that the people in the favoured areas of this State should take advantage of the benefits of the low-cost electricity which will flow from the Gladstone Power Station but not share with people suffering great hardship in Western Queensland the benefits that flow from having a large population of consumers in Birsbane. This is completely and utterly selfish.

It is interesting to note that, while the A.L.P. pretends to consider the Bill to be very important, the Leader of the Opposition is not in the Chamber tonight to officially put its case. I have been told that he is in Maryborough trying to do something about the problems up there which he helped to create. He is one of the people who favoured this inquiry, and now when he should be here speaking about the Electricity Bill he has deserted the people of Queensland to go and try to patch up some of the problems that he was instrumental in causing by supporting an inquiry the result of which will damage the whole economy of Australia in the long run.

There is some pressure for union representatives to be placed on the various boards. It is rather striking that union officials want representation on a board but in industrial disputes they do not want management going out and addressing the rank and file. They say they do not think that that would create harmony in industry. They want to be in it when the decisions are made. In some ways that might not be a bad idea, provided they give management the privilege of addressing union meetings when a strike is called so that unionists can be told the true story of why the dispute developed and not the story that is often put over by Left-wing union militants whose only desire in life is to create as much industrial disharmony as possible.

The Opposition feels that the Government has a responsibility to reduce costs in the electricity industry. One of the main causes of cost increases is strikes; they bring about great increases in tariffs. Whenever a strike occurs the A.L.P. does not condemn those

who are striking, even when they are striking irresponsibly. I have never heard an A.L.P. spokesman try to keep the cost of electricity down by siding with the Government when irresponsible strikes occur in the electricity industry.

Under the Bill electrical contractors are to be given greater responsibility and are to be made accountable for their work. In the past, electric authorities were required to inspect certain electrical work. One of the reasons why the Government has found it necessary to place this responsibility on contractors is the huge backlog of inspections in Brisbane. The Brisbane City Council is held up as one of the more efficient distributors of electricity, yet its backlog of inspections is shocking. If the council is so efficient, why has it not caught up with this backlog? After seeing the figures I am convinced that the Brisbane City Council Electricity Department does not give two hoots about safety. It just has not lived up to its obligation to inspect electrical work. Contractors in Brisbane know that in certain cases they can, if they want to, do shoddy work and never have it inspected. Under the new system they will have to give a certificate and they can be held responsible for their work in a court of law. This provision is deliberately designed to make contractors responsible for their work.

I refer now to the establishment under the Bill of the South West Authority. As the Minister said in his introductory remarks, it is very true that those who so vehemently oppose this part of the Bill are opposing decentralisation. That is a word that is freely bandied about, but when some people think that they might be affected by decentralisation they are against it. I congratulate the Minister on going ahead with decentralisation of the electricity industry by the establishment of the South West Authority.

Some people in my electorate feel that perhaps the South West Authority might not be necessary. I want them to know that I have been active on the Minister's committee and have had many discussions with people who have produced all sides of the argument and, after thoroughly examining the whole situation, I believe that the Government is doing the right thing in establishing the South West Authority in an endeavour to give the people a fair say in what will happen in their area. Decentralisation is a side-effect that is good, but the main reason for my decision to support the establishment of the South West Authority is that I genuinely believe, after hearing all sides of the argument and examining it in depth, that it is in the best interests of the people in that area.

The Minister should be commended for having allowed the Bill to lie on the table for some weeks. The example set by the Minister in this instance should be followed by other Ministers. I know that some other Ministers do it now. We will see better legislation if this practice becomes the order of the day.

I wonder whether some of the submissions that A.L.P. members have in their possession claiming that they raise some doubts about the desirability of certain sections of this Bill have been presented to the Minister or to the commissioner. Submissions were invited and discussed in detail by the commissioner, the Minister, the Minister's parliamentary committee and the joint parties. How much more consideration can people expect? The Minister allowed the Bill to lie upon the table for some weeks and then have the objections to it reviewed by a large section of the Government.

Certain people have expressed their concern that the commissioner may have too much power under this Bill. I want to assure the people of Queensland that the Minister's committee made sure that the Minister has the power to overrule the commissioner if need be. The A.L.P. objects to this. It does not believe that a Government should govern. It believes that we should set up authorities and then let them have the complete say on most things. The intention of this Bill is that the regional boards will be largely autonomous, and in this respect the record of the commission can stand on its own. In the past the commission has not interfered unduly in the affairs of regional boards, and I do not think the commissioner will interfere unduly now—even though he has the power to do so, subject to the Minister's veto.

In certain quarters it has been argued that the power to dismiss the commissioner is not wide enough. We have heard the A.L.P. complain that the Government will sack drug offenders merely because they are caught in possession of drugs but that the electricity commissioner cannot be sacked unless he commits a more serious offence. This is complete and utter nonsense. The more people who realise this, the better. The provision that certain people talk about relevant to this section is more than counteracted by clause 18(3), which states—

> "The Governor in Council may, for misbehaviour or incapacity appearing to him" (and this is important) "to be sufficient for so doing, remove the Commissioner, a Deputy Commissioner or the secretary from office."

I have taken the precaution of checking the legal position, and I am told that the words "appearing to him" mean that the Governor in Council is the sole body which would decide whether or not some future commissioner should be removed from office.

Mr. Moore: Who gave you that information?

Mr. McKECHNIE: A parliamentary draftsman. The reason I say "some future commissioner" is that I know Doug Murray very well and I am sure there will never be

any need for the Governor in Council to remove him from office. I know he has the interests of the electricity industry at heart and is a man of integrity. This clause has not been inserted in the Bill to slight Doug Murray. It is put in to safeguard the Government in case a commissioner at any time does not toe the line and tries to do the wrong thing by the electricity industry.

It is interesting to note that some people are worried about the Bill's containing clauses similar to those in other Acts, such as the Railways Act and the State Transport Act, relative to the powers of the commissioner and the possibility of dismissing him if he will not adhere to Government policy or for any other reason. I took the precaution of obtaining a copy of the relevant section of the Railways Act, and I find that the powers of dismissal in the Bill are much wider and given the Governor in Council much more scope than it has under the Railways Act.

I congratulate the Minister on the very thorough way in which he has investigated the Bill and the very extensive discussion that has taken place over four years—some of it in his time, some of it in the time of the Minister who preceded him. I must say I am disturbed that, at the very last moment before the second-reading debate, the Brisbane City Council has seen fit to adopt the delaying tactic of organising a petition. We saw something similar when court action was taken in a dispute involving the Minister's administration of the Mines Department. Honourable members must be very careful to ensure that they are not misled by the action of certain people who deliberately wait till the last minute to take steps to delay the Bill and then accuse the Government of rushing it through.

Mrs. Kyburz: Like Aurukun.

Mr. McKECHNIE: Yes, like Aurukun. It is the same old story—leave it till the last minute, then blame the Government for rushing it through!

I think it should be stated very clearly that if the Bill is not passed the people of Brisbane will have dearer electricity before long, because the cost of generating electricity in this city will continue to rise astronomically. If the people of Brisbane could only realise that the Bill is a package deal under which they will gain the benefits of cheap electricity from Central Queensland in return for giving a little bit of help to people in western areas, I am sure they would understand that they are getting a very fair deal.

I shall conclude by saying again that I am completely and utterly disgusted that a local authority sponsored by the A.L.P. and predominantly controlled by the A.L.P. would circulate a petition in Brisbane asking the Government to pass a Bill only if it suits the wishes of the people of Brisbane. By demonstrating that it cares only for Brisbane, the A.L.P. has certainly abdicated its right to go to country areas and solicit votes in any future election. I was interested to note that the new Deputy Leader of the Opposition feels very strongly about the Bill. He must realise that Brisbane is not the only place in Queensland. I do not know whether the A.L.P. realises that. The other day it had its chance to elect a bright young fellow from the bush but it chose to put in somebody who comes from Brisbane. It does not care about the bush, and it is demonstrating that in its attitude to the Bill.

Mr. TURNER (Warrego) (10.5 p.m.): The Minister has competently explained the reasons for the introduction of the Bill and its wide ramifications.

In the introductory debate the honourable member for Bulimba said that he did not know of any rural shires that were supporting the Bill. I can understand his point of view. He is representing the Brisbane area and is speaking for that area. I can tell him that I canvassed the six shires in my area and sent copies of the Bill to them, and that I did not receive any adverse comments on the Bill from any of them; indeed, I was asked to do everything in my power to see that the Bill went through. The shires were firm in their belief that the Bill was vital as it will bring about a fairer balance in electricity charges throughout the whole of Queensland. That is why I rise to support the Bill on behalf of the areas I represent.

We have a tremendous electricity cost problem in western areas at the moment. That has been basically created by rising costs generally, including wages, and the fact that we operate diesel fuel-burning plants. We do not have the benefit of cheap coal. The loss of the fuel subsidy has had an adverse effect on the generating authorities in my local government areas. There is a desperate need for a uniform tariff throughout Queensland, and in many ways that would assist with decentralisation. The people in areas like Paroo and Murweh pay three to four times the cost of electricity in Brisbane. There is therefore a tremendous problem in those areas, as the Minister and the staff of the commission are well aware.

The honourable member for Bulimba spoke about direct subsidies to assist those areas. In many ways we are receiving direct subsidies and grants from the State Government. Subsidies for capital works in Paroo and Murweh and to the C.W.R.E.B. in Barcaldine over the last two years amounted to $773,869, plus additional freight subsidy on diesel fuel, and an extra $37,500 for C.W.R.E.B. to bring the smaller town tariffs into line with that of Barcaldine. It can be seen that a tremendous amount of money has been poured into those areas by the State Government in an effort to equalise tariffs. If we wish to achieve equalisation throughout the State, it is necessary to pass this Bill.

Quite a number of people in Brisbane are crying out that Brisbane will be asked to pay all of the costs. We have read the hypothetical figures in the newspapers. The increases mentioned have ranged from 10 to 40 per cent. What about the recent rise of 17 per cent in Victoria that was referred to in "The Courier-Mail" on 28 September last? That was the biggest increase in charges for more than 20 years in that State. I do not think that the rise in tariffs in Victoria can be attributed to equalisation principles such as those contained in the Bill. Without doubt, electricity charges will rise in Brisbane whether the equalisation Bill goes through or not. People should be well aware of that fact.

It is not my desire to delay the House but I wish to express my support for the legislation in the interests of Queensland electricity consumers in general, particularly those in my electorate.

Mr. CORY (Warwick) (10.10 p.m.): I join in this debate to deal with some matters that are causing some concern. Before doing so I shall refer to one point made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, namely, that this is an attempt to nationalise the electricity industry in Queensland. I do not know how he can say that the Bill will nationalise the industry. Rather it is rationalising the industry. The industry is owned by the public and will continue to be owned by the public. It will be serviced by the public and will continue to serve the public.

Mr. Houston: It is not owned by the public.

Mr. CORY: It is owned by the public.

Mr. Houston: It will be controlled by the Minister and Cabinet, not by the Parliament.

Mr. CORY: That is not true. The honourable member should know that all the money channelled into the electricity industry is loan money, with the exception of certain subsidies advanced from time to time. Basically, loan money has been used in all distribution areas. The honourable member cannot say anything different. I do not know how rationalising public ownership by providing a more flexible system can be called nationalisation.

Mr. Houston: How can it be flexible when all control is exercised by Cabinet and the Minister?

Mr. CORY: That is what makes it flexible. Instead of authorities having to follow definite procedures as prescribed by legislation, this Bill will allow decisions to be changed as the need arises. The Bill affords an opportunity for flexibility according to different situations. If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition suggests that legislation affecting the public so widely should not be flexible, he is on the wrong track. The first job of parliamentary representatives is to represent the people, not to be a part or a cog in a machine.

I am a little disappointed about some of the preconceived ideas about this exercise. I appreciate that the legislation has been thought about for quite a number of years. I think four years have elapsed since it was first mooted. However, certain factors in the legislation are not pleasing to some people. I shall explain them as I see them. It is a pity that the bad points are included with the good ones. I shall mention the good ones quickly before detailing some of the problems as I see them.

The one generating authority is an excellent idea. We can only benefit from it. Over the past few years the Minister and the commissioner have explained how the consumers will benefit by being able to make better use of cheaper power. Irrespective of where people live in the State, they must benefit. Only time will tell how the benefits will accrue in monetary terms. But we are assured that considerable sums of money will be available in the system to facilitate the equalisation programme.

The second good point is equalisation itself. As the honourable member for Warrego said, the need for equalisation in his area is urgent. I think we must all agree that electricity costs in his area are so high that it is almost impossible for people to make proper use of electric power. Regardless of where we live, we all have a responsibility to play a part in implementing equalisation. Only time will tell how well the cheaper electricity supply will bridge the gap, but it will certainly go a long way. This is the key to the success of the whole exercise.

I am not convinced that for the purpose of bringing about equalisation it was necessary to restructure the whole distribution establishment to the extent that is proposed. What worries me is whether the system will be good enough and whether the money available through the commission will be sufficient to subsidise or adjust bulk prices to regional boards so that they can implement equalisation in their board areas without the price skyrocketing in uneconomic board areas. It is the uneconomic board areas that are my concern. The Minister and the commissioner know the area that I am speaking of particularly—South-west Queensland. I appreciate that the board will have its own representation, but what is the good of that representation if it has no money to implement its policies? There is a tremendous responsibility on the commission to solve that problem.

If we look at equalisation in particular board areas first, we are in trouble. When there is an uneconomic area such as the South West, it is impossible to equalise on fair terms. The cost of supplying electricity that is bought in bulk from a local authority

or some other body is very high and the return on the capital is not great. We are in real trouble if we are not able to obtain sufficient assistance from other profit-making areas to cushion this effect. We are assured that that can be done and will be done; but only time will tell whether it will be done. It will be a tragedy to the area if it is not. There is a tremendous responsibility on the Government and the commissioner in that area.

I turn now to the general functions of the commission. I do not want to recount things that were done, but the commission's function is really to plan and supply the distribution of electricity throughout Queensland. I suppose that is the job of the commission, and always has been. However, it will determine the price of the electricity supplied by the generating board to the distribution boards and by the distribution boards to the consumers. It also has to plan the supply of electricity into economic and, where practicable, geographic regions. In the broad concept of it, that is fair enough, but I hark back to what I said previously about the economic regions. We happen to be in a region that it is impossible to make economic; so we are dependent entirely under the structure of this Bill upon the good will of the commission. Perhaps the good will is there. Perhaps I should not be concerned about that. Our area of concern is its financial ability to assist us and to allow us to share in the transition period of equalisation without being left out on a limb before the equalisation between supply areas is implemented.

The commission will supply moneys to the regional boards for capital expenditure. As the commission is the only body that will be allowed to borrow, it is the only source of funds for the boards. Whether or not it is wise to have one borrowing authority instead of a number, I do not know. I do know that it is much wiser to make the individual local authorities responsible for their own borrowings, because they have a wider scope and a greater number of sources from which to borrow money than the Local Government Department, if it is to be the sole borrowing authority. I question the wisdom of having one borrowing authority, but we hope that it will be able to borrow sufficient funds; that its scope of borrowing even though narrow will be sufficiently wide to cope with the industry. There will be enormous capital requirements as we progressively expand throughout the State.

The authority, having borrowed this money and having approved that a certain board area can have this capital, it will then be up to the board, out of its tariffs, to meet the interest and redemption on the money. In these unprofitable areas, it is going to be a challenge. I suspect it will sound the deathknell of further extension into unprofitable areas. All of us west of the Great Dividing Range have these unprofitable areas. I have unprofitable areas in which it is beyond the means of the individual landholder at the moment to pay the capital contribution. Although the interest required on that capital expenditure has been reduced over recent years, under the present economic situation it has been impossible for the landholders to pay that capital contribution.

So the board probably will be reluctant to commit the consumers to higher tariffs to pay this increased interest and redemption by further extending into unprofitable areas unless support is given from the commission through the system. It has been indicated that certain help will be given through the generating board, but I do not know whether it will be enough to meet the extra revenue needed for the additional capital commitment that those unprofitable areas would demand.

I do not think it is beyond the reasonable wish and expectation of anyone that our system will give an opportunity in the future for everybody in Queensland to be connected with power. In all areas, it is the wish of everybody to have power connected. When we reach the stage where it is beyond the resources of the people living in those areas—in some cases they are comparatively small pockets but other areas are fairly big and extensive—I do not think it is unreasonable for us to expect our over-all financial structure to swallow a certain amount of this extra cost and get these people connected so that they are part of the system. The cost will be small in over-all capital but crippling in the individual areas where each individual extension has to pay its own way. It is getting more and more impossible to find areas where this will work, but surely the whole system can be big enough to accept a large amount of this capital cost and so make it possible for everyone to share in this electricity extension.

I realise that it is not feasible or right for somebody to be connected tomorrow at a cost less than that paid by somebody who was connected yesterday. Whoever is connected from now on must pay at least what people had to pay previously to be connected. This is quite obvious and fair, but we must keep the cost of connection down to what an individual is able to pay. Considering that it costs anything from $8,000 to $15,000 for an individual to be connected with power, it can be understood why these people think seriously about whether they can afford power or can do without it.

It is the capital needs, the servicing of the capital and the provision of the capital. We do not know whether the borrowing strength of the commission will be sufficient to cope with this need. We do not know whether it will receive sufficient moneys out of the system by virtue of the cheaper generation or other profits derived through the system to assist those areas. I think that the whole principle of equalisation is not only a final equalisation of tariffs but also an equalisation of opportunity to have these services.

The last thing that I want to mention is the Government subsidy that exists and has existed for some years. It is, however, not sufficient to reduce the cost of connection and, in practical terms, the capital requirement of most prospective consumers in these board areas. These prospective consumers are needed, because in the long term the more connections there are, the more profitable will be the whole exercise and the cheaper will be the electricity supplied to the consumers. If there is to be a continuation of expansion in isolated areas that virtually have to pay their own way, that situation will continue till Domesday.

I urge that steps be taken to mop up such areas and assist with capital contributions to the extent that it becomes possible for all to receive power. Let us then go ahead with an over-all equalisation scheme. If this is not done, there will be equalisation for some and nothing for others. As I see it, that is not good enough. This is entirely in the commission's hands because it has absolute power over the boards. The boards make recommendations and obviously they will be made by people who know at first hand the problems of their areas. But the boards are completely dependent on others for money, and it is money that is the real problem.

I appeal to the Minister and the commission to look closely at the capital content because if individual unprofitable boards are to continue to have to use their own revenue to pay interest and redemption on money borrowed, they will be very reluctant to make further capital commitments, because the consumers in their areas will not be able to pay the charges levied on them. They need this help, and only with it can this legislation be a success.

Mr. ELLIOTT (Cunningham) (10.28 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to take part in the debate on the second reading of this Bill. I was interested to hear the submission made tonight by the new Deputy Leader of the Opposition. It was a little hard for me to work out just what he was, because I heard him called many things today including one of "yesterday's men".

In the first place, I should like to say that I support entirely the principle of what we are trying to do. As an elected member from a locality that will be within the south-west distribution area, I strongly support the Bill. It was interesting to note some of the arguments that have so far been put forward and I should like to make a few comments on the tariffs that would result if the present situation were allowed to continue.

What the Deputy Leader of the Opposition recommended would in fact produce a situation in which consumers in the central part of Brisbane would be paying 8 per cent less than the consumers in areas surrounding the Brisbane metropolitan area. I refer here to what might be called outer metropolitan areas such as Pine Rivers, Redland, South Coast and Ipswich. People in those areas are at present paying approximately 8 per cent more for their power than is being paid by those in the central Brisbane area. If Opposition members want to see a continuation of that situation, they should ensure that the Bill does not go through the House; but I put it to honourable members that that is a most outlandish attitude to take. When the public of Brisbane and surrounding areas have this fact drawn to their attention they will not have one bit of this suggestion that has been bandied about by the Brisbane City Council.

I draw the attention of the House, as did the Minister for Local Government, to this advertisement, which states in part, "Electors of Brisbane: Help save your city". I wonder whether when they say "Electors of Brisbane" they mean just that crowd in the middle of the city. Obviously they must because opposing this Bill will be of no advantage to the real residents of Brisbane. As we all know, Brisbane is expanding outwards. One has only to look at Redland, Pine Rivers and other outlying areas which have been referred to. I think of them as being in the Greater Brisbane Area in the long term because they are just as much a part of Brisbane as is the central city area. I would like to know who paid for this advertisement. We assume that it was the ratepayers of Brisbane. It could be that it was marked down to the consumers of electricity in Brisbane and then lost in the books and figures. Perhaps an honourable member opposite might like to tell us the facts about that. At different times we have heard the Opposition make a great play of the fact that in a legitimate fashion the Government was putting out what might be termed public relations material. I see very little public relations in this advertisement. I say that it is straight-out propaganda trying to slate a Bill which they have not even taken the trouble to have a good look at and decide for themselves whose interests they were really pushing.

Let us have a look at the tariffs right along the coast. It was most interesting tonight to see the stand of the honourable members for Rockhampton and Cairns on this issue, which was drawn to the attention of the House by the Minister for Local Government. What are the differences in tariff right now? What are the tariffs in Brisbane and in the other cities along the coast?

Mr. Jones interjected.

Mr. ELLIOTT: I will tell the honourable member for Cairns. The cities along the coast are paying approximately 50 per cent more for their electricity than Brisbane is. I might remind the honourable member that the electricity generated in Cairns is among the cheapest in the State. The same goes for Central Queensland.

But here we see the Opposition moving an amendment to try to block this Bill. How hypocritical can they get? As far as I am concerned, we will be paying slightly more, and I will be only too happy to do so. I would hope that honourable members opposite would be big enough to take part in an exercise which will ensure that all consumers in the State pay a reasonable price for their electricity. I do not think that is an unreasonable request, and I hope we will see a slightly better attitude from honourable members opposite.

The other question I should like to ask is: what would be the position of the West Moreton coal-fields if the existing situation were to continue? The honourable member for Wolston gives me a blank look.

A Government Member: He is smiling at you.

Mr. ELLIOTT: Yes, he is smiling one of those evil smiles of his. He should realise that in a short time industry in the West Moreton area would be strangled by the cost of electricity.

Mr. Marginson: They have carried the State on their back for years.

Mr. ELLIOTT: Right. I am not saying for one minute that——

Mr. Marginson: What is going to happen to them now?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. ELLIOTT: The House is discussing the Electricity Bill. It is important to note that if what honourable members opposite are suggesting were done, the life-blood of the West Moreton area would be cut off and the cost of electricity would put industry right out the back door.

Honourable members opposite are prepared to take the cheaper electricity from Central Queensland and from the hydro-electricity stations in the North, but they do not want to help anyone; in other words, they want to have their cake and eat it, too. I suggest to them that they have another look at the proposal, because I believe very strongly that when the facts are known—and they will be once the Bill goes through and people are able to make them known through the media and through pamphlets such as the one I have here, which is being distributed already—they will see what the people really think about it. I should hope that the Opposition would then adopt a more enlightened attitude.

I should like to make a few brief comments about my area, which will come under the South West Queensland Electricity Board. The honourable member for Warwick mentioned a few pertinent problems relative to capital commitment that I should like to understand a little better. It would be a waste of time for me to regurgitate them, so I simply say that I support the submission he made.

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to express my strong support for the principle of the Bill.

Mr. BYRNE (Belmont) (10.38 p.m.): It is somewhat amusing to see the Town Clerk of Brisbane calling upon not the people of Brisbane but the electors of Brisbane to help save their city. I do not know what has motivated him to authorise a full-page paid advertisement in the "Telegraph" calling upon the electors of Brisbane to save their city. I have not seen any other statement made by him; I have not heard him express anywhere else his fear and consternation that Brisbane is about to find itself in cataclysmic circumstances that would justify a full-page advertisement in the "Telegraph". With due deference to the gentleman, I can only conclude that it was not he who desired such things but the Labor-controlled Brisbane City Council.

Then we have to ask ourselves why the council would head an article, "Electors of Brisbane: Help save your city!" I should say that with the way the council is running the city and the policies it is implementing, the electors of Brisbane do indeed need to help save their city. One way in which they could assist to save the city—not specifically now, but for the future—would be to support the legislation. If the Brisbane City Council was sufficiently far-sighted to realise that it should govern the city and run the city not just for today but for 10 or 20 years into the future, it would support the legislation. Instead, the Labor City Council, and, indeed, Liberal aldermen and the head of the Liberal aldermanic team, seem to be duped by the idea that as long as it is all right for today or tomorrow, it is not necessary to worry about 10 or 20 years in the future. The people of Brisbane are concerned. They do not wish to find that they will be hit by enormous costs in the future. The fact is that if the present circumstance persists, although in the short term it might mean we will have lower electricity prices, in the long term it just wouldn't work, and we would find ourselves faced with increased electricity costs and, because we might not be in a grid pattern, the inability to obtain much-needed electricity. Clearly the Brisbane City Council is saying, "In order to preserve the present standards we do not want to try to increase the capacity of electricity flow to Brisbane, because that might produce greater development and greater industrialisation." Such a short-term, short-sighted attitude of the council could be detrimental to the city's future development and the possibility of industry setting itself up here. At the same time, the council does not look to the increased costs in the future. The electors of Brisbane can well think deeply on the plea made to them to help save their city. They can do that by supporting this legislation rather than by being parochial today and forgetting about their own future.

The staff of the Electricity Department of the Brisbane City Council have been out on the ridges trying to get people to sign a petition. We are told in a pamphlet that the council's efficiency will suffer if these changes are made. We have not had the changes yet, but the council's efficiency is suffering because its staff are out collecting signatures on a petition. If that is the sort of politicising that the Brisbane City Council is going to hope for from its Electricity Department, the people of Brisbane might indeed be wondering how they are going to save their city from such a council.

We have been told by the Brisbane City Council that if this legislation proceeds the people of Brisbane are going to suffer. We are told that our electricity will cost more. That is one of the pieces of propaganda sent out with electricity accounts. We are told that our $100,000,000 in assets will be swallowed up without compensation. I cannot really see how by some strange sleight of hand that $100,000,000 in assets is going to disappear. They are not being sold off to the Arabs; they are not being exported to New South Wales; the people in Queensland are still going to be using the same assets. All that is occurring is nothing more than a change inside an accountancy book.

If the Brisbane City Council says its fear is that, when these particulars are written in one book instead of another, somehow the assets will be stolen, again by some sleight of hand, it is trying to dupe the public. Fortunately the people of Queensland have far more intelligence than that. Indeed, the recent council election showed that at that time the people did not have quite as much faith in this council, which has been trying to save Brisbane for many years, as they had in the past.

We have been told that Brisbane City Council efficiency will suffer. I should imagine that any further lessening of council efficiency would hardly be noticed by the public.

Let me compare the efficiency of the Brisbane City Council with that of the S.E.A. The S.E.A. has better staff. One criticism of it might be that the middle management is too great, and that efficiency and economics could be improved by a better management administration. The fact is that with the engineers available in S.E.A. areas the public have a much greater opportunity to receive service. With one engineer on one side of Brisbane and another on the other side of Brisbane, the public in Brisbane City Council areas who are in need of engineers are not going to receive very efficient service. Anyone who drives about Brisbane should compare the electricity poles in S.E.A. areas with those in Brisbane City Council areas. I am very concerned about some areas in my electorate where the poles are rotting on their feet.

We were told by the newly elected Deputy Leader of the Opposition that he is most concerned about the safety of the public. I am very concerned about the safety of the public and I only wish that the Brisbane City Council was as concerned as the S.E.A. The city council's electric light poles are rotting in the ground. The council is not concerned about replacing them and it has reduced the maintenance work on them. That is the type of false saving effected for the people of Brisbane.

The council has virtually said, "We will not increase electricity costs, because we know that we will not have this undertaking in a few years' time; we want to make sure the Government gets something that is almost bankrupt, something that is almost useless, something that will be an enormous millstone round its neck. We will not increase electricity costs but we will increase your rates by 40 per cent, your water charges by 70 per cent and your sewerage charges by 100 per cent." That happened this year. The Brisbane City Council is virtually saying, "We will not put up your electricity charges but we will increase your rates by 40 per cent." At the same time the council is claiming that, by not increasing electricity charges, it is able to save us enormous costs.

If people examine their Brisbane City Council electricity accounts and their water, cleaning and sewerage charges, they will see that they are paying exorbitant amounts compared with those they paid last year and the preceding year. Even if their electricity accounts have increased by less than $1 or $2 a quarter, they will find that their rates have risen so steeply as to cancel out the small increase in electricity tariffs. Yet the Brisbane City Council concentrates on electricity and claims to be a great God protecting the people and saving them from increased charges. All the council is doing is diverting the public's attention from the enormous increase in rates. If we study the moves by the Brisbane City Council we realise that it is trying by sleight of hand, fraud and deception, to divert public attention from its incompetent administration.

Rates have increased and I am sure that when the council again increases rates it will use as an excuse its loss of the electricity undertaking profitability. But even while the council has been controlling electricity, rate increases have varied between 40 per cent and 100 per cent. Yet the council is saying that when it loses the electricity undertaking (which has been very profitable and has illegally subsidised many other council activities) it will have to increase rates and charges.

In considering this Bill it is very important to appreciate existing circumstances and not let ourselves be fooled by the sleight of hand of the Brisbane City Council. Safety should be predominant. The downgrading

of the Brisbane City Council's electricity undertaking is shameful. If any fatality or injury is caused by this downgrading the Brisbane City Council must be held totally to blame. I hope that nothing happens, but if it does we know who is responsible.

I shall now refer to the absurdity of the amendment proposed by the newly elected Deputy Leader of the Opposition—the once Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Opposition. If carried, it would mean that Parliament would say, "We shall have a referendum on this Bill and whatever the people of Brisbane say they want changed in the Bill will be done. Whatever the people of Brisbane want will be included in the Bill." If we had passed that absurd amendment, the Bill would be altered to suit the wishes of the people of Brisbane. In other words, if the people of Brisbane determine something by referendum, whatever they wanted would apply to the whole of Queensland. I do not think the people of Brisbane would like the people of Townsville to decide by referendum what should apply to all people in Queensland. Never in my life have I heard anything so absurd. That is the sort of absurd argument that the member for Bulimba put forward in an attempt to create, by way of publicity, confusion in the minds of the people of Queensland. The issue is a very clear one. When I look at the Opposition—and all the vacant seats as well—I realise that of the 11 members over there only five are from within the area of the Brisbane City Council. Because of the desirability of the Bill, no doubt the others will support it. If they do not support it, they will highlight their own crass stupidity. When they do support it, we will see the sharp division that exists between them and the Labor council in Brisbane. Both are trying to have two bob each way. Both the Brisbane City Council and the Labor Opposition here are patting each other on the back. Each is saying it supports the other.

At the end of it all, it will be quite clear to the people of Brisbane that, when Labor Opposition members realise the very great advantages of this Bill—they have already stated that they do—and they support it, despite the fact that the A.L.P. dominated Brisbane City Council thinks that for its political purposes and its political reasons it should oppose it, the Parliament of Queensland totally, if not unanimously, supports this Bill. That is the situation that exists. The argument that has taken place here is absolutely futile.

I hope that the people of Brisbane will not be duped by the sleight of hand and the lies and deception of the Brisbane City Council, by its endeavours, through the use of taxpayers' money, in newspaper advertisements, by propaganda sent out with accounts, and by the straight-out lies they have been told, that they are going to lose $100,000,000 in assets. The assets of every council are the assets of the Government; the assets of the Government are the assets of the people of Queensland; the people of Brisbane are part of the people of Queensland—and so these assets will remain theirs. So what the council says is just a tissue of lies. If it is going to continue in that way to try to fool the public, I certainly hope the public wake up to it.

If members opposite had any decency they would point to the same facts. They would agree with the intrinsic value of this Bill. They are aware of the very great benefits it will bring to Brisbane and to Queensland, not only now but also in the long term. We cannot have a higgledy-piggledy argument of, "We are very interested in the developed of Queensland, but at the moment we will pander to this group here and forget about the other one. We will put our heads in the sand here." That just cannot be done. We cannot afford to stick our heads in the sand. If we as a State are to proceed into the 21st Century with some development and some incentives, we will have to operate on a common-sense basis.

On those grounds it is most important that the Bill be supported. It is most important that it set the basis for development in Queensland—not just now, but for the next 10, 20 or 30 years—so that we can have a properly co-ordinated system of power in Queensland. The people of Brisbane will benefit. They will benefit from the long-term decrease in costs, when otherwise they would have experienced increased costs. They will benefit from the increase in the number of industries that will be attracted to Queensland. They will benefit from the side-issues and all the run-offs of all the industry that develops in Queensland.

Mr. Houston interjected.

Mr. BYRNE: If the honourable member for Bulimba wants to put his head in the sand and think that the development that takes place in other parts of Queensland does not benefit Brisbane, he is closing his eyes to reality. I certainly hope that he would not close his eyes to reality, because his leader has closed his eyes to reality on so many occasions.

Mr. Houston: What about the honourable member for Salisbury? She voted with us. Do you couple her with all the things you have said?

Mr. BYRNE: No. The honourable member for Bulimba does not quite understand something that operates in our party. We have a party in which—and it is the reason why I joined the party in the first place——

Mr. Houston: For a start, the Labor Party wouldn't have you.

Mr. BYRNE: The honourable member has just said that the Labor Party would not have me. I remind him that in the 1974 Federal election, when I first met him, he

came to me and said, "It's people like you we need in the Labor Party." I was introduced to him by the then president of the Carina A.L.P. Branch, I think it was—and he introduced me to the member as the next member for Belmont—most inadvertently.

Mr. Houston: I wasn't in the electorate in 1974.

Mr. BYRNE: It was either the referendum——

Mr. Houston: Make up your mind.

Mr. BYRNE: It was either the referendum or the 1974 Federal election and it was at the Mayfield State School booth. If Mr. Speaker will allow me to add one more sentence on this matter—I can also recall saying to the same honourable gentleman at that time, "The difference between you and me, Mr. Houston, is that I read both books to see what the political parties offered and decided which one was best." So I point out that the honourable member for Salisbury displays her immense wisdom in deciding what she considered to be of importance to the community. I hold nothing against her for it and she suffers nothing because she expresses that opinion—unlike members of the A.L.P.

I will finish on this point: I am certain that this Bill has unanimous support for its principles and estimates because of the awareness of the members of this Parliament of the development of Queensland which will flow from it. I support it myself on that basis. No doubt, because of legislation like this and because of the passage of this Bill, we will be able to have a properly co-ordinated system of rationalised power throughout Queensland which will be to the benefit of the people of Queensland generally and of the people of Brisbane both on a short and long-term basis.

Mr. KATTER (Flinders) (10.57 p.m.): That excellent exposition by the previous speaker I think very ably represents the views of his electorate.

A turn of phrase seems to be constantly brought up in this Chamber. It is "centralist monopoly". It has been coming constantly from members of the Opposition. I should like to say a few words on this particular concept. What we are doing is putting the whole of Queensland onto the one grid system. Speaking for the people of North Queensland, I say it is vital and in our best interests that we be connected to some sort of grid system, because we have wild-cat strikes. Recently a single wild-cat strike involving a very few people could have knocked out all power supplies in the remainder of North Queensland. Because a grid system already operates in North Queensland, it was not able to. There are obvious benefits for the remainder of Queensland if we introduce a single grid system.

The very person who advocated this—the Deputy Leader of the Opposition—made great mention of the excellent way in which the Labor Party used to handle this portfolio and the way electricity supply ran smoothly in the State of Queensland. That provided a great deal of mirth to the people of North-west Queensland like me who can recall the then member for Mt. Isa making all of the papers in Queensland because he was buying electricity from Mount Isa Mines Ltd. and selling it privately to householders in Mt. Isa at an extremely large profit to himself. His State Government refused to stop him from making this huge rip-off. So much for the marvellous way in which the Labor Government ran electricity supply in Queensland!

The second point that seems to be raised constantly by Opposition members is that, in this policy, we are controlling the boards and are dictating to them what they should do. I have always thought that that is what should happen in a democracy—that we who are answerable to the people must be responsible for everything that the public servants in Queensland do. It would be a disgraceful abrogation of our responsibility if we were not. But the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has had the temerity to castigate us openly for adopting this policy.

He said that policy guide-lines should be laid down and that the board should follow them. We have a choice. We could write the guide-lines down. I venture to say that only very broad guide-lines could be written down. Then flexibility is lost because systems change and we would be constantly coming back into this Chamber to have the broad, written guide-lines changed. In the alternative, we could have a system of verbal direction, which is only what we are advocating under a different name. I would therefore say that his attack on the board's policy is an attack on the institution of democracy, and he is very stupid for not realising it.

Finally, I may say that I agree wholeheartedly with his last remarks. In the very near future we will be seeing trade union representation on these boards. I personally believe that the unfortunate happenings in North Queensland recently might not have occurred if there had been union representation on the board concerned.

I move on to deal with the concept of a grid system. There are two obvious reasons for having such a system. The first is that it would prevent a small coterie of people from blackmailing large sectors of Queensland, which is what has happened in North Queensland over the last two to three months. It is a way of stopping industrial blackmail and blackmail from the board itself. That is one of the major benefits of a grid system.

The second advantage, which is of vital importance, is that if there is a breakdown in the system it is possible to switch over to another power station and receive power from it.

The third factor is that this State is establishing giant powerhouses that will produce cheap power. It is important to put into the transmission lines of Queensland the cheapest possible power and that is what the Bill will achieve. It will have the effect of putting into the grid system of Queensland power that will be as cheap as that produced anywhere else in the world. As years go by and fuel becomes increasingly expensive, the cost of power produced by the Gladstone Power House will decrease relative to the cost of power in the rest of the world. We are thus enabling the people of Brisbane to have possibly the cheapest power available anywhere in the world.

I do not think that anyone in the House has denied the need for a single grid system. Obviously if there is one generating authority, which there must be if there is one grid system, it would be incredibly unfair to discriminate between users of the power by saying that the people of North Queensland should pay more for the same power than the people of Brisbane. It would be equally unfair to say that the people in Mt. Isa should pay more than those in Charters Towers. It seems to me that it would be an incredible anomaly if power produced by the same powerhouse were charged out to various people at different rates. That would be a provocative act against the people of North Queensland, and I speak from their point of view.

Although we are here to represent our own areas, we must always bear in mind the interests of Queensland as a whole. We are a Queensland Assembly and it is not for us to start bitter parochial fights. But as parochial issues have been raised and as we have had the incredible spectacle of the Brisbane City Council crying and screaming about the way in which it says it is being unjustly treated by the Queensland Government, I will say that we have put up with injustice for a very long period and that for once in the history of this State we look like getting justice from the vast bulk of the people of this State who are in its south-east corner. For once we seem to be getting a little justice from the greedy, selfish interests represented by the Brisbane City Council which is fighting so tenaciously to deprive us of it.

Let me quote some figures. The railway system in Queensland is divided into three areas, and if we bring together the central and northern zones, last year alone the loss made by the southern zone was $60,000,000, while the profit made in the central and northern zones was $10,000,000. That to me looks like a subsidy from the North to the South of $10,000,000 and a subsidy to the South out of Consolidated Revenue of a further $60,000,000.

There is another interesting figure which does not normally come out, and that is that the western part of the railway system is also working at a profit, so that the whole of the State railway system is running merely to subsidise the Brisbane commuter system. And yet we have had quoted here that this Bill will mean a subsidy to non-Brisbane consumers of the lousy figure of $23,000,000 after a period of 15 years has elapsed.

So we have a figure of $23,000,000 in the electricity field versus a subsidy in the railways of some $50,000,000 to $60,000,000, and I am comparing only those two items.

I can then move on to the subject of mining royalties with some $55,000,000 every single year, which is produced exclusively in the northern part of the State, being paid into Consolidated Revenue.

Then I move on to the subject of culture. The estimated cost of the mooted cultural centre in Brisbane is $40,000,000, and there will be a $4,000,000 interest bill before we even get started on redemption payments.

Mr. Lamont: This is a bit like a summer rerun of the midday movie.

Mr. KATTER: The honourable member for South Brisbane, who makes that very interesting comment, should go to the Flinders electorate and see how the people live there. There is not a single car in the electorate better than a Holden. There are a dozen old people living in homes with dirt floors. If this is a rerun of a movie, let me say that I am going to keep saying it in this House until someone realises that the people up there are very poor. Honourable members might ask me why they are poor. They produce the cheapest beef and wool produced anywhere in the world.

Mr. Marginson: It's the quality of representation.

Mr. KATTER: Another interesting interjection! There is only so much one can do in one lifetime. We have had to spend virtually the whole of the State's financial allocation for rural arterial roads to get a single highway built because in 23 years the Labor Government did not lay a single inch of bitumen on the second major highway in Queensland. So in our 19 years of office we have had to try to make up for 30 years of neglect by an A.L.P. Government. We have made giant steps forward, but even they are not equal to the task of what we are attempting to secure—justice and equality.

I approached the James Cook University to do a cost-of-living study in Hughenden. It was a very limited study, but they found that the cost of living in Hughenden is over 20 per cent higher than that in Brisbane. So obviously a worker in Hughenden earning the same wage as one in Brisbane—and paying the same tax—would have a lot less spending power. So if I am criticised for reiterating the point, and if I sound like a record, let me say to the Assembly that I will continue to sound like a record until some of these harsh injustices are eliminated.

Mr. Marginson: It is in the hands of your Government.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. KATTER: I will take the interjection of the honourable member for Wolston.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member has had a pretty fair run and he will now come back to the Bill.

Mr. KATTER: It is most relevant to the Bill that the honourable member says we are not doing anything about it when here we are making an attempt to do something about it through the rationalisation of electricity charges. But it is not being done specifically for that purpose; it is being done to introduce a common grid system in Queensland, and it is only incidentally that a little more money will come into North Queensland. Yet here is the Opposition opposing it at every twist and turn. That is why we have not secured justice—because honourable members opposite have objected to it. It is being done now because honourable members opposite did nothing when they were in office.

Mr. Houston: One of us is equal to seven of you.

Mr. KATTER: The Opposition is reduced to 11 members. That is why the Government can do this; that is why it will be successful in getting the Bill through the House. If the Opposition had more members, this may not have been such a fortunate day for North Queensland.

If a referendum does take place, I think it will be very embarrassing for the Brisbane City Council.

Mr. Houston: Why not stick to the Bill?

Mr. KATTER: I am not talking about the honourable member's amendment; I am talking about the Bill. The fact that a referendum is being sought in Brisbane is relevant. That referendum will be lost, and I am suggesting that that will be very embarrassing to the Brisbane City Council.

Let me move on and mention decentralisation—that hackneyed word that every parliamentarian mouths, that high-sounding word that has certain connotations which never seem to become a reality. I shall give one reason why they do not become a reality. The general manager of Mount Isa Mines Limited, David Buchanan, when addressing a meeting of a chamber of commerce, said that the most relevant factor in the locating of industry is cheap electricity. He said, "To my mind, that is the most important factor when we are deciding where we will place an industrial complex."

Obviously, if power is half as expensive in Brisbane as it is, for example, in North Queensland, industry will be established down here. In Brisbane now, prices are so high that the ordinary person cannot secure a block of land or a house for himself. So the ordinary Queenslander is being precluded from realising one of the great Australian dreams, and I do not believe that the people of Brisbane or the people of any other part of the State want that. To change that, we must encourage industries to build factories and plants outside the south-east corner of the State and outside the city of Brisbane. The major contribution that a Government can make is to provide a common electricity tariff throughout the State. So, with decentralisation and the quality of life in Brisbane in mind, it is imperative that the Bill be passed.

As I said earlier, the cost of living is over 20 per cent higher in Hughenden than it is in Brisbane. There are many factors which cannot be taken into consideration, or it would be even higher. Not all the greedy people in this State are in Brisbane. I have a lot of greedy people in my area, too, and they supply two things to Brisbane—food and energy, which comes from coal. Many people —and I do not wish to mention names—are talking about a vast union of primary producers, with each primary producer organisation having its own union and then being joined at the top in exactly the same way as the A.C.T.U. If honourable members opposite think they have seen a powerful, aggressive force in the A.C.T.U., I invite them to stop and think about a union that could cut off food supplies from the city of Brisbane or from any other city in Australia. If they ponder for a while, they will see a horrifying spectre. They will see the possibility of power being exercised as it has never been exercised before.

The greedy people in country areas have not taken control yet, but leadership is being thrown to the extremists there. Tonight we listened to a ridiculous member of the Liberal Party who crossed the floor when the division took place; we have listened to other people who have betrayed Northern and Central Queensland. I excuse some of them, because I do not think they have thought about the matter. However, there are others who have thought about it, and who did think about it tonight and cold-bloodedly voted for the amendment. At the next election, I should hate to be in the shoes of those who betrayed the North and betrayed the State of Queensland. Let these greedy people who are sowing the seeds of hatred reap the whirlwind of poverty that will come if such a split occurs.

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (11.15 p.m.): The Bill contains 447 clauses, and it is certainly not my intention to outline or make specific comments on the Bill as a whole. We are dealing with a very vast State with different circumstances in various parts of the State. I do at times question the merit of dividing the State into seven regions. In the final analysis each of these areas is represented by a board of equal dimensions. In the southern region, of which I am part, there are some 360,000 consumers—a little

more than 50 per cent of the consumers in the entire State. This board will have a considerable task, with some difficulties.

The distribution of electricity, being a specialist industry, would require persons of special expertise. I know that my next comment will not be readily accepted by a number of people. The Bill specifically states that the persons chosen to be members of the board must be members of local authorities. I must cover my tracks here. If there are qualified persons in local authorities who have the capacity to do this job effectively, by all means let us have them. But I feel that we have narrowed the field to such an extent that we may not get the benefit of the best persons to perform this specific role. I am vitally concerned about this.

I think it would be fitting if I were to confine my remarks to the southern region. Over a period of years we have had the S.E.A., an organisation which is well known to all of us. I have never regarded the S.E.A. as being perfect, but in my role as a member of Parliament on many occasions I have received requests to make submissions to the S.E.A. on behalf of potential consumers who wished to be provided with a service, and I must say that at all times I have received the utmost civility and attention from the S.E.A. The Bill indicates very clearly to me that that organisation, as we now know it, will be completely demolished. I do not know whether that is desirable. A person should not burn down his house until he is sure he has somewhere else to go. I wonder if we are doing that in this instance.

A tremendous amount of loan money is required for the expansion of the electricity industry. Unlike other bodies throughout the State, the S.E.A. over a number of years has been responsible for raising its own loan funds. I am not suggesting that it is the only body with the capacity to do that, but it has been most effective in this field. I compliment it on its record.

I have some details to support those remarks which I believe I should place on record. Since 1960 S.E.A. has raised 28 loans, 20 of which were fully subscribed by the public, 14 of them closing early. Since 1970, 10 loans have been floated, eight being fully subscribed by the public. Only last week it floated a comparatively small loan of $700,000—and the issue was oversubscribed in five days. That record is unmatched by any other Queensland organisation. I do not suggest that it is the only group with the capacity to raise money, but it has raised money very efficiently over a long period. I should like to think that, in the final analysis, people who work for S.E.A. will be considered for engagement somewhere within the commission. They have expertise which can be used to the advantage of the people of Queensland.

Other facets of the Bill concern me when I think of the S.E.A. They are especially important to me because I reside in an S.E.A. area. People on the regional boards must have the capacity to make a reasonable contribution. Beyond doubt we are considering a very big industry. Last year S.E.A.'s revenue was $162,000,000. I fear that if we are not very careful in selecting personnel, things could well go wrong. In those circumstances all consumers will suffer greatly.

Equalisation and tariff proposals can be administered adequately by the commission. I am sure that they will be. These matters have been canvassed at length tonight.

In the future, if the proposals in the Bill are recognised as successful—and I hope that they will be—I believe that the commissioner will be acclaimed. But if there are any shortfalls or failings, the Minister in charge, and we as members of Parliament who have supported the Bill, will be severely chastised.

I now wish to refer to subclause 3 of clause 9 on page 13 of the Bill, which states that for all the purposes of this Act and of any other Act the commission represents the Crown and has and may exercise all the powers, privileges, rights and remedies of the Crown. I do not intend to take anything away from the commissioner, who is charged with this tremendously responsible task. He must have authority to do the things for which we will hold him responsible. But there are some dangers in this clause if the commissioner's judgment should be at fault. I hope it will not be, but all great men make mistakes. Should he fail, the Minister or Governor in Council may not have the power to remedy the situation. I should appreciate replies from the Minister, particularly in relation to my query concerning that provision in the Bill.

Dr. LOCKWOOD (Toowoomba North) (11.25 p.m.): In rising to take part in this second-reading debate on the Electricity Bill, I would like to comment briefly on the division tonight and the great delay that led up to it. That, I believe, was caused by Labor aldermen running round Brisbane to see if they could improve on the 24,000 signatories to their petition. I believe that at the time this debate was proceeding they were scouring the pubs and clubs of Brisbane to see if they could get any more support. Of course, they were unable to do that. They obtained only about 25,000 supporters in all of Brisbane, which I think shows how popular the Labor Party is and how popular some of its trumped-up issues are.

I think most of the people of Brisbane can see through them, and I urge them to pay particular attention to the summing-up of the situation about the Labor council by the honourable member for Belmont. Labor aldermen have had four years to plan for this evening. After four years' planning, they decided to launch their petition today. In that four years they have been very cunningly allowing their assets to deteriorate.

As the honourable member said, in the southern and south-western parts of Brisbane, work on electrical installations is urgently needed.

Whereas the Labor members made a big show by dividing the House on their amendment, probably none of them will oppose the Bill in the final vote. If they care to, they can call for a division then and have recorded in "Hansard" just where they stand on this Bill. People all over Queensland——

Mr. Houston: We will show there are fewer of you here; that's what we'll do.

Dr. LOCKWOOD: The Opposition will be able to see if they can get a few more than their 11. I was wondering whether the honourable member for Rockhampton was trying to make good his alley for a safe Brisbane Labor seat.

This Bill is necessary because, throughout the State of Queensland, householders have been subjected to vastly differing charges for electricity. I well recall that when I was in Dirranbandi I was paying six times the Brisbane average for my electricity. In each reading period, I started from scratch on five different meters—commercial light, commercial power, domestic light, domestic power and hot water system. As a single man in Dirranbandi, my hot water cost me 30s. a week. That was for a shower each morning, a shave, and washing the few odds and ends of laundry that I had. It is for such reasons that this Bill became necessary.

Tremendous charges were levied against people throughout the State when we had small generating authorities. Later, they were connected to distributing authorities, some of which are outside the State. The Balonne Shire still gets electricity from the North-West County Councils in New South Wales. I hope that at a later date those places on the border will not be placed at a disadvantage by having to continue buying electricity from across the border.

The people of Queensland will remember that the Opposition members made a great hue and cry about the power supply in Karumba. For them it was a convenient issue on which to raise a bit of bally-hoo to gain some Press publicity. However, this evening they dared to move an amendment not for the people of Karumba, but for the people of Brisbane. I believe that this Bill will set about rectifying all the problems of those people who are supplied by isolated generating plants, whether they be operated by authorities or private individuals.

The Brisbane City Council has been making a profit from the sale of electricity to Brisbane consumers. Whenever a housewife, particularly during the past four years, has used hot water and her washing machine to wash clothes for herself and her family, right down to the baby in nappies, she has had to pay excess electricity charges and in this way has bolstered the profit, which has been used by the Brisbane City Council to offset its bus losses. Paraplegics in wheelchairs who cannot even get on a Brisbane City Council bus, but who use a stove to cook, use hot water, or turn on their television sets, are also contributing funds to meet the council's transport losses. That can be said also of people confined to bed, with their arms and legs in plaster and splints, who look at a television set screwed onto the wall or the ceiling and never use a council bus from one year to another. When industry uses electricity in Brisbane, it, too, has been paying for the Brisbane City Council buses, whether employees travel on them or not. Council buses are not used for the transport of goods to and from factories, but industry has been subjected to this rip-off. It has been paying more than its fair share and the council has been sticking the money into its coffers to run its buses. The council is now crying because it is losing this hidden bolster—this means of deficit funding of other areas of council expenditure. It has been doing this at the expense of the consumers. The people in convalescent homes are paying for buses, whether they can use them or not. So are the people in Archerfield when they pay their electricity bills. And I do not think that the honourable member for Archerfield has council buses running all round his electorate. The people of Wynnum and Manly have no council buses, yet they are subsidising them.

The cheapest future electricity for Brisbane depends on having all Brisbane members, Labor members included, backing this Bill. If they do not and they go their own sweet way, they will soon reap the folly of allowing the installations to run down. They will soon have to commit themselves to massive capital expenditure and will find then that the people of Brisbane will be bleating to have their local members of Parliament and their aldermen back this Bill.

The Bill contains provision for the Government to intervene where authorities fail to agree on how they are to reticulate electricity.

It is an excellent Bill and will seek to increase safety throughout the State not only of linesmen with the authorities and of tradesmen working with power and power tools, but also of home owners themselves. It is interesting to note that all accidents are to be reported and that any attempt to suppress informaion will be dealt with severely.

The Bill provides for better inspections, if only on the ground that week-end tradesmen, whether private contractors or not, will be encouraged to submit all work cards to the authorities for processing. All circuits will be tested. There will be provision that a report has to be submitted to the owner and a duplicate to the electric authority when any alterations are to be connected to power. This requirement has been lacking. People have been getting work done on the cheap by someone who perhaps is a qualified tradesman and has passed out of the trade. The best of us can make a mistake and the work

should be tested. If this work is done at week-ends when people are tired or is done in poor light, there can be a mistake.

There has been concern in Toowoomba that there may be a differential price as between the south-east zone, which runs as far west as the foothills of the range and includes Gatton, and the south-west zone which includes Toowoomba and the western districts. The Minister has assured us that there will be no price differential and he has likewise assured us that there will be no immediate price rise to the consumers in Toowoomba.

Toowoomba has sought a guarantee that off-peak power will be available at cheap rates not only for street lighting but for the very essential service of filtering water and pumping it uphill to Toowoomba. At present approximately $330,000 per annum is paid for off-peak power. No matter where it is generated or how it gets to Toowoomba, it still needs to be provided at off-peak rates in order that our city can use this great amount of power to pump water uphill from the Perseverance Dam to the Pechey gravitational reservoir.

There is also provision in the Bill, which should please honourable members opposite, for an environmental impact study. I do not know whether any Opposition members are interested in this aspect of the Bill. They have "gone off" about environmental impact studies on all sorts of things. They might care to tell the Minister when they speak on the Bill just what they think about it. I think it is a great idea, particularly its reference to radio and television reception in and around towns. Reception can be affected by high-tension transformers and by high-tension lines passing round towns and suburbs.

In particular, I should like an investigation to see if high-tension wires near highways could be relocated or if other means could be found of suppressing their interference with radio and television reception. On many highways in this State, motorists travel for mile after mile beside high-tension wires, with consequent interference to reception on car radios.

This is a major Bill. It will radically affect the generating authorities. The honourable member for Wolston is perhaps terrified of the effect that it will have on coal miners when the whole of the State is in one vast net. But there will be other beneficial effects. If there is another disastrous flooding of mines, power can be produced by coal from other mines. It is also true that if there is a localised dispute, the people will not suffer. There will not be the problem of hauling coal to Brisbane every year to stockpile enough of it.

Mr. Wright: Do you recommend the N.E.A.T. scheme for retraining?

Dr. LOCKWOOD: For coal miners?

Mr. Wright: For anybody.

Dr. LOCKWOOD: I think coal miners should stick to coal-mining. If there is no work for them in their areas, they might have to do as some graziers do—go half way across the State to seek another job. There will be coal-mining jobs in this State and they will be available only to coal miners. If there is a need to shift from the coal-fields of the Moreton district, I am in favour of encouraging and assisting miners to move to new mines.

Mr. LESTER (Belyando) (11.39 p.m.): I came to the House tonight knowing full well that nearly all the people of Belyando are 100 per cent behind this Bill. Its main aim is to give country people a fair deal in view of the fact that their costs are high and they produce some 90 per cent of the State's food and contribute very much to its economy.

Mr. Wright: What does Belyando produce?

Mr. LESTER: Let us not start to get parochial. Belyando, with its grain, coal, cattle, timber, kangaroos, and various other products probably contributes more to this State than any other electorate. In fact, if I speak about the electorate of Belyando, I have every right to do so because I have jolly good people there——

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will return to the principles of the Bill. He will deal with the Bill before we worry about Belyando.

Mr. LESTER: The main benefit of this Bill to the people of Brisbane is that eventually they are going to have cheaper power. Quite simply, if we do not go ahead with this Bill and things are left the way they are, eventually the people of Brisbane will find that because of rising generating costs they will have to pay a lot more for power in the not too distant future. The generating stations down here will not be able to compete with the cheap power generated in Central Queensland.

In Gladstone we have one of the most modern generating stations in the world. It will eventually be able to generate a great deal of cheap power, using very cheap coal supplied from Blackwater. Let us get things into perspective. The Government pays nothing more for this coal than handling costs and bulk-freight rates. This occurs simply because in its wisdom the Government made an agreement with Utah that the steaming coal which was overburden and which had to be mined before the coking coal could be mined was not to be stockpiled but was to be given to the Government on the payment of handling costs only. That is why the people of Brisbane will benefit from this scheme we are bringing in and which is paid for by the cheap coal mined in the Blackwater area. In that way the people of Belyando are helping the people of Brisbane to eventually have cheap power.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. LESTER: Honourable members opposite cannot argue with me; they know very well that I am right. It would be a good idea if they sat down and listened to me. It amazes me to think that the Leader of the Opposition is in Maryborough tonight trying to tell the people there what a wonderful person he is and what a wonderful deal he is trying to do for country people—at a time when his colleagues in the Labor Party are down here trying to kick the country people fair in the guts. Honourable members opposite cannot deny it. They should not try starting to argue with me tonight. I am in pretty good form and I will take them on either inside or outside the House. It would not worry me very much.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. LESTER: If honourable members opposite had not continued to interject, I would have finished what I had to say by now and everybody could have gone home a little earlier. With their behaviour, they are holding up the proceedings of the House.

There has been some speculation about the big companies operating in Queensland paying the same for power as the private consumer. If ever I have heard a lot of undiluted, unadulterated garbage, that is it. Let us be realistic. If we did not give the big companies lower rates, they would not remain in Queensland; they would go to other places where they can get cheap power.

Mr. Jones interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! If the honourable member for Cairns is going to interject, he should return to his own seat.

Mr. LESTER: Queensland has already lost some of its major industries because they can get cheaper power from hydroelectric schemes in Tasmania and New Zealand. So the people who are suggesting that these companies should pay a uniform tariff are not very good business people. The members of the Brisbane City Council are particularly naive business people. I have never heard the like.

Opposition members do not know what they are talking about when they get up and start talking about referendums, cheaper power and what we are trying to do to make the people of Brisbane pay more for power. They cannot see past their nose, and I might say that some of their noses are not very long. I cannot work them out. They have no brains whatever. They are not really interested in the long-term future of the people of Brisbane; all they are interested in is the short-term benefit. They think the issue is a political vote-catcher and this goes for the Liberals as well as the Labor members. If they have not enough brains to work out the consequences of what they are seeking, they are going to get a blast from me, because they are not sticking up for the people of Brisbane. They are interested only in short-term benefits and they could not care less about the people of Brisbane.

Mr. MILLER (Ithaca) (11.45 p.m.): I have considered the introduction of the Bill long and hard and whether or not it does the right thing by the people of Brisbane. Each and every member of this Assembly comes into the Chamber to represent the electors in a thorough and proper manner, and in the five weeks since the introduction of the Bill I have not been able to obtain any information to indicate to me that what is proposed will not benefit the people of Brisbane in the long term. I firmly believe that, in the long term, the Bill will benefit them.

I have to consider, also, whether the people of Brisbane are any different from the people of Townsville, Cairns, Mackay, Rockhampton or Wide Bay. I do not believe they are. The Minister has said that the people of Cairns are quite happy to subsidise the people living in western areas, in Cooktown, on the Tablelands and in the areas surrounding Cairns.

Mr. Jones: We have been doing it for years.

Mr. MILLER: I agree with the honourable member.

Mr. Jones: We have been doing it since 1931.

Mr. MILLER: I accept the honourable member's interjection. They have been doing it since 1931, and I take my hat off to the people of Cairns for recognising as long ago as that the problems faced by country people.

The people of Townsville are subsidising the people in the Far West, as far out as Winton. All the country areas around Mackay—Proserpine, Nebo and Carmila—are being subsidised by the people of Mackay. The people of the Central West are being subsidised by the people of Rockhampton and Wide Bay.

Are the people of Brisbane any different from the people living in these towns and cities? I do not think that they are. Are members of the Opposition or any other honourable members in this Chamber going to tell me that the people of the inner city electorates of Brisbane will object to paying a little more so that there can be an equalisation of power costs in South-east Queensland? Do they believe, for instance, that people at Strathpine should be paying 6 per cent or 8 per cent more than people at Bald Hills? Do they believe that people at Woodridge, just south of the city, should be paying 6 per cent or 8 per cent more than people at Wynnum?

The present situation is farcical. It has developed because of the huge monstrosity that has been built up in this city—the Brisbane City Council. That is where it all began. That monstrosity does not wish to lose any of the power it has had over the years, and I can understand that. However, surely we, as legislators, have to look at this from a long-term point of view, and I see benefits for the people of Brisbane in the long term.

What is it costing at present to have coal delivered to the bunkers at Swanbank from West Moreton? $18 a tonne!

Mr. Lester: Scandalous!

Mr. MILLER: Of course it is scandalous, when one considers that it is costing only $6.50 a tonne to have coal delivered to the bunkers at Gladstone.

What is going to happen every year unless inflation is overcome and unless wages are controlled? There must be an increase in the differential between coal from the West Moreton field and coal from Central Queensland. It has been said already that the cost of coal from Central Queensland is only the cost of storing it and delivering it to the bunkers. On the other hand, at West Moreton the miners have to be paid to work underground and bring the coal to the surface before it is delivered to the bunkers. We could never ever hope to get coal from West Moreton for the same price as that for coal from Central Queensland. I have no doubt whatsoever that unless we get on the grid to Central Queensland the cost of electricity must increase sharply in Brisbane each year. I believe that, and the city council itself believes it.

To illustrate that point, I refer to the spate of propaganda that the Brisbane City Council circulated with its electricity accounts.

The second paragraph states—

"Furthermore:—

> Do you know that because of Bulk Supply increases, the retail tariffs in Brisbane compared to Sydney and Melbourne, over the last 5 years will rise to:—
>
> Brisbane 76% Sydney 39% Melbourne 35%"

I suppose that it should have read "has risen to." Why it said, "will rise to" I do not know, because it is referring to the last five years. The council has admitted that because of the bulk prices of electricity in Brisbane the prices have increased in Brisbane by 76 per cent compared with 39 per cent in Sydney and 35 per cent in Melbourne.

The coal-fields around Melbourne are owned by the electricity authority. The same applies to Sydney. But what have we got in Brisbane? The electricity authority in Brisbane has to buy its coal from the West Moreton field at $18 a tonne. No wonder the price has gone up 76 per cent in five years, and yet the council is saying to the people of Brisbane, "Don't let's change this." In its own words it has told the people of Brisbane what has been the extra cost over the last five years, and yet it is prepared to allow the situation to continue. It could not bring coal down from Central Queensland any cheaper than it can buy it from West Moreton, so the problem is the same. The only way we can get cheap electricity in the long run is to get on a grid system supplied by a huge electricity-producing plant. Everybody knows that the bigger the plant the cheaper it is to produce the unit. We have seen it down South, and we will see it in Queensland once we get the huge power plants to produce electricity.

What is this all going to mean? What is all this propaganda about? To the people of Brisbane it could mean a 1 per cent increase per year, as long as the price in Brisbane does not increase because of coal costs. If the price of coal from West Moreton remains as it is now, we could have a 1 per cent increase —$1 in every $100—in our electricity costs over 13 years to ensure that some sort of sanity prevails in the price of electricity.

Let me quote a few figures of estimated costs per kW/h after uniformity of tariffs has been attained. In the Brisbane City Council area people will be paying 3.74c per kW/h, or an increase of 0.41c.

Mr. Houston: Who provided those figures?

Mr. MILLER: These figures were supplied to me by the department. That 0.41c increase is over a period of at least 12 years and could be as long as 15 years. That is how long it is going to take to equalise the cost of electricity. It is not going to be equalised in 12 months. Even the city council knows that.

Mr. Houston: It doesn't say that in the Bill at all. It could do it in 12 months if it wanted to.

Mr. MILLER: For the information of the honourable member, I shall read the first paragraph of the Brisbane City Council propaganda that was enclosed with his electricity bill just as it was enclosed with mine. The first paragraph states—

> "The enclosed account could, over a period, rise to about 13.5 per cent greater if the present plan is adopted by the State Government."

The council realised it was not going to be in 12 months but over a period of time. The Brisbane City Council is quite aware that it could be between 10 and 15 years.

Mr. Houston: There is nothing in the Bill to say that. They were told that by the department or the Minister.

Mr. MILLER: The honourable member admits that the city council knows. And because the city council knows, the honourable member also knows.

Mr. Houston: I know what the Minister said but there is nothing in the Bill to confirm that.

Mr. MILLER: We have an assurance from the Minister.

Mr. Houston: You had an assurance from the Minister for Police, but you changed him.

Mr. MILLER: I am quite happy to accept the Minister's word that equalisation will take place over 12 to 15 years.

Mr. Houston: You can sack your Minister.

Mr. MILLER: The honourable member should consider what is to take place. I have already pointed out what Brisbane City Council consumers will be paying under equalisation. People living in the S.E.A. area will be paying 3.67c; people in Wide Bay-Burnett R.E.B. area will pay 3.83c; people in the Capricornia R.E.B. area will pay 3.42c; people in the three northern regional electricity board areas will pay 3.81c; people living in the Dalby Town Council area will pay 4.13c; people living in the Roma Town Council area and in the North-western Electric Authority area will pay 4.32c; those living in the Balonne Shire Council area will pay 4.86c; those living in the Central Western R.E.B. area and the small western authority areas will pay 5.12c per kw hour. That is what people will pay for electricity after rationalisation.

The story being pedalled in Brisbane is that the people of Brisbane will be paying to equalise costs throughout the State, but the figures I have quoted prove that there will be variations between the areas. I do not believe that the uniformity which the Brisbane City Council is suggesting will be achieved can in fact be achieved.

I shall now deal with the referendum that the Brisbane City Council is urging people to seek.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I draw the honourable member's attention to the fact that there is nothing in the Bill about a referendum. It is only supposition at this stage.

Mr. Houston: You would have voted against the referendum.

Mr. MILLER: Although the Brisbane City Council has put copies of its petition in every alderman's office, I will not refer to the referendum. The Liberal alderman for my area had quite a lot of them delivered to his office today. At 4.40 p.m. today I received a telephone call from my secretary informing me that my alderman had answered four telephone calls from people about the petition and that 14 people came in to sign the petition asking this Government not to proceed with the Bill we are discussing tonight. Mr. Speaker, you may well rule that we must not discuss the referendum, but it was hoped that it would prevent us from proceeding with the Bill.

I listen to people in my electorate. On one occasion I asked the House to change shopping hours because 80 per cent of my electors wanted them changed. On this occasion, after five weeks of propaganda from the Brisbane City Council, my alderman informed me that he had received four phone calls and 14 signatures relative to the petition circulated by the Brisbane City Council to prevent the Government from proceeding.

Does the Brisbane City Council want uniformity? I say that the Lord Mayor wants uniformity, although he may not want it the way we intend to achieve it. He is quite happy with uniformity, although he has not told the people of Brisbane so. Has the Lord Mayor ever told the people of Brisbane that he agrees to uniformity? Never, to my knowledge! In all this propaganda I have before me not once has he mentioned a fact that he included in the letter he wrote to every mayor. It is my intention tonight to quote from that letter.

Mr. Marginson: Surely you are not going into that one.

Mr. MILLER: I intend to quote only two paragraphs, but I want it recorded that the Lord Mayor——

Mr. Wright: Take it as read.

Mr. MILLER: If the Opposition is prepared to have this letter included in "Hansard", I am willing to sit down.

Mr. Wright: I'll move that.

Mr. MILLER: Does the House give me leave, Mr. Speaker?

(Leave granted.)

"Lord Mayor's Office,
"Brisbane, 10th September, 1976.

"Alderman Sir Bruce Small, M.L.A.,
"Mayor of the Gold Coast,
" 'Wanamara',
"Isle of Capri, Qld. 4217.

"My dear Mayor,

"I am writing personally to all Mayors and Chairmen regarding current proposals by the State Government to reorganise the electricity industry. Over the years, I have had a very warm relationship with many of you and feel that our common interests allow me to write to you on this basis, particularly in view of the favourable judgement handed down by the Industrial Court only yesterday.

"There are many aspects of these proposals which affect the community of Queenslanders as a whole. However, at this stage, I am writing to you to draw attention to just a few of the more glaring aspects which cause me concern for the continuing role which Local Government will be allowed to play in 'grass roots' matters.

"Price Equalisation

"Firstly, the stated aim of the reorganisation has been to equalise electricity prices throughout the State. I agree with this principle, but am concerned at the way it is to be implemented. Other ways of doing this are acceptable, viz.—

1. Up to 20 per cent of all Queensland electricity revenue is used to pay for capital works. Additional loan funds should be obtained for this as is done in other States. The saving would greatly reduce all electricity prices and help subsidise country tariffs.

2. Any subsidy should be drawn from general funds, and electricity users should not be singled out for penal treatment.

3. We in the coal state should have cheaper coal, e.g. through reimbursement of the export coal levy to the electricity industry.

"Community responsibility

"As community leaders we share a responsibility not only to identify the needs of the community, but also to protect and serve those needs. In fulfilling this dual role surely central direction is unnecessary because it is the local government representative who best knows the local conditions and requirements.

"In these days it is recognised at all levels of government that local government, due to its intimate knowledge, should play an ever-increasing and more effective role in an independent way. There is no doubt that local government can provide many functions better than a centralised, bureaucratic and impersonal Brisbane-based authority.

"My Council has demonstrated over the years that local government can control electricity distribution efficiently. Indeed, the Industrial Court judgement on electricity prices to Brisbane substantiates this.

"For these reasons, I am sure that you will be vehemently opposed to this legislation which proposes to reduce accountability to the people by transferring decision-making powers on local issues from elected representatives to a remote and isolated Authority.

"Legislation

"In conclusion, I would strongly urge you to obtain quickly a copy of the legislation being discussed by the government parties. You will then be able to assess the effect of these changes on the people you represent and then exercise your influence with your State representative to obtain the best local control of the electricity industry in your area.

"Yours sincerely,
"Frank Sleeman,
Lord Mayor."

Mr. MILLER: I thank the House.

An Opposition Member: You said you'd sit down if it was included in "Hansard".

Mr. MILLER: If the honourable member wants me to sit down, I will. As the Opposition has agreed to allow this letter to be included in "Hansard", the people of Brisbane will know the true belief of the Lord Mayor of Brisbane; so I will rest my case at that.

[Friday, 12 November 1976]

Mr. LAMONT (South Brisbane) (12.1 a.m.): I am not going to waste the time of the House by going through all the arguments that I went through at the introductory stage.

Mr. Wright: Thank goodness for that. You're not allowed to.

Mr. LAMONT: That is an interesting comment, because the member for Flinders did. He gave us a summer rerun of the same speech he has been giving all the year whenever city versus country interests arise.

What does concern me is simply this. Those of us in the metropolitan area, whether we be Liberal, Labor or National Party, who have had reservations about these measures did not come in at the introductory stage and attack the Minister willy-nilly just for the sake of appearing to our electorate to be concerned about something that we really did not care about. Anybody who looks at that debate will find that a large number of us from all parties did a considerable amount of research. We approached aldermen. We approached shire councillors. We talked to economists. At that time I said that I thought there might be a lot of merit in it but that I had grave reservations on certain matters.

I came in, in good faith, with graphs and statistics which I had been given by economists and which I believed to be right. I believed they raised serious doubts. In all good faith, I asked the Minister to dispel those doubts. I am afraid that the Minister didn't bother to answer.

It comes back to the old question of why we are here. Should we just hand over to the Cabinet and say, "Run the State. We will send you a telegram now and again to let you know we are still alive."?

Mr. Houston: That's what the Bill is all about.

Mr. LAMONT: I do not need help from the former Labor leader.

Should we just hand over to the Cabinet and say, "Look, fellows, you go it alone. We will send you a telegram to let you know we are still alive, that there are no by-elections necessary, that you still have our vote and you can do what you like."? It seems that that is what happens, anyway. Or do we really go out and do some genuine, honest research and talk to people—talk to voters—look at statistics and study a bit of economics?

I was a history teacher when I came into Parliament. I am not an expert on electricity Bills. However, I did a lot of work to make the sort of speech I made at the introductory stage. I am not going to bore people with the details of it, but on re-reading it I am not ashamed of it. I asked a lot of questions in that speech. Whether cynically or carelessly or for some other reason, neither the Minister nor anyone in his department appeared to care to answer.

We still have a board that is going to take over all these functions. A board, as I have said before—and many of us have said—is not responsive, nor is it responsible, to elected representatives of the people. Sure, we have a change whereby the board will be directly under the control of the Minister—and he is elected by the people. But he is only elected by the people of Bowen. He is not elected by the people of South Brisbane, and that is what worries me. I would like to think that, just as the Brisbane City Council Electricity Department has been responsive to the people of Brisbane through the aldermen—such that when the people of Brisbane felt that something was wrong they could stick a pin into the nether end of an alderman and be sure that he would jump on the people administering the Electricity Department to keep it efficient—if there is going to be a change, those administering this supply, this utility, should be responsible to representatives of the people so that if the people did not like what was going on they could stick the proverbial pin into their local representatives and get results.

But there has been no change. We still have a nice anonymous, nicely insulated board, so that it cannot be reached by the people; so that no matter what it does it is not now going to be in the hands of elected representatives of the people at either local or State level to have changes brought about.

I was worried about that at the introductory stage. I expressed it as a reservation. It is not apparent that anyone cared two hoots about answering it. I wonder whether in fact I wasted my time then doing all the research and saying that in Parliament. And I am probably wasting my time and whistling in the wind saying it now. But we must keep trying because, even as constant dripping of water wears away the stone, we might one day get some response.

I also suggested that if we want to talk about rationalisation and 15 per cent changes, let us not talk about its being over 15 years at 1 per cent per year. If there is going to be a change of 15 per cent let us be honest and say so. As I have said before, if we are going to poison someone, let us say so. It is no comfort to say that it will only be done cup by cup, year by year, if the end result is the same.

I have to use this language because I have had no response from the Minister to tell me that I am wrong. It was a reservation the last time I said this. What can I suspect now when I have had no evidence from the supposed authorities to tell me that what I suspected before was not true? I am not really at the moment talking about the problems of electricity rationalisation; I am talking about the fundamental problem of representative government. We are either representatives of the people and can get up in an introductory debate and express reservations and ask questions and expect the Minister and his department to supply answers or we cannot. If we cannot, we have not a representative government.

We were told by the Minister then and now that there is a tremendous advantage to people living in a high-density metropolitan area and that it is unfair of us to think that, just because we are clustered together in the south-east corner, we should get something cheaper. Of course we put up with a lot of other inconveniences by virtue of living in these areas.

We were also told that, because we have this better supply owing to the higher-density population and because we have this cheaper supply, for some reason or other we have to subsidise the people in country areas, who have not got this advantage. They do not subsidise us for breathing polluted air or for sitting in traffic jams for half an hour at a time on the way to work. We can go through all of these arguments every time we talk country versus city if we want to and we are still avoiding the major issue.

On this question of population density, the Minister implied that Brisbane consumers received a disproportionate advantage or benefit from electricity rates as the result of a highly efficient operation at Gladstone and I simply asked whether it was possible that it was the high density and high consumption of this area that made the Gladstone effort for the remainder of the S.E.A. area a bit cheaper for everyone else. That has not been answered either but it is equally economically feasible that it is so.

We have also been told that the board will be more efficient than the Brisbane City Council. I had statistics and graphs which I studied and they seemed to me to show reasonably by comparison—for example with Sydney, where density is far greater but the electricity supplied is not cheaper—that it might well be that for some reason or other the Brisbane City Council had hit on a method of supply (and I really believe it had) whereby Brisbane people were getting an advantage from administrative arrangements in Brisbane which were not operating in Sydney and Melbourne and which have not been operating throughout the whole S.E.A. area. I asked whether in fact I had been duped by figures or whether I had interpreted the position correctly. If so, I asked whether some allowance or adjustment for it could be made in the Bill. That has not been answered, either.

We were also told that at peak hours we could have black-outs throughout the metropolitan area if we do not go for this deal.

I produced a graph which showed that at peak hours in the Brisbane area the glut of consumption did not peak as high as for the rest of the State. This again showed that apparently the supply of electricity in the Brisbane metropolitan area by the Brisbane City Council was more efficient and therefore cheaper because Brisbane aldermen had been pushed by the people of Brisbane to ensure a more streamlined system. Graphs of that type do not lie. Peaks of electricity consumption can be drawn and if one peak for Brisbane is not as sharp as the peak for the rest of the Southern Electric Authority region, it clearly means that the Brisbane supply is more efficient. I therefore asked why the supply is more efficient at peak hours in Brisbane than in the rest of the Southern Electric Authority area. Nobody from the Minister's department even attempted to give me the answer. Naturally I remained suspicious.

Now I come to the question of oversupply. Again graphs show that at the moment there is a use of about 76 per cent of the electricity generated, which means that an oversupply of about 24 per cent is available. So much for the story about black-outs at peak hours. But when we look at the projected generation of electricity as against projected consumption, we find that the projected generation doubles but the projected consumption does not double. (Even if it did, that would mean a surplus double the present surplus in absolute terms.) But, in fact, the projected consumption does not rise to double the present amount. The true picture is that the surplus will increase from about 24 per cent to 45 per cent. Why all this surplus at this time and how much of it will Brisbane costs cover?

I asked this question once and I ask it again: Is the basic reason for the proposed legislation the financing of the very high capital cost of redemption charges attributable to a very large and premature investment in generating capacity? Hopefully, tonight the Minister will, in his reply, answer that question. Is it premature? Is it a very high oversurplus? If so, is it going to be a weight on the Brisbane consumer?

I believe that the Brisbane metropolitan demand will fall from the present 37 per cent of the Southern Electric Authority regional supply to 27.8 per cent usage. That then compounds further the amount that the Brisbane consumer will have to pay for his supply of electricity proportional to other people in the State. I should like to know whether that is true or false. I should be grateful if the Minister would even now give the answer to this question.

I have also asked why an additional subsidy cannot be made available. I have said before that I am not against subsidising certain facilities in country areas. Why cannot this subsidy come out of Consolidated Revenue, like fertiliser and dairy subsidies?

Mr. Marginson: We have said that six times tonight.

Mr. LAMONT: Yes, I know that the good gentlemen opposite have asked for this. I, too, have asked for it, but I have not been given an answer. It is no good the Minister's saying that it is being taken from the taxpayers. Taking it from the Brisbane electricity consumers is not the same as taking it from the taxpayers. I know that the Brisbane electricity consumers are taxpayers but that small group does not equate with the taxpayers throughout the State, as would be the case if a subsidy were taken from Consolidated Revenue. The Government cannot perpetrate the fallacy that the part equals the whole. It simply does not; that is the fallacy.

So with all those reservations I came into the Chamber last time armed with statistics, graphs and figures that I do not intend to go through tonight; they are all on record, anyway. Hopeful and bright-eyed I came in with a lot of research, having discussed the matter with economists, aldermen, consumers and constituents and I asked a series of questions seeking answers, doubtful that really all the glorious claims that were being made by the department were in fact correct and doubtful that my constituents in South Brisbane were really going to be better off.

But trusting in the Minister I said, "It may well be that the figures I have looked at are wrong or that my interpretation is incorrect. It may well be so. Please explain how this happens, or is it not so?" But I have had no answers.

I am concerned that we will be going in for an unwarranted oversupply. I am concerned that there will be a quadrupling in absolute terms in the oversupply of generated electricity over demand. I do not know if in fact we are being asked to pay for a very premature oversupply. I asked the question a month ago, and I ask the question again, and I do say, Mr. Speaker, in all honesty, that one wonders whether a representative of the people in this House can rise and ask certain questions and voice reservations and have them answered the way representative government is supposed to function. It would seem to me that a cynical ignoring of these questions is not really the way Parliament is meant to operate at all.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (12.18 a.m.), in reply: I thank various members for their contributions. At the outset might I make it clear that the Government is not taking over from the Brisbane City Council the distribution of electricity. It is another constituted body of local authority representatives from this region that will be in charge of the distribution of electricity in South-east Queensland.

Mr. Houston: You have the power to veto them.

Mr. CAMM: The Government has had the power to veto ever since the electricity supply industry came into existence. The honourable member talks about the Minister having the power of veto. He says that the Minister is the Governor in Council. That shows how ignorant he is of parliamentary and governmental procedures. The Governor in Council is the whole Cabinet with the Governor in charge, not an individual Minister. The honourable member spoke about the Governor in Council having the privilege of overriding decisions of electricity boards. The Governor in Council can sack an entire local authority if it thinks that that local authority is not carrying out its constitutional duty. The honourable member should not come in here displaying his ignorance by trying to make capital out of that point.

Mr. Houston: I will make more capital out of it, too, the way you treat the people of Brisbane.

Mr. CAMM: I think the people of Brisbane are very well treated by this Bill.

Mr. Houston interjected.

Mr. CAMM: The honourable member talks about the line losses from Gladstone. These were taken into consideration when a decision was made to locate the power station there, in close proximity to cheap coal and abundant water in the Pacific Ocean for cooling facilities.

Mr. Lane: The Leader of the Opposition has come out of hiding again.

Mr. Houston interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Bulimba will cease interjecting.

Mr. CAMM: Quite a few members, including the honourable member for Fassifern, have queried the power of the commissioner. Honourable members should look at clause 8 of the Bill, which states—

> "Subject to the Minister, the Commission shall administer this Act."

That gives the Minister, through the Governor in Council, power over any actions of the commissioner.

Some honourable members indicated that there was a desire on their part to have union representation on the distributing board. That proposition has been examined very closely, and when one realises that representation is dominated by local authority representatives—five to three—one can readily see that some of those five members of local authorities could also be representatives of the trade union movement. If the distributing board is to be enlarged by the inclusion of union representatives, why not include representatives of industry and consumers? They should be entitled to have a representative on the distributing board if that privilege is to be given to the unions.

It is believed that a cross-section of the community can be represented on the distributing boards through the appointment of elected representatives from local authorities. Of course, the local authorities will be grouped and there could be one representative from two or three local authorities. That is common to all the distributing boards in Queensland at present. Not every local authority can hope to have a representative on a distributing board when there are seven distributing boards and 130 local authorities. Some of the local authorities will have to be grouped and elect one representative.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition commented that the Minister had too much power. I do not know of a case in which the Minister has vetoed a decision of a regional board relative to the distribution of electricity. As I indicated earlier, the Government can even dismiss a local authority if it so desires.

The honourable member for Carnarvon has a sound knowledge of the Bill, and I thank him for his contribution. As a member of my committee, he was of great assistance to me during the drawing up of the Bill.

I shall now deal rather quickly with the contribution made by other honourable members. The honourable member for Warwick was in favour of having one generating authority. Apparently, he is worried about how the charges are to be equalised for people in outlying areas who need to have extensions to the electricity supply. The Bill does not take into consideration capital costs involved in the reticulation of electricity; it relates only to tariff charges. People in outlying areas will still be paying a far higher price for their electricity, because, although the tariff will be uniform, the capital costs of the extension will have to be met by the individual consumer.

Over the last few years the Government has gradually increased the subsidy available to people who need extensions, and it has also subsidised some of the small generating stations in western areas. I expect that, as time goes by, it will be in a position to increase the rate of subsidy so that eventually people in the far distant areas of the State will be able to enjoy the benefits of electricity.

One honourable member mentioned the power of the commissioner to fix charges for electricity, both from the generating board and from the distributing board. In the final analysis, someone has to be responsible for charges for the bulk supply of electricity. These charges can be challenged by a distributing authority through the Industrial Court, if it so desires, and the charges for the distribution—that is, the tariff charges—must be based on the actual cost of distributing electricity. The commissioner then has power to fix those charges after discussions with the distributing boards. However, he does not have any power to levy a

charge to bring about the equalisation of tariff charges. Any additional charge placed on the bulk supply in order to bring about equalisation must be fixed by the Minister—naturally on the basis of a Cabinet decision.

The honourable member for Warrego expressed concern about the capital charges involved in extensions in his area. He elaborated on the amount of money that had been contributed by the Government towards the capital costs and also on the subsidies granted towards the cost of fuel for the diesel-burning power stations.

The honourable member for Cunningham supported the Bill in principle. He, too, was concerned about the capital contribution necessary for further extensions in his area. I hope that as time goes on successive Governments will be in a position to gradually increase that subsidy towards extensions.

The honourable member for Belmont outlined the situation of the assets that are claimed by the Brisbane City Council. All we are doing is transferring from one authority to another the responsibility of administering the distribution in the Brisbane area. Naturally the assets belong to the people, whichever authority is administering the distribution. To take it to a ridiculous conclusion, it could be said that the people should be entitled to compensation when there is a change of Government. That would be quite ridiculous. I thank him for the information that the Brisbane City Council, because of this pending legislation, has been neglecting the maintenance of its power lines. It hopes it can save money in maintenance costs. It hopes it can save money on electricity distribution and use it for some other purpose. Of course, the incoming authority will have the responsibility of heavy maintenance costs.

The honourable member for Flinders has the advantage of the grid system. He outlined once again the advantages that flow to the south-east corner of Queensland through the productive capacity of the northern areas of the State.

The honourable member for Fassifern talked about local authority representation and the qualifications of some of the representatives. The main function of the distributing authority is that of a policy-making body for the distribution of electricity in its area. It is not necessary for its members to be expert electricians or electrical engineers. Within the distributing boards there will be two people who will be experts in their own particular field—whether they be engineers or economists. Who knows? Among the five representatives of local authorities there may be some people well versed in these activities. They all have the advantage of the knowledge of the commissioner himself. The implementation of the policy decisions made by the boards will be carried out by trained personnel and technicians under the control of a qualified manager whom they will appoint.

The honourable member for Fassifern was also worried about the fact that the commissioner will represent the Crown and carry out certain duties. He has to have that power, which is given to him by the Crown through the Minister. He will always be under the control of the Minister. I do not know of any occasion when any Minister has had to exercise control over a commissioner in charge of one of his departments. But that power is always there for the Minister or the Governor in Council to exercise, if necessary.

Other speakers, including the honourable members for Toowoomba North and Belyando, spoke in support of the Bill. The honourable member for Ithaca gave a very learned speech on the Bill itself and referred to the difference between prices in Central Queensland and South Queensland if there were no interconnection of power generation. Of course, there is. If there were none, the difference between generating costs would continue to widen. As there is a connection between South Queensland and the Gladstone Power Station, that occasion will not arise. The people in South-east Queensland will have the advantage of cheaper power from the Gladstone Power Station.

We do not consider that the Gladstone Power Station belongs to the people of Central Queensland or that the hydroelectric stations in North Queensland belong to the people in that locality. In the same vein, we do not feel that the people of Brisbane should be responsible for the high electricity charges that would result if they had to get electricity from the one source on the Moreton fields.

If Brisbane people desire to share in the advantages of cheap electricity generated in these stations it is quite reasonable to expect that the cheaper electricity resulting from density of population should be shared among all the people of Queensland.

The honourable member for South Brisbane dealt mainly with the duties of a member of Parliament in relation to Cabinet or Government decisions. In all the years that I have been here I have found that if a member attends his party and joint party meetings regularly he has an opportunity to express his views and take an active part in the formation of contemplated legislation. He said that he asked some questions that I had not replied to. I honestly felt that I had answered his questions. If I failed to do so, I am sorry.

He said that the Brisbane City Council must be more efficient because generating costs are far cheaper in Brisbane than in Sydney. I point out that Sydney is broken into about 10 small local authority areas. If power is cheaper in the aggregation of the city of Brisbane than it is in Sydney, where there are 10 local authority areas, will it not be far better for the people of South-east

Queensland to aggregate all the local authorities and have one major system covering the whole of South-east Queensland rather than only the Brisbane area? If, as a result of aggregation in Brisbane, electricity can be distributed cheaper than in Sydney the same axiom should apply and there will be cheaper electricity in South-east Queensland.

I do not remember mentioning the likelihood of blackouts in South-east Queensland if this Bill is not passed. I might have mentioned blackouts that occurred in the 1940's before we had a partial interconnection of our electricity generating system. There is no chance of blackouts if this Bill is not passed. There is ample generating capacity in this part of Queensland and, as I indicated, it is now connected to the Gladstone Power Station. I can only say in reply to the honourable member's suggestion that the Gladstone station was premature and resulted in an oversupply that we accept the advice of experts associated with the generating of electricity in Queensland—the people who advise the Government on the future needs of electricity in Queensland. If the Gladstone Power Station was premature, how is it that we have been advised to add two more units to that power station?

Mr. Moore: The Story Bridge was premature when it was built.

Mr. CAMM: That is so.

Everything can be classed as premature when it is built. Only one unit is operating in the Gladstone Power Station. Quite some years will pass before all the units come into operation. I remember that when I first became a Minister, and before Swanbank was completed, it was said that it was premature —that there was ample power. But at that time the Calcap station was already under way on the Callide field. Before the Calcap station was completed the Collinsville station was started. At that stage it could have been said that we had an oversupply of generating capacity, but that was not the end result.

Mr. Moore: You will never build them cheaper.

Mr. CAMM: They get more expensive every day. Before the other stations were completed we had started on Gladstone.

A suggestion has been made that we should contemplate building another station in South-east Queensland. A decision on that suggestion was held in abeyance and it then became necessary to build two further units at the Gladstone Power Station. I predict that before the Gladstone station is completed a decision will have to be made on the location of the next power station and that construction on it will be started. When electricity demand increases at the rate of 10 or 12 per cent each year and we have the prospect of inviting industry into a region, the Government has to decide which comes first. Industry cannot begin without power. If we do have power and a surplus is available, we might be able to encourage industry.

The honourable member indicated that he would like a subsidy paid to bring about uniform tariffs. If subsidies are to be used to bring about uniform tariffs in all our Government instrumentalities, let us start subsidising those areas of the railway system that are not profitable. We would then be able to pinpoint where the additional charges must be directed. That, too, is a Government instrumentality controlled by a commissioner. If a subsidy is necessary to bring about uniform electricity tariffs, then a subsidy must be applied to all the other Government instrumentalities. We believe that the railways are an industry and that they should work within that industry and their freight structure so that an advantage can be given to an area that needs it and assistance can be given to other areas. The same should apply to the electricity industry. It should be approached as an industry, and within it provision must be made for bringing disadvantaged areas up to the level of areas that have an advantage, whether it be proximity to a power station generating cheaper electricity or concentration of population facilitating lower distribution costs.

Motion (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 to 5, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 6—Interpretation—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (12.38 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 10, line 25, omit the word 'repairing,'."

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (12.39 a.m.): It is a bit late for the Minister to come in, after the Bill has been printed, and say that he is going to cut out a word. Surely we are entitled to know the reason for it. He did not even say what the definition was. The full definition reads—

" 'electrical installation work' means the actual physical work of installing, repairing, altering or adding to any electrical installation and the supervision of such work".

"Installing", I think, is quite obvious. "Altering" is obvious. What happens if there is a breakdown? Surely that calls for repair work. If it breaks down, it has to be repaired. Under the amendment repair work will not be regarded as "electrical installation work."

I think the Minister should give the Committee much greater detail. I can see unqualified people doing repairs to their own work or installation. If they are challenged they will say, "I am not doing electrical installation work at all." The definition as amended will say nothing at all about repairing. I cannot see that cutting the word

out adds anything to the definition. If it is left in, repair work will clearly come within electrical installation work.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (12.41 a.m.): I have foreshadowed another amendment to this clause. The reasons for these amendments, which are based on recommendations from the Electrical Workers and Contractors Board, are to more clearly define the functions of the electrical tradesmen, that is, electrical fitters and electrical mechanics.

Mr. Houston: But it is the electrical installation work that we are altering.

Mr. CAMM: Yes, but it is considered that the word "repairing" is redundant and that there is a full explanation without it.

Mr. Houston: That is their opinion. You thought that it was right when it was put put in there originally.

Mr. CAMM: Yes, but the Electrical Workers and Contractors Board said that it was redundant.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (12.42 a.m.): All I can say is that in regard to other things the Minister said earlier tonight, he has rejected the advice from that same organisation.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (12.42 a.m.): I move the following further amendment—

"On page 10, lines 35 and 36, omit the words—

'maintaining, repairing or connecting any electric line or'

and substitute the words—

'altering or adding to any electric line or electrical installation and of maintaining, repairing or connecting any'."

This will explain it further. The real distinction which is required is that the electrical fitter having served a full trade apprenticeship is qualified to carry out electrical fitting work and electrical work which involves repairs to an electrical installation. The electrical mechanic is the only tradesman entitled to perform electrical installation work. One does the installation work and the other one does not.

Mr. Houston: You are splitting hairs.

Mr. CAMM: I am not. One is an electrical fitter and one is an electrical mechanic.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The next foreshadowed amendment is to clause 18. Does any honourable member wish to speak to clauses 7 to 17?

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (12.43 a.m.): As you know, Mr. Hewitt, this is the first time that anyone in this Chamber apart from the Minister has seen these amendments. We are diving from page to page. I suggest that we be given a moment off to look at the implications and get the reactions of interested persons.

Clauses 7 to 17, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 18—Vacation of office—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (12.44 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 16, omit all words comprising lines 44, 45 and 46."

This also has reference to the suggested amendments of clauses 95 and 124. The paragraph which it is proposed to delete is too restrictive. It provides that the commissioner, a deputy commissioner, the secretary of the commission or the general manager of the generating board or of an electricity board vacates his office if he is directly engaged in any trade or business other than as a member of a company consisting of more than 20 persons. In present-day conditions, this provision is so restrictive as to be impractical. Clearly, all the officers concerned can be expected to give their full time to the position to which they are appointed, but this is covered in paragraph (a). To take the provision to its logical conclusion, it means that an officer to whom this provision applies is precluded from owning a block of flats, letting a holiday house or even helping his wife in a corner shop she owns for short periods at night or at week-ends. An obvious cause for concern would be if one of these officers used his position to profit from dealings either directly or indirectly with the commission or an electricity authority or legitimately contracted with one of these bodies (other than as an ordinary consumer) and did not disclose his interest. Surely this is misconduct sufficient for the Governor in Council to remove him from office pursuant to paragraph (g) and subclause (3).

Mr. Wright: But you are now saying it won't matter.

Mr. CAMM: We considered this clause and, on representations from people who could some day be appointed to boards in the positions of general manager, commissioner or deputy commissioner, we considered that it was too restrictive. They could not be appointed if they had any outside interest whatsoever.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (12.45 a.m.): The Minister referred to people other than the commissioner, deputy commissioner and secretary. He referred to general managers

and others. They are not referred to in this clause at all. The clause reads—

> "The Commissioner, a Deputy Commissioner or the secretary shall be deemed to have vacated his office . . ."

Surely that is all that the clause will cover. The commissioner is in effect the commission; he is the power and glory of virtually the whole set up. I can hardly agree that it would be wise for him in that office to be engaged in all these other activities. I do not think this type of provision has ever been applied if, for instance, a person's wife ran a corner store. I cannot imagine the present commissioner being tied up with his family in such a situation. I think the whole object is to ensure that there is no feeling or thought anywhere along the line that these people would be persuaded by some outside interest. Because I cannot see how these words would apply to anyone, I am not objecting to their removal.

But it is a different story in the case of other employees. I hope the Minister makes it very clear that the only ones we are talking about are the commissioner, a deputy commissioner or the secretary who are appointed as such.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (12.46 a.m.): I prefaced my remarks to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition by saying that this will refer to suggested amendments of clauses 94 and 95, which we will come to later. It refers to general managers of generating boards.

Mr. Houston: Later?

Mr. CAMM: Yes.

Mr. Houston: We will handle them separately?

Mr. CAMM: Yes. This clause requires that they do not directly engage in any other business activity.

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (12.47 a.m.): I take the Minister's point. He is talking about people owning flats. Surely they do not fall into the category to be admitted here. We are talking about a body corporate consisting of more than 20 persons. The average company in Australia employs only about 20 to 25 people, so we are talking about a major involvement. I accept that there is no need for a person to vacate his position if he is involved in activities that do not pertain to the electrical business. But surely if a person is involved in some way with electrical contracting, he has no right to hold such an office. The Minister said that he could be removed for some other reason. I quickly looked through page 17 and it seems to me that he could be removed only for misbehaviour or incapacity. If a person is involved with an electrical contracting firm, that certainly does not bring him into the category of incapacitated, and I cannot see how any person could honestly say that that would be misbehaviour. I accept that we do not want this provision to prevent a person from being involved in any trade or business, but surely there should be some restriction when it comes to a trade or business that relates to the electrical industry.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (12.48 a.m.): The honourable member will note all the references to the vacation of office. He will see that the clause reads—

> "(a) if, except with the prior approval of the Governor in Council, he directly or indirectly engages in any paid employment—
>
> (i) outside the duties of his office or of any additional office to which he is appointed by the Governor in Council; or
>
> (ii) outside the duties of any office to which he is appointed by virtue of his position of Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner or secretary, as the case may be;"

Clause 18 (b) reads—

> "if he directly or indirectly engages in any trade or business . . ."

Leasing of flats is a business. We feel that that clause is too restrictive in the appointment of a manager, secretary, commissioner, or even a member of a generating board. There would be no influence on the work of the commissioner and therefore it should not be there.

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (12.49 a.m.): I reiterate that no-one denies the point that the clause could in fact be too restrictive because it is wrong to say that a person should not be allowed to be involved in investment or some association with industry. But that is not answering the point we are making. Does the Minister contend here that it is all right for that person to be involved in an electrical contracting firm and still hold the office of commissioner, deputy commissioner or secretary?

Mr. Camm: No.

Mr. WRIGHT: How would you beat him?

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (12.50 a.m.): With the exception of the prior approval of the Governor in Council, if he directly or indirectly engages in any paid employment outside his office he can be dismissed. If he directly engages in any trade or business without the prior approval of the Governor in Council, except as a member of a body corporate consisting of more than 20 persons, which means he can have shares in an undertaking, he can be dismissed. So that precludes him from undertaking any electrical contracting work.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (12.51 a.m.): The point I want to make is somewhat similar to that being raised by the honourable member for Rockhampton and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I cannot find in the whole of this clause any provision for removal from office of a man who is incompetent to perform a job as the Minister wants him to do it. Remember, this is the commissioner, who is going to have tremendous powers. Clause 18 (3) states—

> "The Governor in Council may, for misbehaviour or incapacity appearing to him to be sufficient for so doing, remove the Commissioner, a Deputy Commissioner or the secretary from office."

The clause should be wider than that. There is a need for the Government of the day to be able to say to a commissioner, "We don't believe you are competent to handle this particular job." This is a job of major importance. In any other section of the industry, the boss will be able to say to an electrician or someone else, "We are not keeping you any more."

Mr. Lowes: Doesn't 18 (1) (g) cover that?

Mr. BURNS: I am talking about incompetence. I am talking about a man who is not capable of doing the job in an efficient manner.

Mr. Lane: It would have been helpful if you read the Bill beforehand.

Mr. BURNS: I have read it. Quite truthfully, we have all read the Bill on a number of occasions, and this is a point that has been raised with me by people involved in the electricity industry.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (12.53 a.m.): I can say that in practice I do not know of any occasion when a commissioner has been dismissed by a Government. Parliament could dismiss any commissioner if it so wished, but, in practice, if a Minister felt that the commissioner was not doing his job, he would write him an order requesting him to do a certain job. If he did not carry out that task properly, it would be misbehaviour or even incapacity, and then the Minister could go to the Governor in Council and say, "The commissioner has refused or is incapable of carrying out a job I have set him." The Governor in Council could then dismiss him. I do not feel we should place in a Bill an overriding clause whereby the Governor in Council, for no reason at all, could dismiss any of these top departmental officers. There must be a reason, and I am quite sure the Minister could find a reason if he so desired.

Clause 18, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 19 to 35, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 36—Powers, functions and duties of the Commission—

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (12.55 a.m.): This clause is the beginning of Division III, which sets out the powers, functions and duties of the commission, and naturally it is the key to the practical operation of the legislation.

I do not intend to go through all the provisions—members can read them for themselves—but the clause covers all the obvious things. It says, first—

> "shall plan the supply of electricity throughout Queensland so far as such supply may be reasonably and economically possible and regulate and co-ordinate such supply and matters related thereto;"

However, I wish to deal specifically with subclause (d), which says—

> "shall determine the prices to be paid for electricity supplied—
>
> (i) by any Electricity Authority to consumers of that Authority;
>
> (ii) in bulk by the Generating Board or other Electricity Authority;"

In my opinion, that is the key to any equalisation that the Government of the day wishes to introduce.

I might say at this stage that, in theory, the Minister is correct in saying that the Governor in Council is not only Cabinet but Cabinet and His Excellency; but I have yet to see an instance—it may happen on a very rare occasion—when a Minister of the Crown is not able to persuade Cabinet on major matters of policy. If he cannot persuade Cabinet on major matters once legislation has been passed, in my view he has failed in his job. So the reality is that a Cabinet Minister acting under the provisions of this Bill—and certainly if he acts on the advice of his commissioner—will be supported by Cabinet.

The charge for electricity is one of the matters that will concern people throughout the State, and I trust that the undertaking relative to 14 years that the Government has given—I think someone said that on behalf of the Government—is carried out. Far from wishing to deny country people the right to have cheap electricity, I should like to see them get it immediately. As I said at the outset, the Government should decide to subsidise the authorities straight away and the subsidy should be continued during the period over which the equalisation programme comes into effect. I do not see any reason why such a policy could not be adopted. In fact, it could be done even under the provisions of the existing Act. The Government could decide at any time to put finance into the commission, and the commission could then distribute it to the boards. That is covered in later clauses, and I do not wish to become involved in that matter now.

I also draw attention to subclause (k) which says—

> "may approve special agreements made by Electricity Authorities with persons for the supply of electricity at other than standard tariffs;"

Fairly strict control is necessary in this instance, because it has been said in this Chamber on many occasions that the price paid by people who use large quantities of electricity affects the price to the ordinary consumer. I have never been happy with the arrangements made for the possible introduction of an aluminium smelter at Gladstone. I said at the time that the figure quoted was so low that the charge to other consumers would be very high in order to maintain the guarantee. This is a matter that must be considered, and I hope that the commission will consider it. The commissioner has tremendous power, and I am not doubting his integrity but I am questioning his judgment.

Mr. Burns interjected.

Mr. HOUSTON: As the Leader of the Opposition has said, I think that his determination should be made public and that the reasons for it should also be made public. The negotiations would relate to inducing an industry to go to a particular area—that is probably the main thing the Government would be after—or bulk-supply to major mines. The industries would have to be fairly big, because in effect the Minister would be taking that consumer away from the distributing authority. I imagine that the consumer would be dealing direct with the commission or the generating board. If that is not so, the Minister can tell me, but that is probably the way in which it would operate.

Mr. Camm: Which subclause are you speaking about?

Mr. HOUSTON: Subclause (k). Subclauses (k), (l) and (m) are all tied up with special agreements. The problem with special agreements is that someone else has to pay. If a concession is given for something or other, someone else has to make up the leeway to get the average return.

I now turn to clause 36 (r). This is a matter that concerned the Electrical Trades Union for a number of years. I am going back perhaps 30 years. That portion of the clause provides—

> "may approve of electrical articles with the object of securing their safety in service and may prohibit, subject to the provisions of this Act, the use or the sale of electrical articles."

I can see the reason for it, and I go along with the general principle. The advice given to the union at a time prior to my coming into Parliament was that such a provision could not be applied. For instance, it could apply to the sale of electrical articles such as switches. It could apply to fittings that normally would be installed by an electrician. I am thinking of lampholders and the like. At that time the union was quite concerned about unauthorised persons themselves putting in these fittings. To launch a successful prosecution, a person had to be caught in the act, and that was impossible. The union endeavoured to say that these things should only be sold to recognised contractors. We are told quite clearly by the legal people that the Constiution could not stop a genuine retail establishment from selling any article which in itself was safe. A switch would be safe in itself, but it could be put in incorrectly and become dangerous. I will refer to that later when I talk about inspectors. If that wording is sufficient, well and good. I certainly support the idea of setting up training schools and that type of thing for those engaged in the industry.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.3 a.m.): Clause 36 (d) contains an already existing power which has been enjoyed by the commissioner for many years. The commissioner does have the power, and always has had the power, to fix the price of electricity to consumers of that authority.

Mr. Burns: Will they still have a right of appeal?

Mr. CAMM: A right of appeal to the Industrial Court, yes. Clause 36 (k) and (l) also contain what is an existing power. The commissioner does have that power now.

Mr. Houston: Yes, but you have to watch it more carefully.

Mr. CAMM: If an agreement is entered into, it will be endorsed for sure by the Governor in Council.

Mr. Burns: Will we know how much?

Mr. CAMM: Not generally. If it is a business proposition, it is not generally disclosed. The same thing applies to rail freights. They are not disclosed.

Mr. Burns: That is a different principle. You, as a Government, negotiate on rail freights. This is the commission.

Mr. CAMM: Yes, but the commission only acts under the jurisdiction of the Minister. The Government will have to endorse this.

Again, clause 36 (r) contains an existing power.

Mr. Houston: I agree that it is an existing power, but you can go into any bulk retailing establishment and buy all these electrical items today. It is the type of thing that is contained in legislation, but it cannot be applied.

Mr. CAMM: He can approve or disapprove. If it is obviously unsafe, he can disapprove.

Clause 36, as read, agreed to.

Clause 37—Borrowing by Commission—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.5 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 28, lines 33 and 34, omit the words—

', whether by yearly, half-yearly or quarterly payments or by payments into a sinking fund,'."

The words are redundant. In fact, the majority of lenders seek the repayment of the loan in full on maturity. Although it is the practice of the Treasurer, by a general ruling, to specify payments into a sinking fund, these are not normally sufficient to redeem the loan at maturity but at the end of some predetermined period, say 30 years. We want to take those words out because we think they are redundant.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Clause 37, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 38 to 40, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 41—Authorization of Electricity Authority to borrow money—

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (1.6 a.m.): If I understand this clause correctly, it will allow the commission to authorise bodies like the S.E.A. to raise loans. It is a very important clause because very recently, I understand, the State Electricity Commission had a problem in raising loans. In one case the brokers discounted brokerage because they had trouble in floating the loan for the State Electricity Commission. The S.E.A.Q. has had record loan borrowings. It is possible that electricity authorities may be able to generate funds. Loan-raising may become more difficult as time goes by, especially with the Federal Government approving that bodies like Telecom can borrow on the loan market. It is extremely important that authorities or boards be given the right to raise at least one loan per year to facilitate their general activities.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.7 a.m.): This clause empowers the Governor in Council to authorise the borrowing of money by electricity authorities in any case where it appears to him to be necessary or desirable to do so.

I am not concerned when an undertaking like the Electricity Commission has difficulty in raising loans, but I am concerned when they are filled too quickly, because that means the interest rate is too high. If the interest rate is on the verge of the market difficulty is sometimes experienced in raising money. The commission has always been successful in raising necessary funds.

Clause 41, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 42 to 63, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 64—Power of Commission to determine prices—

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (1.8 a.m.): This clause deals with the power of the Commission to determine prices. I raised the earlier clause dealing with this because of a couple of queries I wish to raise about subclause (1) (b) in this clause, which reads—

"by a consumer for the supply of electricity by an Electricity Authority (including the supply of electricity to lighting on a road),

and the methods of charge."

I hope that the Minister will enlighten me by saying that the words, "on a road" cover a wide field. In the metropolitan area, at least, we like lighting in our parks and certain other places. The lighting of a walkway or around Guide huts and Scout huts in a park is essential. I should like to think that "on a road", in that context, covers all public lighting that should be supplied by an authority.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.8 a.m.): This subclause relates to any part of a local authority area that is under the control of the local authority. The word "road" was inserted because roads in a local authority are sometimes not under the control of the local authority. They could be main roads or other roads and this gives the commissioner power to fix the charge for lighting.

Mr. Houston: It would cover parks, too?

Mr. CAMM: Yes, it will.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (1.9 a.m.): Subclause (4) of clause 64 reads—

"In considering a determination to be made as to prices of electricity, the Commission may have regard to and take into consideration the degree of efficiency with which an Electric Authority in question conducts its undertaking."

I am rather surprised that that is in there. As it is there, it would appear to me that the Government feels that some authorities are going to be more efficient than others. I would hope there are no inefficient authorities. If there are, those who cause them to be inefficient should be dealt with in other ways. I would like to think that, if an electrical authority is inefficient, the rest of us will not be called on to pay for its inefficiency. If anyone is to pay for it, it should be the consumers and the members of the area who allow the authority to be inefficient. That is all that those words can mean. "Inefficient" to me means that one authority's financial situation is not as good as that of another. I suggest that the Minister give an undertaking that any authority that is found to be inefficient will not be compensated by being

allowed an increase in charges, but will be dealt with in some other way than making the rest of us pay more.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.11 a.m.): That is exactly what will happen. The honourable member is arguing in reverse. They can inquire into efficiency. By doing so, they inquire into inefficiency as well. If a distributing authority says that it needs a certain charge in order to distribute electricity, the commissioner can check whether it is an inefficient operation that has to be financed. If it is an inefficient operation, he can advise on how it can be made more efficient. We are not penalising the efficient ones, but we are giving the commissioner the opportunity to point out where inefficiencies can be remedied.

Mr. MILLER (Ithaca) (1.12 a.m.): I would like the Minister to refer to subclause (3), which says—

> "In determining the prices to be paid for electricity, the Commission shall at all times have regard to and proceed towards the objective of progressively equalizing throughout the State the prices to be paid by consumers to which a particular tariff applies."

I believe that this is the subclause in which the Minister can read into the Bill the time factor that I mentioned during my speech. The Minister mentioned to the joint parties that it will be between 12 and 14 years. The Opposition has pointed out that nowhere is it mentioned in the Bill. I would now like the Minister to inform us of the time factor so that it can be taken into consideration by all future Governments and local governments.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.13 a.m.): I indicated during my reply at the second-reading stage that the commissioner must take this into consideration, but when any additional charges are levied in order to bring about an equalisation of tariffs, they must be endorsed by the Minister and the Governor in Council.

Mr. Houston: Have you got a time scheduled?

Mr. CAMM: No, we have no time scheduled. Whichever Government is in power will impose the charges, I am quite sure, in a reasonable manner. I can give an assurance to the Committee that there will be no additional charges towards the equalisation of tariffs in the next 12 months.

Mr. MILLER (Ithaca) (1.14 a.m.): This is a little different from the Minister's information to Government members in the joint party room. I for one have been left with the understanding that it will not be increasing at a greater rate than 1 per cent per year for a period of between 12 and 15 years. I want this spelt out. I am not prepared to be told now that there is no agreement and that in fact it can be pushed onto the people of Brisbane in 12 months. To me that is not good enough. It is not what the Minister indicated. I want to know now whether it is to be 1 per cent per year. If it is not, I will vote against the clause.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.15 a.m.): I understand the concern of the honourable member. However it cannot be written into the Bill that it will be 1 per cent per year. For two or three years there might not be any increases in charges. I can give the assurance, as I said earlier, that it must be endorsed by Cabinet.

Any Minister who contemplates bringing in an increase in tariffs in order to bring about equalisation would certainly discuss it with his Caucus or his party, no matter which Government is in power. It does not rest entirely with Cabinet to make an arbitrary decision. It can do it, but I am sure that no Government would ever do it. It would always be after discussion with the party members.

Mr. Wright: The Assembly will not have any say.

Mr. CAMM: It can have a say on whether it is implemented or not but the final power does rest with the Minister.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (1.16 a.m.): I am afraid that the Committee and the public have certainly been given a wrong impression as to how long it will take to do this. I will not say they have been misled deliberately because I do not think that is true. I went through the Bill carefully looking for a time. As the honourable member for Ithaca knows, we discussed it, and he realises that it is not there. I queried him when he was making his speech.

The point is that we all know what politics is and how Governments operate. The year after an election is when we get hit to leg. Certainly it will not be done this year. The Minister will not introduce any greatly increased charges this year, as I interjected, with an election coming up next year. That is only logical. I want to know and the people of Brisbane and of Queensland want to know what the Minister will do the following year.

Mr. Miller: I want to know, too.

Mr. HOUSTON: I appreciate that. Any other reasonable honourable member should ask what is going to happen after that. Surely the Minister could say that no more than a certain percentage per year will be added. That does not stop him from doing nothing. If it were put on the basis of "no more than" it would meet the situation.

I am talking about the people of Brisbane but I am sure that other people in this State would feel the same. They are under the general impression that this will be a gradual process of an increase of 1 per cent or some

other small percentage per year. My assessment and judgment are that the Government, to satisfy the people and those that it is trying to sell this to, is not prepared to use subsidy money from Consolidated Revenue and will want to get it through in a period of four or five years. That is how I see it and there is nothing to the contrary in the Bill, so I am afraid I must think that way.

Mr. MILLER (Ithaca) (1.17 a.m.): I have to say again to the Minister that I want something included in clause 64 to indicate to the people of Brisbane that they will not have this increase foisted upon them in one fell swoop. When I agreed to this in the joint party meeting, it was to be 1 per cent per year. I want it to be 1 per cent per year and if I cannot have it I am not prepared to go along with the clause. I want a clear assurance from the Minister that it will be 1 per cent per year.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.18 a.m.): If the honourable member wants to saddle the people with 1 per cent per year, that is all right, but it may not be 1 per cent. In some years there might not be any increase in the tariffs. In some years they might be able to carry on without any increase. If the honourable member wants to saddle them with 1 per cent every year——

Mr. Miller: Will you give an assurance that it will not be less than 10 years?

Mr. CAMM: It will not be less than 10 years. I can give the honourable member that assurance.

Clause 64, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 65 to 67, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 68—Review by Commission of prices of electricity—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.19 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 43, line 15, omit the words—

'charge for'

and substitute the word—

'charge,'."

This is simply to correct an editorial mistake in the printing.

Dr. LOCKWOOD (Toowoomba North) (1.19 a.m.): I am not sure that this makes sense. Why not just delete the word "for"? Or does the Minister wish to delete the words "charge for" and insert the word "charge" in another line? That is a good one for this late hour!

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.20 a.m.): All I can act on is the advice of the Parliamentary Counsel. It is an editorial amendment only and if it is read with the comma after "charge" it will be seen that it makes sense.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Clause 68, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 69 to 73, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 74—Monetary transfers for tariff equalization purposes—

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (1.22 a.m.): This is the key to the Bill in the matter of equalisation. It sets out in a few words how the surplus from one electricity board is to be transferred to another by the generating board. The whole matter is to be determined finally by the Minister. The key to our objection is to be found in the equalisation brought about by the transfer of profits from one board to another. In other words, it sets down the principle that the user in one authority will subsidise the user in another. If one electricity board keeps its tariffs low and makes a small profit, it will have very little to give to the generating board. By means of this clause the Government will beat an electricity board that operates in that way, because the board will be told, "You will pay this amount for your bulk electricity." It therefore matters little what the electricity board may want to do for its consumers.

If a consumer feels that he is paying too much for his electricity, there will be no point in his complaining to the electricity board, because the board has to accept the price for bulk electricity as determined by the generating board. At present, citizens can go to some authority and complain about electricity prices, but under this clause a person who wishes to complain will have to go through an electricity board, which can do nothing for him, to get to someone else at the generating board.

I mention these facts because I do not want anyone to say in the future, "We didn't know how it would work" or, "We didn't think it would work that way." Let it be clearly understood that equalisation will take place through the Government's telling the generating board what to charge the various authorities. It will be that figure that will determine what the consumers, irrespective of whether they are householders or industries, will pay. Earlier we decided that industries of a size determined by the generating board could come to an arrangement through the commission to deal in bulk supply, so this is what we have to take into account.

We go along with the major principle of equalisation, but when we get down to the nitty-gritty we see that it will be brought about by consumer subsidising consumer instead of by taking money from Consolidated Revenue as a whole. That is where the difference lies, and I would point out to the Minister that among the consumers who are going to be asked to subsidise another board or another consumer in another part of the State we could find a

person or a company or an industry that is struggling. That consumer could feel that the charge for electricity is stopping him from remaining viable. This is where the system breaks down, because we are asking a consumer who can ill-aford to pay extra to do so, whereas if the money came out of Consolidated Revenue it is derived initially from people who have the ability to pay taxation. That is the difference between the two.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.26 a.m.): I think I indicated in my reply that we considered the industry itself should pay for any adjustment. That is what happens in the Northern Electric Authority region. It fixes the bulk supply price for the three distributing boards so that it can maintain a uniform tariff and they pay different prices for electricity in accordance with the cost of reticulation.

Clause 74, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 75 to 81, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 82—Membership of Generating Board—

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (1.28 a.m.): What I have to say on this clause would apply equally to the general principle of electricity boards, so this will save a double debate. One of the problems we face today in our way of life is the number of times that unions go on strike for various reasons. I am referring to employees in supply authorities, whether they are employed at a powerhouse or work for the authority itself. Most strikes affect the people working in the industry involved and their families, and perhaps a few other people in the community, but a strike in the electrical industry, particularly in a powerhouse, has a tremendous influence on the community as a whole, because the production of electricity is affected and this in turn affects both householders and industry. So I believe we should be looking for ways and means to overcome the threat of industrial action.

I believe that now is the time to do something. We have a new Bill setting up a new generating authority. There will be a lot of experience on the board, which consists of the general manager, the commissioner and the Under-Treasurer, who shall be ex officio members, and five other members. In this part of the Bill they are referred to as appointed members, appointed by the Governor in Council by notification published in the Gazette.

Clause 82 (2) states that of the five members—

"(a) one shall be resident in that part of the State comprising the Areas of The Far North Queensland Electricity Board, The North Queensland Electricity Board and The Mackay Electricity Board;

"(b) one shall be resident in that part of the State comprising the Areas of The Capricornia Electricity Board and The Wide Bay-Burnett Electricity Board;

"(c) one shall be resident in that part of the State comprising the Areas of The South East Queensland Electricity Board and The South West Queensland Electricity Board; and

"(d) two shall be consumers' representatives one of whom shall be nominated by The South East Queensland Electricity Board and the other of whom shall be nominated in manner prescribed by the other Electricity Boards constituted for the time being."

So we run into the problem that, although the Minister has indicated that the Government could appoint a union man to one of those positions, if he is appointed purely and simply as a member of the board, human nature being what it is he would probably consider his loyalty lay with the Government that appointed him. I do not think he would have the same influence. I think a unionist should be appointed, but in a different manner. He should be appointed as a representative of the workers associated with, say, a powerhouse. The logical way to do it would be through the union itself, which could nominate a couple of names from which the Government of the day could make its selection. The main function of these people would not be connected with the physical operation of generating stations—there are experts and employees to carry that out—but they would be there as a safeguard against the building up of industrial problems. From my knowledge of the trade union movement and industrial matters generally, I believe that, if management and unions are able to sit down and talk and there is fellowship between them, very few problems will arise. One of the principal problems today is that management is aloof, and there may be many reasons for that. Once that situation is reached, there is a breakdown and problems arise continually. It is not only the strike that occurs today; it is reflected in other areas.

I suggest to the Minister that two people should be included who, in their own right, represent the workers actually associated with the generation. As I said earlier, Mr. Menzies and some other gentleman from the Reserve Bank suggested—and I believe that their suggestion was quite valid—that there should be worker participation at the place at which decisions are made. That would not be worker control or anything of that type. If industrial problems arose, they would be there to report back and give first-hand information.

It is pointless for the Opposition, with a cricket team or a soccer team of members, to move amendments. Nevertheless, I suggest that, for the reasons I have advanced, the Government could amend the clause.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.32 a.m.): We did give this matter a great deal of consideration. We had quite a long discussion on the question of whether it would be advisable to have on the board representatives representing specific bodies. None of the appointees represents a particular group of people or a business undertaking. It was thought that if union representatives were included, there would be pressure from industrialists who are the major consumers in the area. They would wish to group together and have representatives on the board. Therefore, we left it very broad and said that one must come from the North Queensland area, one from Central Queensland, one must be the nominee of the South East Queensland Electricity Board and one must be the nominee of the other six. Within those nominees could be two representatives of the trade union movement. If the board in the area thought that it would be advantageous for it to have a union representative, the board in South East Queensland or one of the other six boards could put a trade union representative on it. However, the Government believed that it would be unwise for it to set up a generating board and have on it members representing a specific group, because the pressure would then mount for other bodies to have representatives on the board. That is the reason why we did not continue with it.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (1.34 a.m.): The fact is that on the board will be one member who shall be resident in that part of the State comprising the areas of the Far North Queensland Electricity Board, the North Queensland Electricity Board and the Mackay Electricity Board. He will be nominated by those boards, and he will certainly be a member of one of those boards—probably the chairman. That is reasonable. I am not fighting about that, because that is the way things operate. All I am saying is that the Minister now has a glorious opportunity to have direct representation of the unions, particularly in the powerhouse section of the electricity industry. The Minister has given his explanation; but having in mind the realities of life, I cannot accept it.

Clause 82, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 83 to 89, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 90—Governor in Council may rescind resolution of Generating Board—

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (1.35 a.m.): This clause says that the Governor in Council may at any time suspend or rescind a decision of the generating board. Again I wish to have it recorded that I do not believe that the Governor in Council should always have this overriding power. I can understand that, if the Generating Board comes up with some policy contrary to Government policy, Government policy has to be the dominating factor. I believe that the clause will tie the hands of the board. If the Governor in Council knocks back a couple of the board's decisions it could rightly ask what power has it got, or is it just there as a safety valve for the Government. We have seen this before with boards. If something is done well and the public accept it, the Government of the day says, "We did that. We provided that money." But if the public object and say, "We don't like that very much.", the Government says, "Don't blame us. That was that board. It was its decision." I think the Government has gone too far in its desire to protect itself.

Mr. Moore: No it hasn't.

Mr. HOUSTON: My worry is that the honourable member may be given a seat on the board when he is defeated in Windsor. If he was put on the board I would be pressing strongly for an amendment.

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (1.37 a.m.): Clause 90 (3) allows the Governor in Council to scrub a tender or contract ab initio. A board might accept a tender on which someone had spent a considerable amount of money in its preparation. The money would have been spent with the thought that there was some opportunity to gain some profits. As the result of this subclause, a contract could be completely thrown out by the Governor in Council in overriding the generating board. It goes well beyond what I believe to be the normal scope of the Governor in Council. It is getting right down to the nitty-gritty when the Government says that a tender has been accepted but it is not going to allow the board to accept it. The Government leaves itself open to a number of charges. It might be said that it is looking after tenderers who have lost. That type of charge is not good for a Government, the generating board or any authority.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.38 a.m.): It must be remembered that the cost incurred by the generating board will be reflected in the price charged for electricity to the distributing authorities. This is to protect the distributing authorities from an overcharge in a contract that might not be in the best interests of the electricity industry as a whole. I do not think it is a clause that will be used to any great degree. It does give some power to the Governor in Council to ensure that contracts are to the benefit of the industry as a whole, and not just to the generating authority. It also gives the Governor in Council power to pay any costs that could have been incurred in good faith by that contracting body when it tendered.

Mr. Burns: Was it not previously that the tender was subject to the approval of the commissioner?

Mr. CAMM: Not necessarily. The tenders would be, but the resolution——

Mr. Burns: I am talking about the tendering.

Mr. CAMM: The final tendering would be.

Mr. Burns: Wouldn't it have been better to have put it in in that way?

Mr. CAMM: This rescinds the resolution before contracts are let. It also enables the Governor in Council to reimburse any contractor who has incurred legitimate expenses in order to submit his tender.

Clause 90, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 91 and 92, as read, agreed to.

Clause 93—Insurance of members of the Generating Board—

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (1.40 a.m.): The Government talks about competition, free enterprise and so on, but it seems to be acting ridiculously on some occasions. The S.G.I.O. is our own office. Surely when boards like this can effect insurance for their members —and I have no fight with that—the S.G.I.O. should get the business. Why should it be given to another organisation? I believe that several words should be deleted to remove any doubt. We should make sure that the boards insure their members with the S.G.I.O. Any profits made by the S.G.I.O. are returned to us in lieu of the office paying income tax.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.41 a.m.): I believe that, in practice, it will be the S.G.I.O. but we are not defining that exactly. This provision was taken from a section in the Local Government Act. It covers a legal point. A legal opinion has been given that a contract of insurance of board members while performing duties for the board could be void because of the board members' pecuniary interest in the contract unless this disability is removed by law.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (1.42 a.m.): I am not opposing the clause but I do say that the S.G.I.O. and no other insurer should be involved. The Minister referred to the Local Government Act. At that time we were told that everyone would stay with the S.G.I.O. We were also told that everyone would stay with the Commonwealth Bank, but we found very quickly that the local authorities traded with the banks which were good to them. Let us make sure that State organisations support our own State Government Insurance Office.

Mr. Camm: I think you will find that the State Government Insurance Office is quite capable of competing with other insurers in this field. I am sure that the board members will take the best and cheapest insurance.

Clause 93, as read, agreed to.

Clause 94, as read, agreed to.

Clause 95—Appointment of General Manager—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.43 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 57, omit all words comprising lines 8, 9 and 10."

I explained this matter fully when the amendment to clause 18 was considered.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Clause 95, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 96 and 97, as read, agreed to.

Clause 98—Appointment of other staff—

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (1.44 a.m.): Subclause (7) of this clause reads—

"The Board is not empowered to direct the General Manager to appoint, or with respect to the appointment of, a person to fill any vacant position within the staff establishment, and if a direction is so given at any time it shall be void and of no effect."

Does not the Minister believe that it would be better to have a board with some overriding control over the general manager and his appointments so that there can be no charge of cronyism against the manager and his appointments? This is how we get industrial strife. People on the job feel that someone is being looked after unfairly. It is different if an appeal can be made to a board or someone other than the manager. If we make a rule that the manager has the right to hire and fire, and the board has no say, people could well wonder what the board's functions are. In most other areas we have provision for control exercisable by the Governor in Council over the commissioner's activities. Finally, I am not too sure what sort of a board we are appointing.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.45 a.m.): The board has the power to approve the organisational structure and the numbers and classes of employees making up the staff establishment, after giving full consideration to the proposals of the general manager. Surely, after a board has set out the organisational structure and the different categories and as the board meets only once a month, the manager, who has to work with them every day, should have the power to hire and fire.

Mr. Burns: The board should have some overriding power.

Mr. CAMM: I am quite sure that the board would have some say if it felt something was going wrong—if it felt there was favouritism, for instance. If the board had the power to appoint different members to the staff, the same confusion could arise—except that it would be multiplied by the number of board members.

Clause 98, as read, agreed to.

Clause 99—Powers, functions and duties of the Generating Board—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.46 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 59, line 46, omit the words—

'upon the recommendation of the Commission, for'

and substitute the words—

', by agreement with and on behalf of'."

This is a case where the deliberate policy of not restricting the Governor in Council so that he can act only upon the recommendation of the Commission was, inadvertently, not put into effect. It is "by agreement with and on behalf of".

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Clause 99, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 100 to 114, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 115—Remuneration to members of Electricity Boards—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.47 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 67, line 48, after the word 'Board,' insert the words—

'the chairman,'."

This is to correct an omission. At the time the original instructions were drafted, it was intended that the general manager of an electricity board be its chairman. When this concept was changed, the necessary correction was not made in the instructions for this clause.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Clause 115, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 116 to 123, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 124—Vacation of office by General Manager—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.48 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 74, omit all words comprising lines 7, 8 and 9."

I explained this fully when clause 18 was amended.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Clause 124, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 125 to 128, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 129—Powers, functions and duties of an Electricity Board—

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (1.50 a.m.): The clause outlines many powers, functions and duties and they are those that one would expect an electricity board to deal with. They are similar to those of the regional boards at the moment.

I refer to subclause (b) which reads—

"may supply, install, repair, accept by way of trade in, sell, hire or otherwise deal in electrical articles within its Area."

I have no fight with that at all. It means that the board will be going into direct competition with electrical contractors and electrical retailers. One Minister is nodding his head and another Minister is shaking his head, so that I think I will take notice of the Minister handling the Bill. I feel that it will be a good public relations exercise and that it will be good from the consumer's point of view for the board to sell, service and install the commodity.

The point I raise is this: I imagine that this will be run as a business. Will the profits be taken into account when the generating board, through the commission, is determining the bulk-supply rate or will the prices for these articles and the charges for electrical installation and repair work be such that the people who use this service will be paying so much as a hidden amount that will go towards the electricity board's profit, which will then go to the generating board by means of the subsidising of the equalisation of the tariffs? I ask the Minister to tell us whether any profits made from this activity of installing, repairing, selling and hiring of electrical articles will be taken into account by the commissioner when determining the bulk-supply rate.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.52 a.m.): I imagine that the profits from the trading will be absorbed in all of the expenses and profits of the electricity undertaking as a whole. According to the reports of every board that trades in Queensland, the profits have been minimal. It is not the intention to open a trading-house to make big profits. Many of the trading departments really only display electrical goods and high electricity consumption goods so that there will be more use of electricity and people will know how to make the best use of electricity. A lot of the profits are absorbed in the display and service given by the regional boards.

Clause 129, as read, agreed to.

Clause 130—Delegation by Electricity Board—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (1.53 a.m.): I move the following amendment:—

"On page 78, line 32, omit the expression—

'129'

and substitute the expression—

'128'."

The purpose of the amendment is to correct an error in numbering.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Clause 130, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 131—Reconstitution of Areas—

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (1.54 a.m.): I regret that this clause is in the Bill at all. The Bill lays down that there will be seven electricity distribution areas. We debated the issue and I argued for eight so that the Brisbane City Council could remain as a self-contained unit and continue to operate with the efficiency to which the people of Brisbane have become accustomed. Now we find that boards can be abolished by Order in Council.

We all know that it was originally suggested that there would be four boards. I am sure the honourable member for Cairns will be interested in this clause because he said, "Leave Cairns alone. Let it have its own board with its own centre in Cairns." The Government finally agreed with him and included it. The Bill has now passed the introductory stage and the second reading and is now at the Committee stage. There is usually a delay between the introductory stage and the second reading of a Bill, and in this case it was five weeks. Under this clause, the Government of the day will be able to say, particularly in a parliamentary recess, "There are far too many boards. We need only four." and proceed by Order in Council to reduce the number.

I believe it is wrong for the Government to have that power. It is not wrong for the Government to change the number of boards if it considers such a change is necessary, but surely it should be done in Parliament. All I am saying is that there is a difference between Government by regulation and Government through Parliament. Such a major decision as an alteration in the number of boards should come before Parliament. I can see from the clause that the whole situation has been covered, but my argument remains against the method prescribed.

The Minister well knows that if an Order in Council is issued at the start of a recess it could be months before it could be debated in the House. And, when it does come before the House, the debate is limited to a couple of hours. By that time, of course, everything flowing from the Order in Council is under way. If a board were abolished, the local member might argue that it should not have been disbanded, but what chance would he have? By the time the matter came to be debated in Parliament six months later, the assets would have been distributed among other boards. There would be new boundaries and new members elected. In other words, the eggs would be well scrambled and there would be little chance of unscrambling them.

I believe that any Government has the right to amend legislation and any Government has the right to alter the number of boards. But I do not think that it is good government or even democratic to do it by means of regulations. There are so many other problems associated with government by regulation.

Mr. JONES (Cairns) (1.59 a.m.): The reconstitution of areas is still a matter of concern to people in Far North Queensland and, I should imagine, in other areas, particularly Wide Bay and those that were not included in the original proposition for four boards. After some pressure, it was agreed to include the extra three areas to make a total of seven.

As mentioned by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the clause provides that an area can be dissolved at the behest of the Governor in Council.

The Governor in Council can amalgamate, reconstitute or do anything at all with the boards. In effect it means that it can redraw the lines at any time. We know the difficulty that we had originally in convincing the powers that be that there should be seven boards, and I think at this point in the debate we would like an assurance from the Minister that boundaries will not be interfered with and that boards will not be reconstituted for some considerable time, unless there is some real reason for doing so, and not just because there is power to do so. With the Governor in Council having that power, I am concerned that there could be a reversion to the original four areas. In view of the public reaction that we had originally, an assurance from the Minister on that point would be very gratifying both to me and to the people of Far North Queensland.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.1 a.m.): The recommendation for four boards was a recommendation of the committee that inquired into the subject. It was never a decision of the Government that it be limited to four boards. It was after consultation with the commission and discussion in Cabinet that a decision was made to have seven distributing boards in Queensland. I can give the honourable member an assurance that there is no intention whatsoever of reducing the number of boards in Queensland. Taken in its entirety, this clause does give the Governor in Council power to take an area from one board and transfer it to an adjoining board by which it might be better served, but there is no intention of reducing the number below seven.

Clause 131, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 132 to 162, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 163—Supply of electricity under agreement conditions—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.2 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 91, omit all words comprising lines 1 to 13 inclusive and substitute the following:—

'(b) to enter into an agreement to provide a sum related to the estimated expense of providing and maintaining the initial or additional supply of electricity applied for and to receive such repayments of the aforesaid sum as may be prescribed in the agreement;

'(c) to enter into an agreement to pay to the Electricity Authority a non-repayable contribution related to the estimated expense of providing and maintaining the initial or additional supply of electricity applied for;'."

Amendment agreed to.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.3 a.m.): I move the following further amendment—

"On page 91, insert after line 34 the following:—

'(b) the method of calculation of the sum to be provided under any agreement made pursuant to subsection (1) (b) and the method of determining repayments of such sum;'."

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 163, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 164 to 174, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 175—Duties of Electricity Authority with respect to consumer's installation—

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (2.5 a.m.): This is not an argument about whether the Brisbane City Council should control distribution or whether there should be equalisation by one means or another. We are coming now to the nitty-gritty of the safety aspects of the legislation.

As I said in my second-reading speech, I am rather concerned about some of the matters associated with the safety provisions of the Bill. The matter to which I draw attention first is not really covered by the Bill but would come under the heading of supply. I refer to small ships and boats—motor-boats and the like—and suggest that the commissioner might be able to do something about the matter that is causing me concern.

Any work carried out on a motor-boat or small ship must be carried out by a person holding an electrical workers' certificate, provided that the installation is to be connected to a 240V supply, either on shore or from its own self-contained generator. I understand that, once the Bill has been passed, the work will have to be performed by a qualified electrician, because a boat is not an establishment in the same sense as a dwelling or something of a similar type. I am concerned because, as the Minister for Tourism and Marine Services would know, there are already many boats in existence—and many more will be coming onto the market—that come into moorings and plug into an electricity supply provided by an electricity authority. Unless they are wired correctly—and I do not mean for only a short period—they could be quite hazardous, not only for the owner but also for anyone else who happened to be aboard them.

Therefore, I suggest that when regulations are being made under the provisions of the Bill, it should be made very clear that any apparatus or structure, including a boat or a ship, that will be connected to a dangerous voltage—and I consider that town supply and supply from the generating units of the size now carried on boats is dangerous—should be wired by an electrical contractor and be subject to the inspections set out in the Bill.

I go to my second point. Subclause (a) says—

"shall ensure that a consumer's electrical installation to which an initial supply of electricity is to be made available is inspected in its entirety, prior to connexion to the source of supply, by an installation inspector in the manner prescribed;".

I agree with that completely. However, this is a new installation by a qualified electrical contractor. Everything is new—wires, switches, and so on—but it is going to be inspected. On the other hand, subclause (b) says—

"may cause part of a consumer's electrical installation to be inspected by an installation inspector prior to the connexion of that installation to the source of supply in lieu of the whole of the installation . . ."

Then subclause (c) says—

"shall ensure that alterations and additions to a consumer's electrical installation are inspected by an installation inspector in the manner prescribed, prior to connexion to the source of supply, if—

(i) such alterations and additions have been performed by an electrical worker, duly authorized by this Act, who is not himself an electrical contractor and is not carrying out the work as an employee of an electrical contractor;"

In other words, if the work is done by an electrical contractor, it has not to be inspected if it is an addition.

Of course, there could be 20 years' difference between the original installation and someone coming in to put an additional light, say, in a particular room. I believe that the contractor should be liable only for the quality of the workmanship of the particular light or power point that he installs. I cannot see him saying to the consumer, "I want to go over the rest of your installation", because as soon as he suggested putting a couple of

lights in or making an alteration or carrying out a repair, the consumer would say, "What are you trying to do—touch me, or take me down?" I am sure the honourable member for Windsor will agree——

Mr. Moore: You are a bit right on this one.

Mr. HOUSTON: I always am.

Because of the additions, a problem could develop in another part of the installation. Almost all of the installations today are made with synthetic-covered cables, but there are still old installations with conduit-type wiring. When any type of electrical work is carried out, it should be inspected. I am not saying that it should be inspected for nothing. There should be a fee. I think every householder would be agreeable to paying a fee to have the guarantee that the rest of the installation was safe.

When a person calls in an electrician, he assumes that everything is going to be right. To suggest that it is the responsibility of the consumer to get the inspector out might be all right in theory, but it is not much good in practice. Inspections help to stop electrical contractors from becoming careless. After all, they are human beings. No-one would suffer an accident in any shape or form unless somewhere along the line there was a loss of concentration or carelessness. If contractors know that their work is going to be inspected, that will guarantee that they will take extra care.

It is true that in additions many contractors liven up the additions part when they have finished the work. But they know that in livening it up, it is going to be inspected within a day or two. If not, it is not the contractor who is to blame but the supply authority for not carrying out its task properly. The contractor knows full well that his work could be inspected. This way he knows it will not be inspected unless the consumer asks for an inspection. I cannot see many consumers asking for it.

After World War II one of the ways for a contractor to make that bit of cream on the top was to sell and repair electrical appliances. The Brisbane City Council both before and after the war set up a service for the voluntary inspection of appliances. At the present time when an inspector goes somewhere to inspect an addition he asks to see all the electrical appliances. This is a particularly good idea.

In the interests of safety the Bill should be amended. Certainly we cannot do it tonight, but I suggest that before the Bill becomes operative a few of these matters should be looked at in the interests of safety.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.14 a.m.): I thank the honourable member. I will be guided by the advice of the experts in this field. I have been reliably informed that there are about 7,000 alterations and additions in the area of one depot in Brisbane that have not been inspected. Inspectors have not had time to do them. They are being operated quite safely.

Mr. Houston: Do you agree that the threat is still there?

Mr. CAMM: Yes. Distributing boards offer free periodic inspections of installations. The right is always there for the householder to request the contractor who does the work for an inspection. We are putting the responsibility onto the worker himself to say that this work has been tested.

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (2.15 a.m.): I wish to elaborate on the points made by the honourable member for Bulimba. I refer first of all to (a) and the question of the initial supply. The point has been raised with me by members of the C.R.E.B. that the new installation could consist of a consumer's main switchboard, meters and other ——

Mr. Moore: Have you just had a sleep?

Mr. WRIGHT: I was just waiting my turn because we have stacks of time. A point has been raised about the remainder of the installations. What about the stove, hot-water systems, fans, heaters, lights and general purpose outlets when the building is finally completed? We are saying that the electricity authority has a responsibility to ensure that a consumer's electrical installation to which an initial supply of electricity is to be made available is inspected. These other matters are just as important. It has been suggested that clarification is required. Will an inspection be required for these additional installations? That is the first matter.

The second matter relates to subclause 175 (b), which seems to have an optional aspect relative to the charge that an authority may impose on the consumer. A request has been made for clarification of the intention of imposing a charge on the consumer. Is it optional? On what basis will a charge be made? The subclause says that an electric authority may cause part of a consumer's electrical installation to be inspected. It then adds a rider that, in such case, it may recover the cost. That, again, is optional. What is the basis of these charges? I think it should be made known.

The third matter I raise concerns subclause (c). It seems to me that the "manner prescribed" referred to in this provision is only a recommendation—that it is only a guide. It has been suggested that we should have in black and white exactly what is prescribed. I admit that this is out of my area, but it was raised by men who know.

The last matter I wish to raise on this clause was referred to by the honourable member for Bulimba. It concerns lines 16 to 20 of subclause (f) and relates to the type of checks that will be made. Apparently this

matter has been discussed with officers of the S.E.C. They admit that not only should a check be deemed necessary but also that a percentage of installations should be inspected. A suggestion was made that at least 2 per cent of installations should be checked. I think I made the point earlier when talking about the amendments that many faults occur. One way of overcoming them is to have a minimum number of inspections carried out.

I raise these four points, some of which have been raised by the honourable member for Bulimba, because I think they need further explanation by the Minister.

Mr. JONES (Cairns) (2.18 a.m.) Under clause 175 (a), to what extent does an initial inspection apply? It could apply to a new building or a major industrial concern, or it could relate to one general purpose outlet, when supply is connected. Assuming it related to a domestic installation, it could cover ranges, additional power outlets, etc. installed by the contractor after the initial installation and inspection. Very extensive installations could be involved in large industrial or commercial premises.

I want to know how sub clauses 175 (a) and (c) will be policed. It is obvious that fly-by-night electricians will effect additions that may never be inspected. I reiterate my initial comments that the safety factor is being overlooked. While some people may take me to task for criticising electrical contractors, I believe there is no room for error. Every installation should be inspected by an authorised installation inspector. I have spoken about this matter with both the regional board and electrical contractors in Cairns. They agree that work is subject to human error. The electrical contractors welcome inspections. If there is a backlog in inspections, surely it could be overcome by the appointment of additional inspectors.

I make this point in the interests of electrical safety. We should amend this provision before injuries or deaths are caused from electrical shocks. This is the time to consider the problems that might occur in the future. We cannot allow any margin for error; nor can we afford to allow an innocent party to be injured simply through the neglect of an electrical contractor or one of his employees.

While installation inspectors have been engaged on this work there have been no problems. They are the ones who discover the problems. They draw attention to faults. They prevent electrocutions. The installation inspectors are the guardians of the safety of the users of electricity, not only in the home but also in industrial establishments. We would be remiss if we did not remedy the situation here and now.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.22 a.m.): As the clause says, and as I indicated, all new installations shall be inspected before the power is connected.

Mr. Houston: That is new ones.

Mr. CAMM: It says that.

Mr. Houston: What about repairs and additions?

Mr. CAMM: If a qualified electrician does the work and endorses that a test has been carried out on additions and repairs, he would be responsible. It is all very well to say that, if the inspection work is falling behind, we should appoint more men. I have already indicated that one depot in Brisbane has 7,000 inspections outstanding. Are we to say to people in country areas or even in the city that if they have a switch repaired or an extension added to an electrical installation it has to remain out of use until an inspector from the distributing authority passes it?

I think it was the honourable member for Murrumba who said at the introductory stage that he had faith in the qualified tradesman in the electrical industry and that, if the tradesman endorses his work and says that a test has been carried out, that is sufficient for him. He said that he had faith in the quality of the work of the tradesman. However, any new installation has to be thoroughly inspected before the electricity is connected. It is felt that in the instance of minor repairs and additions the endorsement of the contractor or the tradesman is sufficient.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (2.24 a.m.): I respect the Minister's opinion, but my experience tells me that this should not be allowed. I am dismayed to hear him say that 7,000 tests are outstanding at a depot in Brisbane.

Mr. Moore: The Brisbane City Council.

Mr. HOUSTON: It would have to be the Brisbane City Council, because it is the authority that supplies the area. That is one that I will have checked out. I will be quite surprised if that is so.

There is a responsibility on the contractor, and nobody denies it. How many contractors who start off in business have the testing equipment demanded by modern installations? It is all very well to talk about a house and to say all that has to be done is to use a test lamp or a megger; but what about such installations as factories where men will be working?

Mr. Camm: I indicated that all new installations would be inspected.

Mr. HOUSTON: If I was minded to make any exemptions, it would be for new installations rather than for additions or repairs. As the honourable member for Cairns said, a person could have one light fitting to be done. Or it could be a block of flats where the building contractor would have established a temporary main and would have a rough switchboard for the floor sander and for other workers to use.

That would be the first inspection. After a while there could be additions and they would not be part of the original inspection.

I am also concerned about industrial factories where machinery is installed. The worker does not know; he accepts that everything has been checked out and inspected. I would like the Minister's advisers to tell us some time this morning what test equipment they consider an electrical contractor should have to test the work successfully.

Mr. Moore: A Bridge Megger.

Mr. HOUSTON: Does the honourable member know the price of a modern one?

Mr. Moore: A few bob.

Mr. HOUSTON: The honourable member's information is as out of date as his currency, because hundreds of dollars are involved in proper test equipment. The days of the test lamp and of being quick enough to use the back of the hand to see if a wire or appliance is live have gone by the board. This is a very dangerous part of the industry.

Mr. JONES (Cairns) (2.26 a.m.): Take the case of a contractor who is constantly assailed with the problems of conducting his business, supervising his staff and preparing estimates. He may not be able to conduct undistracted and unbiased tests of his own work. That is the situation we will be confronted with. What is to become of check inspections? There are so many ramifications of this aspect of the legislation. The mind boggles when we get down to the nitty-gritty. We should be looking very carefully at this matter.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.27 a.m.): I intend to move an amendment to take care of the contractor who has not the faith in his men to carry out the work.

I move the following amendment—

"On page 98, omit all words comprising lines 48 and 49 and substitute the following—

'(ii) the Electricity Authority is required to provide additional metering or control apparatus or it is necessary to alter, in any manner whatsoever, existing metering or control apparatus or the wiring associated therewith;'."

Amendment agreed to.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.28 a.m.): I move the following further amendment—

"On page 99, insert after line 23 the following—

'(g) shall cause an installation inspector to carry out an inspection of alterations and additions to an electrical installation, being alterations and additions that pursuant to this Act are not otherwise required to be inspected by an installation inspector, if the electrical contractor who has undertaken the alterations and additions requests such inspection and undertakes to meet the cost thereof.' "

Mr. Houston: If he is a wise contractor he will do that with all jobs.

Mr. CAMM: For sure, but there are many places in Queensland where a small electrical extension is to be made. But is that contractor to be followed by an inspector on every job he does when it is only a minor adjustment or a minor extension? This is to reduce the expenditure involved in these minor adjustments and minor extensions. If any contractor desires to have the work inspected by the authority's inspector, he can apply and it will be done.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Clause 175, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 176—Responsibilities of a consumer—

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (2.30 a.m.): This clause worries me a little. The consumer has the right to have his premises checked, but I am worried about the position with his fire insurance. Quite often after fires it is said that they were caused by a fault in the electrical installation. To my knowledge, again from working in the industry, quite often if there is a fire for which no obvious cause can be found, such as the lighting of matches, it is assumed, in many cases quite rightly, that it was caused by a faulty electrical installation.

Mr. Moore: Mosquito coils with a little petrol are good, too.

Mr. HOUSTON: The honourable member has had experience in this sort of thing and he may be right. The clause provides that a consumer—

"shall ensure that an installation in respect of which he is the consumer, while it remains connected to the source of supply, is maintained free from any defect that is likely to cause fire or that is likely to cause a person to sustain an electric shock;"

The responsibility is being thrown on to the consumer. How would an elderly lady, or anyone else for that matter, know whether an installation was safe from fire? She just would not know. Much of the electrical work is above the ceiling. How many people go up there to check it?

I am wondering if, following the burning of a house, the insurance company could claim that the owner was responsible because he did not carry out his duty in having it checked. The insurance company could quite legitimately ask, "When did you last have this place checked?" The consumer in all honesty might say, "I don't know—20 years or so ago." What happens then? I would like this point thoroughly checked.

Mr. Moore: You have a valid point there.

Mr. HOUSTON: Of course I have. As I said before, the Committee can take note of what I say about these matters.

Mr. Moore interjected.

Mr. HOUSTON: I am not looking for praise but, as the honourable member is giving it to me, I thank him for it.

The whole thing is that this clause could have an effect on insurance. I ask the Minister to clear up that point before I proceed to the next.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.32 a.m.): On a reading of the clause in its simplest form I concede that that could happen. Its purpose is mainly to protect the person who goes into an installation such as a factory where there has been carelessness and various articles have been left lying around with the power turned on. The honourable member takes it to the point where it could refer to an elderly lady. Surely the consumer has some responsibility to see——

Mr. Houston: Not to lose his insurance policy.

Mr. CAMM: No, I do not know whether it would cause the loss of insurance cover.

Mr. Houston: I think it is worth checking.

Mr. CAMM: I can check whether the clause puts so much onus on the householder that it would negate his insurance policy. I shall look into that. That was not the intention of the clause.

Mr. Houston: You will have that checked?

Mr. CAMM: Yes.

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (2.33 a.m.): I raise a matter that also pertains to this clause. It is headed, "Responsibilities of a consumer" and when such a clause becomes a section o fthe Act one turns to it thinking, "This section lists my total responsibilities." However, it will also be seen that clause 159, dealing with application for supply, includes responsibilities of a consumer. Clauses 181 and 183 also relate to the consumer. As we are bringing down brand-new legislation, surely there would be merit in putting the responsibilities of the consumer together in one clause or part. As it is, clauses 176, 159, 181 and 183 relate to these responsibilities. The four clauses could be brought close together and any person wanting to know his total responsibilities could find them there. I make that recommendation for consideration.

Clause 176, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 177 and 178, as read, agreed to.

Clause 179—Re-inspection of electrical installation not connected to source of supply—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.35 a.m.): I oppose the clause.

Clause 179, as read, negatived.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.35 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 100, insert as clause 179 the following clause—

'179. Re-inspection of electrical installation not connected to source of supply. (1) Except as otherwise provided, a fee shall not be charged by an Electricity Authority for an inspection that is required to be carried out by an installation inspector pursuant to this Act.

(2) Where, pursuant to this Act, an installation inspector has made an inspection of electrical installation work and has not connected the installation or part thereof to the source of supply, the Electricity Authority in question shall, where the installation or part thereof was not connected because the inspector did not pass the work, charge—

(a) the electrical contractor who performed the work; or

(b) the consumer, in the case where the work was carried out by an electrical worker duly authorized by this Act who is not himself an electrical contractor and did not carry out the work as an employee of an electrical contractor.

the prescribed fee in respect of a re-inspection of the electrical installation work.'"

This clause was deficient in that it provided only for the payment of a reinspection fee for contractor's work which was not passed by the installation inspector. The new clause sets out when the electricity authority is required to carry out a free inspection and provides that all reinspections of work that was not passed by the inspector be subject to the prescribed fee.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

New clause 179, as read, agreed to.

Clause 180—Electrical contractor to test certain work—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.36 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 101, line 14, omit the expression—

'48 hours'

and substitute the expression—

'7 days'."

It was considered that 48 hours was not sufficient time because somebody could do work on a Friday and by Monday he would be out of time.

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (2.37 a.m.): I do not argue with the amendment the Minister has moved, but there is a matter that relates to clause 180 and also to clause 178 and others where there are certain requirements on the electrical contractor but

it seems that there is nothing in the legislation that tells us what happens if he does not abide by these requirements. What penalties are involved? This certainly pertains to clause 178, and I believe it pertains here. All right, the electrical contractor is required to test certain work and do certain things, but where in the legislation do we have requirements for some type of penalty that will ensure that these things are carried out, or is it a hit-and-miss system? Perhaps the Minister has some views on that.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.38 a.m.): I should imagine he would jeopardise his contractors' licence if he did not carry out the provisions of this Bill.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Clause 180, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 181, as read, agreed to.

Clause 182—Power to disconnect electrical installation or part thereof likely to cause fire or shock—

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (2.39 a.m.): This clause ties in with what I was saying earlier, that there were many clauses we could have debated, but I think this one will be sufficient to get our views across to the Minister. The clause refers to an electrical inspector, and I want to make it clear that that is not an installation inspector; it is an electrical inspector.

We have already discussed the clause dealing with interpretation and meanings and, although electrical fitters, electrical mechanics and installation inspectors are designated, there is no designation of an electrical inspector at all. He seems to be a forgotten man, but he has quite a bit of authority. One thing the Bill does not spell out is that he has to be a qualified electrician in the sense of having a certificate from the Electrical Workers and Contractors Board as an electrical fitter, mechanic, jointer or linesman, and that is what I am worried about. Another clause we discussed earlier permitted an industrial inspector to be made an electrical inspector, and no-one would expect an industrial inspector to be electrically qualified. This clause shows the power he has. Subclause (1) states—

> "An electrical inspector or installation inspector who discovers in a consumer's installation a defect that is likely to cause fire or a person to sustain an electric shock may forthwith disconnect the consumer's installation or the defective part thereof."

It is one thing to disconnect something, but it is another thing to make sure that the method of disconnecting leaves other things safe. For instance, a person could say that a certain circuit was unsafe and disconnect one wire and think he had shut everything off whereas in fact if it was an M.E.N. system or something like that, he could have really have livened up something else. It is not just a matter of being able to use a screwdriver, honourable members can take it from me. There is a lot more involved than just that. It involves electrical knowledge.

Electrical inspectors should be able to do certain things. I have no quarrel with their being allowed to examine things and use their eyes and the general knowledge that they have acquired. I have no quarrel with most of the matters set out in the Bill in this respect. In fact, it could be a very good job for a person who has come up through the administration. But when it comes to physically disconnecting or connecting something in the system, I have seen too many things that have convinced me that it is a very dangerous job to give to a person who is not fully qualified in the particular field.

Therefore, I again say to the Minister, through you, Mr. Hewitt, "Before the Bill comes into force, rephrase the provision. Leave the installation inspector there, but not the electrical inspector who is unqualified." If he has a ticket, it is all right; but if he has not, I suggest that it should not be part of his responsibilities.

Mr. JONES (Cairns) (2.41 a.m.): As to clause 182 (3)—I think that the limit of the equipment or wiring that can be disconnected by an electrical mechanic should be defined. For example, the entire installation could be disconnected, and it should be inspected to ensure that the wiring rules of the Standards Association of Australia are complied with before the reconnection.

Mr. Camm: That will follow naturally, won't it?

Clause 182, as read, agreed to.

Clause 183—Electrical accidents on consumer's installation—

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (2.42 a.m.): I refer the Minister to clause 183 (2) (a) on page 102. There is a requirement that if a consumer is injured in any way, that must be reported immediately. However, if the Minister looks at lines 9, 10 and 11, he will see that if the electrical contractor himself sustains injury from an electrical accident to the extent that he is unable to report it forthwith to the electrical authority, he shall report it prior to recommencing work as an electrical contractor. I do not see the reason for the exception. I make the point that it is possible that the fault which caused the injury or hazard—and that is what it would be—could be left for some period and other persons may be injured. I believe that an explanation is required of why that exception is included. Why cannot some action be taken? Why cannot it simply be reported? The hazard remains.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.43 a.m.): The clause says—

> ". . . if the electrical contractor himself sustains injury . . . to the extent that he is unable to report it forthwith to the Electric Authority . . ."

He might be seriously injured; he might be in hospital or he might be unconscious. However, he must report the accident so that the installation can be examined before he recommences work as an electrical contractor.

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (2.43 a.m.): I take the Minister's point. It is all right if he is in hospital. The point I am worrying about is that it says he shall report it prior to recommencing work as an electrical contractor. That could be many weeks later. Are we saying, "If he is laid up in hospital, we can't expect him to do much about it"? Surely there would be other persons involved with him or someone else who could make a report. The rule here is that he is covered till he goes back to work, and if he goes back to work it must be reported. I do not think that is good enough.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.44 a.m.): I do not wish to labour the point, but the clause says—

> "If an electrical accident on a consumer's electrical installation causes an electrical contractor or his employee to sustain electric shock or personal injury, the contractor shall forthwith report the accident to the Electricity Authority . . ."

So if he sustains a shock and he is physically able to report it, he must do so; but if he is laid up in hospital and unable to report it, he must report it before he commences work.

Mr. JONES (Cairns) (2.44 a.m.): What is the situation if an accident occurs to an employee of a supply authority? Should an accident to such an employee be investigated in a similar manner under the provisions relating to electrical accidents?

Mr. Camm: Yes.

Clause 183, as read, agreed to.

Clause 184, as read, agreed to.

Clause 185—Certificate of approval to act as installation inspector—

Mrs. KYBURZ (Salisbury) (2.45 a.m.): The certificate of approval is clearly defined but I am concerned about proof to the consumer that a person is in fact an approved installation inspector. How will a consumer be given proof of such a certificate? Is the production of the certificate by that person—presumably a man—sufficient proof?

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.46 a.m.): The clause provides—

> "The production of such certificate by such employee to any person shall be conclusive evidence of his authority to act as an installation inspector."

He will have a little identification card, much the same as any other identification. That is his licence to act as an installation inspector.

Clause 185, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 186 to 201, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 202—Disposal of land previously taken—

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (2.47 a.m.): I can understand that once an authority no longer requires land for transmission lines, a temporary substation or whatever it might be, that land has to be disposed of through the Lands Department. I would like to see it first of all offered back to the original owner. Very often when land is acquired, the owner is not very happy about it but he has no option. Certainly he gets paid for it. Once the land is no longer required for the purpose for which it was originally taken, it should first be offered back to the person from whom it was taken. There could be an adjustment of price because of escalation in prices or inflation. I know of a person who gave part of his land for one of the old-type transformers. It was decided to transfer to a heavier transformer and finally a substation was built. That person was very happy to get his land back. I know that, because I played a small part in it. I find here that there is a direct line straight into the Lands Department. I suggest that the first approach should be to the original owner and then if a price cannot be negotiated he can take the matter to the Land Court.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.48 a.m.): Sometimes it is difficult to find out who the original owner was. It is now generally accepted in all Government departments that when land which has been resumed, and for which full value has been paid, is no longer of use to the department concerned, it should go to the Lands Department for sale, generally by tender or by ballot. In many cases, particularly in country areas, the only person requiring the land is the original owner from whom the land may have been excised. In practice that is usually the case. If it were specified that it must go back to the previous owner the authority would be saddled with the responsibility of finding out who that was.

Mr. BYRNE (Belmont) (2.49 a.m.): I know of land in a closely settled part of my electorate which is now no longer of use to the authority. It would appear that the intention is to subdivide that land. I see great advantage in it being offered to the Lands

Department, but I would hope that, in such cases in urban and closely settled areas, instead of its being used for subdivisional purposes it be set aside for parks or other recreation purposes. In this instance there is no open land mass close to the houses. The area traversed by the overhead wires was used by children for recreational purposes. Seeing that this is open space in a suburban area, I hope that when it becomes available it will be set aside for recreational purposes.

Clause 202, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 203 to 209, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 210—Electricity Authority to ensure overhead electric lines not within prescribed distances from structures—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.51 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 113, omit all words comprising lines 36 to 39 inclusive and substitute the following—

'(b) where there is no structure on land abutting a road in which such electric line is being constructed, none of its conductors will come within the distance prescribed of any structure that may lawfully be erected on such land.' "

We have received objections from electric authorities that the intent of this paragraph is not clear. The new wording leaves no doubt about the intent.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Clause 210, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 211 to 229, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 230—Capital Works Fund—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.52 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 123, omit all words comprising lines 6, 7 and 8 and substitute the following—

'(d) provided by an applicant for an initial or additional supply of electricity pursuant to an agreement under paragraph (b) or (c) of section 163 (1); and'."

This amendment is necessary because the existing paragraph (d) merely repeats in different words what is in paragraph (c) and neither of the existing paragraphs makes a clear statement to the effect that moneys provided by an applicant pursuant to an agreement under clause 163 must be paid into the Capital Works Fund.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Clause 230, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 231—Special Fund—

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (2.54 a.m.): My comments on this clause also relate to the following two or three clauses. I am concerned about the use of funds, the collecting of them and where they come from. I am interested in the profits. The Minister accepted earlier that the charge paid by consumers, whether they be industrial, commercial or private, depends to a large extent on the cost of bulk electricity from the generating board. A figure must be allowed for administering the board and department concerned. Installation inspectors, clerical staff and accounts staff have to be employed. It is reasonable to assume that an electrical undertaking will either make a profit or a loss. If it loses the Minister will come down on it. We must therefore assume that a distribution board will make a profit. That being so, will a board be subject to income tax? I should like the Minister to explain that.

Will the various boards have to pay taxation on their profits, particularly as they will be trading? Clause 232 relates to appliance trading funds. The moneys will be banked accordingly. The Minister said that there would be very little profit. Still and all, there will be a profit; if there is not, the undertakings will go broke. Will they be paying tax on those profits? If not, will they be treated like the S.G.I.O.? The S.G.I.O. operates through a board system and pays into Consolidated Revenue an amount equal to that which would be paid in income tax if it were assessable. We all know that that is good for Consolidated Revenue, but it also ensures that other companies in the insurance business compete on a comparable basis, since both are subject to the same type of payments.

In the field of electricity, there are generating boards. That is one thing. However, when they trade, they are competing against private enterprise. I would like the Minister, either on this clause or on one of the associated clauses, to inform us about Government policy on those matters.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.57 a.m.): They are required to keep an appliance trading fund. I think the honourable member is referring to clause 232. The most important reason for keeping that fund is to ensure that, after all relevant costs have been charged, it is revealed that the board's trading is fair and does not detrimentally affect the private sector. If a profit is made, the amount that would have been liable for income tax is paid into the operating fund. Instead of being paid into Consolidated Revenue, it is retained within the industry itself. It is held in that distributing board's funds. However, that is taken into account when profitability is assessed. If a reasonable profit is not made and it is considered that advantage is being

taken over the private sector, the charges will be adjusted in accordance with those made by the private sector.

Mr. Houston: What about the profit from the distribution and sale of electricity as such? That will also result in a profit if the board is efficient. What will happen to that profit?

Mr. CAMM: The boards will not always operate at a profit. Any profit would remain in the board's fund.

Mr. Houston: How will you get your equalisation if you don't?

Mr. CAMM: A lower charge would be made on the tariffs. The tariffs charged should just about balance out the operating costs of the boards every year. If a profit is made, the tariff may be reduced.

Mr. Houston: It will be compensated for within the year?

Mr. CAMM: Yes.

Clause 231, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 232 to 235, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 236—Investment of moneys—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (2.58 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 125, line 11, omit the words—

'Commonwealth Government securities'

and substitute the words—

'securities of or guaranteed by the Commonwealth Government'."

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (2.59 a.m.): I appreciate the amendment moved by the Minister. That was one of the matters I intended to raise. This clause really provides that the electricity boards will be required to invest all of their temporary funds through the commission itself. Some people involved with the boards say that this is not a good thing. They believe that the temporary funds should go through banks in their own area. This gives them an opportunity for greater liquidity in the area. They believe that if the money is raised in an area, such as Townsville, Cairns or Rockhampton, it should be invested in that area rather than sent down to Brisbane or Canberra or wherever there is to be centralisation.

I wonder why we need to take the temporary funds away. We allow them to invest in long-term Commonwealth, State or local government securities. It seems to me they should be able to use the local bank or some other local institution rather than send the money to Brisbane.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.1 a.m.): If any of the distributing boards desire the Electricity Commission to handle any temporary surpluses they have, the commission has access to the short-term money market and can build up an association with the borrowers and so establish good business relations. It can always place that money without any problems.

Mr. Burns: You say we are building ourselves a better basis centrally to raise money?

Mr. CAMM: The commission, having the right to invest in the short-term money market, does provide a better basis. The distributing authorities do not have to raise loan money in their own areas; the commission has the responsibility of raising all loan money. For this reason it is believed that it should have the responsibility also to invest in the short-term money market.

Mr. Burns: You don't think it is dragging money out of the North?

Mr. CAMM: No, because it is only gone for a short time.

Clause 236, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 237, as read, agreed to.

Clause 238—Annual budget to be prepared and submitted to the Commission—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.2 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 125, line 45, insert after the word 'funds' the words—

', except the Trust Fund,'."

There is no point preparing a budget for the trust fund. The point here is that trust moneys must be kept separate and distinct from other moneys and the amount to be paid out of the trusts fund by the electricity authority is governed by the terms of the trust and not by the discretionary exercise by the electricity authority of any of its powers, functions or duties.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Clause 238, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 239 to 250, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 251—Contracts—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.3 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 132, insert after line 51 the following:—

'(14) Subsections 8, 9 and 11 are not applicable in the case of the relinquishment of an easement by an Electricity Authority.' "

The new subclause is necessary to make it clear that references in this clause to the disposal of land do not apply in the case

where an electricity authority hands a registered easement back to the owner of the land over which the easement existed, even if some monetary consideration is involved.

Mr. AKERS (Pine Rivers) (3.4 a.m.): I agree that subsections 9 and 11 should not be applicable, but I am wondering if subsection 8 should not be. There are other authorities that have need for easements across properties. One that comes to mind is the Moreton Region Water Authority, which, when it is established, will have to run water mains through different areas. I think that authorities like that should have the opportunity to take over an easement. I know that there would have to be different types of easement, but it may save some property owners the trouble of having another easement taken from them.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Clause 251, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 252 and 253, as read, agreed to.

Clause 254—Environmental impact—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.5 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 134, lines 33 and 34, omit the words—

'avoid or minimize any deleterious effect on the environment'

and substitute the words—

'ensure reasonable protection of the environment'."

There is no change of principle. However, the wording of the subclause is at variance with the wording of the Procedural Manual for Environmental Impact Studies in Queensland where the corresponding requirement in respect of a submission by an administering authority to the Environmental Control Council is set out.

Mr. BYRNE (Belmont) (3.6 a.m.): In speaking to this clause and also the amendment—if we reflect on the various works that an electric authority may perform——

The CHAIRMAN: Order! If I may attempt to be helpful to the honourable member—at the moment he may speak only to the amendment. If he prefers to speak to the principal clause, I suggest that he allow me to dispense with the amendment first then I shall give him the opportunity to speak to the amended clause.

Mr. BYRNE: I should like to speak to the amendment, Mr. Hewitt.

The CHAIRMAN: Very well.

Mr. BYRNE: Whilst the Minister points out that the amendment rationalises the circumstances, I cannot but feel that "avoid or minimize any deleterious effect on the environment" is somewhat stronger than "ensure reasonable protection of the environment". "Reasonable" is one of those words which do not appear to convey anything and which by a degree of pedantics can mean almost anything. Despite the fact that the words may be out of character with other rationalised circumstances for environmental impact studies, it strikes me that "avoid or minimize any deleterious effect on the environment" is much stronger and certainly more desirable than "ensure reasonable protection of the environment". Just what does "ensure reasonable protection of the environment" mean? It is not necessarily as strong or as wide as the words presently in the clause.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.7 a.m.): As I indicated earlier, although the words to be omitted may be more high-faultin, they have been replaced by the words in the Procedural Manual for Environmental Impact Studies in Queensland. There is a manual issued that contains guide-lines and these are the words associated with any submission by any administering authority to the Environmental Control Council. The words are being changed merely for that reason.

Mr. Burns: This clause won't let them out of any requirement under the Clean Waters Act?

Mr. CAMM: No.

Mr. BYRNE (Belmont) (3.9 a.m.): Because something has been done 100 times before, that does not necessarily mean that it is good. Would it make any essential difference to the ability of the authority to have an environmental impact study if the words in the clause remained as they are at present? Perhaps what is in the manual is not the most desirable statement on what can be done in that area.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.9 a.m.): It might not be the most desirable but it is the more desirable wording because it complies with the conditions imposed by the Procedural Manual for Environmental Impact Studies in Queensland. It is word for word with what is laid down there. So that there may be no mistake in respect of electricity undertakings being at variance with any other administering authority, we are making it uniform with all the others. That is all it is.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Mr. BYRNE (Belmont) (3.10 a.m.): This is the question I raised earlier. It strikes me as strange to say in subclause (1)—

". . . shall take into consideration the environmental effects likely to be occasioned by the implementation of the proposal and shall institute such investigation as it considers necessary into the environmental aspects of the proposed work."

Then subclause (2) states in part—

". . . due consideration has been given, in connexion with the planning of the proposed work, to the environmental impact of such proposal."

That to me does not seem to say very much at all. It says, "If we feel like it we will do it; if we don't feel like it, we won't do it." Then the clause goes on and states that they may recommend to the Governor in Council that the electricity authority either not proceed with such proposed work or proceed with such work subject to such environmental safeguards as the Governor in Council may direct. Once again it strikes me as having threepence each way without having anything definite in it. Then on the wisdom of there being no appeal from the decision of the Governor in Council subclause (5) states—

"The Governor in Council may give a direction as referred to in subsection (4) and a direction so given is binding on the Electricity Authority and is not subject to any appeal to any court or tribunal whatsoever."

Then similarly in subclause (6) it states—

". . . take into consideration the environmental effects likely to be occasioned by the implementation of the proposal, and for this purpose may, or shall if so required by the Minister, institute investigations into the environmental aspects of the proposed work."

The whole clause strikes me as being somewhat loose and somewhat non-directive in its nature, having no real constraint upon the authority at all, and I wonder whether it does say or do sufficient about environmental factors when we consider the sort of works that the electrical authorities could be associated with. Some of these could greatly affect the environment, and I just question whether one can say that this is a very strong clause in relation to environmental factors.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.12 a.m.): The honourable member seems to take exception to subclause (5), which states that the Governor in Council may give a direction to the electricity authority, and that direction to the authority is not then subject to any appeal in any court or tribunal whatsoever. The Governor in Council gives an instruction to the local authority. Does the honourable member want the local authority then to have power to go over the Governor in Council and appeal to the High Court?

Mr. Byrne: It leaves total power in the Government's hands?

Mr. CAMM: Yes.

Clause 254, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 255, as read, agreed to.

Clause 256—Live line work—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.13 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 135, omit all words comprising lines 1 to 7 inclusive and substitute the following—

'256. Live line work. (1) The Commission shall determine the electrical work that is live line work, and every authorization to perform live line work shall be given by the Commission in writing to the Electricity Authority and to each suitably trained person.' "

This amendment is merely to clear up some wording which was inclined to be ambiguous.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Clause 256, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 257 to 282, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 283—Second-hand electrical articles offered for sale to be labelled—

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (3.14 a.m.): I think it is a good idea to have these articles covered, although up to a point they were covered by earlier legislation. I think that before second-hand electrical articles are offered for sale, they should be checked thoroughly and rendered safe. The public are entitled to know what they are buying.

I wonder how far this would go in practice. We went to a lot of trouble to provide for the inspection of motor vehicles before they were sold, and I think there is plenty of evidence to show that in some cases vehicles whose condition leaves much to be desired are being sold and put on the road. Of course, things could have gone wrong after the inspection had been carried out; but the point is that things do go wrong, and they have gone wrong.

It will be all right if electrical articles go through an established dealer. But what happens in the case of electrical articles sold by one private citizen to another? One sees in "The Personal Trading Post" newspaper and at flea markets instances in which a private person sells to any member of the public who wishes to buy. He might have only one article for sale.

With many electrical articles today, the trader offers a trade-in price. When you say, "Come and get my old refrigerator", or "my old washing machine", although he has given you a trade-in value, he says, "I don't want any part of it. Sell it privately." People who think the article is worth $20, or something like that, do sell it privately. I think this will present a problem. Perhaps it could be overcome by allowing any person who buys an electrical article to have a quick check of it made. If a person buys privately an article that has no label on it—and I imagine that the Act cannot cover private sales from one individual to

another—he should be informed of the probabilities of danger and he should try to have an inspection carried out through the inspection group. Most people who get rid of refrigerators and other electrical equipment do so because they have been playing up and they wish to buy something better. It is quite a normal thing for people to do. I make that suggestion to the Minister purely from the point of view of administration.

Mr. HALES (Ipswich West) (3.18 a.m.): As another electrician in this Chamber, I have worked on used appliances. At one stage of my career I worked for Hoey and Ploetz of Ipswich for about nine months, repairing washing machines and stoves that had been traded in. After they had been repaired, they were sold again, probably at a profit. At that time, which was almost 10 years ago, we attached cards to the appliances showing what work had been done on them and what tests had been carried out. I suggest to the Minister that if repairs had been carried out, perhaps a ticket could be attached to show the consumer exactly what repairs had been carried out and what tests had been made of the appliances being sold through registered retailers.

As mentioned by the honourable member for Bulimba, there is a problem with second-hand dealers. There could be a few "shonky" dealers, and I do not know how that problem can be overcome.

Mrs. KYBURZ (Salisbury) (3.19 a.m.): I think this clause is an excellent one. It has far-reaching implications for all consumers in Brisbane. The honourable member for Bulimba mentioned "The Personal Trading Post", or whatever it is now called, and many people do buy electrical appliances through newspapers. However, I see no need for penalties for any retailer who sells electrical goods which have not undergone an inspection and, therefore, do not have a label attached to them.

I am interested to find out—and I know that this has been done in the past—whether or not the price of goods will in fact go up to cover the cost of the inspection, although I believe that the protection afforded to all consumers by the inspection, particularly of things such as small domestic appliances and electric blankets, will be very much worth while. I thank the Parliamentary Counsel for this clause, because I think it is a great step forward—certainly for all women.

Mr. BYRNE (Belmont) (3.20 a.m.): It is certainly a most important area of safety. However, I ask the Minister just what penalties are provided for non-compliance with the clause.

Mr. GOLEBY (Redlands) (3.21 a.m.): Where do we stand with auction sales? I am sure that each one of us has attended many auction sales where we have seen old refrigerators, radiators, etc. put up for auction. Do they have to be labelled, or are auction sales exempt?

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.22 a.m.): Clause 410 deals with offences relating to the sale of second-hand electrical appliances. There is quite a number of clauses dealing with penalties. That clause provides that a person who "sells or offers, exposes or advertises for sale" etc. is liable to a penalty. I refer to clauses 410 to 419. It will be noted that clause 419 provides—

> "A person who contravenes or fails to comply with any provision of this Act is guilty of an offence and, save where a specific penalty is otherwise provided or provision is otherwise made with respect to the offence, is liable to a penalty of $200."

Mr. SIMPSON (Cooroora) (3.23 a.m.): This is very worth-while consumer protection. A lot of people without a great knowledge of electrical appliances are in need of such protection. Quite often, in this age of mass production, appliances malfunction. More and more electrical goods are being used, and we can expect that in the future even greater use will be made of them. This is very worth-while consumer protection.

Clause 283, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 284 to 321, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 322—Electrical work to be done by certificated persons or permit holders—

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (3.24 a.m.): This is the clause I mentioned earlier as giving a complete contradiction to clause 182, which provides that electrical inspectors and installation inspectors can disconnect electrical work. In other words, they can perform the work of an electrical mechanic or an electrical fitter. There is no definition of "electrical inspector", yet he can do that type of work. Clause 322 lays down quite clearly that it is an offence for a person who is not an electrical fitter, an electrical jointer, an electrical linesman or an electrical mechanic to do electrical work. A probationer, an apprentice or an improver can perform electrical work. It is quite right to have that clause. To my way of thinking, an electrical inspector who has not that certificate would be breaching the provision if he carried out that work. Can we take it that anybody appointed as an electrical inspector—I do not query his other duties—or anyone given the power to disconnect will have one of these certificates?

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.26 a.m.): I think the honourable member can rest assured that anyone given power to connect or disconnect any electrical undertaking will have the qualifications to do so. I think the honourable member readily recognises

that some inspectors are employed on specific jobs relative to boiler explosions in a power station or some such thing. Although they may not have the qualifications of an installation inspector, they are appointed as electrical inspectors. Anyone who has not got the necessary qualifications will not be allowed to disconnect wires.

Clause 322, as read, agreed to.

Clause 323, as read, agreed to.

Clause 324—Applications for certificates of competency—

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (3.27 a.m.): This, again, is a safety clause. Subclause 2 provides—

> "(2) Every applicant for a certificate of competency (including a restricted certificate) shall, before the issue of a certificate, produce satisfactory evidence that he has been trained in and is qualified to render artificial resuscitation to a person who has stopped breathing or is unconscious as the result of electric shock."

I agree completely with that provision but, as I said earlier, the danger lies in getting men off wires. When a man is going for his linesman's certificate it is not good enough to say to him, "You must know how to apply resuscitation." If a man on a pole is injured he is probably hanging by his safety belt and he may even have an arm across a wire. A linesman must be qualified not only to resuscitate him but also to free him from the wire, at the same time making sure that he himself is not caught. I believe that a provision could be included by regulation stipulating that not only must he produce a certificate that he is qualified in resuscitation but also that he is qualified to rescue people who have been electrocuted.

I witnessed an unfortunate accident (and played a small part in the sequel to it) where a jointer was caught on top of a pole. This was a simple accident. He was working at a place which had a high-set knock-off whistle. He was on the ladder bending over the whistle, which went off and startled him. He stood up and his head touched a live wire above him. He was badly burnt. The resuscitation necessary to get him off and down without further injury was the most important part of the operation.

Clause 324, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 325 to 335, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 336—Complaints with respect to inspection work—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.29 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

> "On page 165, line 29, omit the word—
> 'approval'
> and substitute the word—
> 'authorization'."

This is a simple amendment which is necessary to ensure consistency in wording throughout the Bill.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.30 a.m.): I move the following further amendment—

> "On page 165, line 33, omit the word—
> 'approval'
> and substitute the word—
> 'authorization'."

This amendment follows for the same reason.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Clause 336, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 337—Electrical contractors' licences—

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (3.31 a.m.): In the main, this is a rewriting of the Electrical Workers and Contractors Act, which covers electrical contractors and electrical tradesmen as a whole. Only one or two lines are different, but they make quite a substantial change. In the Electrical Workers and Contractors Act, section 19 (2) (d) says—

> "that he intends and is able to undertake contracts for electrical installation work."

Under that provision, if a person wished to become an electrical contractor he had not only to be an electrical mechanic of good repute and over the age of 21 years but also to undertake that he would go into full-time contracting.

Mr. Moore: Why should he?

Mr. HOUSTON: This is a matter of opinion. I believe that an electrical worker has to make up his mind whether he is going to be a contractor or an employee.

Mr. Moore: Does that apply to the painter or the brickie?

Mr. HOUSTON: The bricklayer and the carpenter are not as involved with safety as the electrician. Those who are interested in other callings are quite capable of looking after their own affairs. I am interested in a person who obtains a contractors' licence.

Mr. Moore: They want to close their shop.

Mr. HOUSTON: They do. I ask the honourable member not to forget that, when the Electrical Workers and Contractors Act was passed, this Government agreed—and the Opposition agreed—that it should be a closed shop. We agreed then. To my knowledge, nothing has happened to change the situation. Under the old Act, if a qualified person wanted to do some work for a very close friend, a relation or a charity——

Mr. Moore: He had to tell lies.

Mr. HOUSTON: He did not have to tell lies at all.

Mr. Moore: Of course he did.

Mr. HOUSTON: If he wanted to do it for those people, he did not have to tell a lie at all.

Mr. Moore: It had to be a relative.

Mr. HOUSTON: That is right. I said it had to be a relative, a charity or the other things.

Mr. Burns: They all had 5,000 uncles.

Mr. Moore: That's right.

Mr. HOUSTON: The honourable member for Windsor, of course, is well versed in trying to beat the law. We know that he is well experienced and has a reputation for that. I have no desire to parallel his reputation in that sphere.

I am concerned that an employee of a firm can obtain a contractors' licence—he will virtually have to be given one—provided he is a qualified electrical mechanic. He can pirate the work that would normally be his employer's. He would know full well the quotes his employer would give to do certain work. It is not difficult to understand why in the first place the contractors wanted this clause in the Bill. Prior to the Electrical Workers and Contractors Act, it was an open go. Many people had contractors' licences. All that was necessary was the payment of the fee every year. I had one for years and never used it. However, then the contractors came up with this idea. They said, "Let's be a closed shop." If a fellow wants to be a full-time contractor he is entitled to a licence. He can break away from an employer and become a contractor in his own right, operating on his own or employing others. However, one of the things we have to do in the electrical industry is make sure there is work for our young people, for youths leaving school. The best way to get a youth into the electrical industry is to give him employment as an apprentice. The only person who is going to employ an apprentice is a full-time electrical contractor. I can see weaknesses on both sides. My leaning is towards the full-time electrical contractor. We should not encourage others to come into the field to be virtually fly-by-nighters or week-end workers.

I know that people like getting extra money and I suppose in principle that we cannot disagree with a person wanting to put his skills to use. I see no problem in that. But if he wants extra money he should take the job and give it to his recognised contractor as another job. If it is so urgent that it has to be done at week-ends, penalty rates and other conditions could apply.

I believe that this is a backward step. I do not know where the pressure for it came from. It might be the two Government members who are not satisfied with their parliamentary salaries. Of course, the honourable member for Windsor gets an additional salary.

Mr. Burns: Repairing lifts.

Mr. HOUSTON: He admitted he knew so little about lifts that he was prepared to give his services free. I appreciate that. But as Government Deputy Whip he gets extra pay and apparently that is not sufficient.

Seriously, I think the situation is very clear. I think that this is a breakdown in the Bill. I do not think that it is justified at all. I suggest that the Minister have the clause reinserted in the Bill so that there will be no doubt that any electrical mechanic who wants to do charity work and that type of thing can still get permission under the Bill, but that unless he wants a full-time contract, he has to do what the rest of us do and apply to do particular jobs.

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (3.37 a.m.): One of the points we have to make is that under this clause every electrical worker or electrician is allowed to go into the contracting business, but there is a provision under other legislation that will stop people who work for the Government from being involved.

The union sent me a copy of a letter it sent to the Minister. One paragraph of it reads—

> "While this Union is opposed to the Government's policy in this regard, it is pointed out that because of provisions covering Government employees such employees would be denied the opportunity to avail themselves of the provision of this proposed legislation. This, of course, results in one standard for private industry and another for Government employees."

In that letter the union also made the point that the honourable member for Bulimba has put quite clearly, that we need to have a secure contracting industry so that there will be opportunities for apprentices. I do not know what chance we would have of getting young men into the electrical industry without the small contractor who can take one apprentice out with him.

One thing that the fellow who is working on the job Monday to Friday and doing a bit of contracting on the side is going to do is destroy some of the security in the contracting industry for the businessmen who are there.

Mr. Moore interjected.

Mr. BURNS: In the case of plumbers, carpenters and others, I can remember when there were long delays in getting brickies to do work and we were paying them $365 a week. The honourable member is suggesting that we allow a few people to do this. I have a submission here from the contractors association claiming that it does not want this and I have a letter from the union representing the electricians saying it does not want it. So why are we introducing it?

Mr. Moore: A bit of freedom.

Mr. BURNS: Is that what it is all about? I can mention legislation covering the dairy industry, the wheat industry and the egg

industry where the Government has been reducing freedom for quite some time. Something more that a little freedom seems to be involved.

Mr. HALES (Ipswich West) (3.38 a.m.): As a member of the Minister's committee, I should like to record in "Hansard" that I was probably one of the few who argued against this clause. I am just as concerned about it as the previous two speakers. I believe that it will lead to proliferation of contractors and that the position will become very unwieldy. I believe that it is a wrong step by the Government.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.39 a.m.): This was the subject of a great deal of consideration by my committee and also by me. I had consultations with the contractors I know and individuals who had been disadvantaged by being held up for weeks on end because they were unable to find a contractor to do the work for them.

There was some talk about apprentices. The contracting business in the electrical field today is getting bigger and bigger and there are few opportunities for people to put up their shingles reading, "I am an electrical contractor" and to break into the contracting business. But, given the opportunity, a competent man who has the ability and initiative to go out and work for himself can establish a reputation in country areas and in cities by doing extra work on Saturdays and Sundays until eventually he becomes a contractor. He does not have to hang up his shingle immediately after leaving his job and take the risk of obtaining work. He waits till he has become known throughout the industry as a competent man who is prepared to act as a contractor. Increasing the number of contractors in this way will provide more opportunities for apprentices to enter the field and eventually more electricians will be turned out.

I do not think that there is any real reason to fear that electricians employed at present by contractors will be going out and doing very much week-end work. I know in my own area that electricians from the sugar mill are not looking for work at week-ends. By the same token, mechanics, plumbers and carpenters are not out looking for week-end work. If the safety aspect is taken away and electricians are regarded simply as tradesmen, it appears that the electrical trade is the only trade that places this restriction on people who desire to go out and do a little extra and build themselves up to the stage where they themselves become contractors. I think it is worth a try. If it proves to be detrimental to the industry, the clause can be amended.

Mr. Burns: Will you change the law to allow people in Government departments, such as the railways, to contract themselves at week-ends or at night?

Mr. CAMM: They are governed by other restrictions not associated with the electricity industry.

Mr. Burns: You are discriminating again.

Mr. CAMM: They are not associated with this Bill. Do men employed by the Government doing carpentering work want any provision other than what they have now? Do plumbers want any release? It can be done in private industry with plumbers and mechanics, as the honourable member for Windsor pointed out. I personally think it is worth a try and that was the opinion of my committee and others with whom I discussed it. The contractors mounted a very concerted campaign to have this provision deleted from the Bill. It is a policy decision of my committee and the joint parties that it be given a trial to see if we can encourage contractors to go out and take on more work than they are prepared to do if the job is not attractive enough for them.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (3.43 a.m.): This provision was put into the Act a few years ago because of week-end work, cut prices and the shoddy work that was being done. What the Government is saying is that if someone wants to be an electrical contractor he should get out and do week-end work.

Mr. Moore: What's wrong with that?

Mr. HOUSTON: It is all right if he is going into business. But what happens when people go into business? They work for someone as a mechanic and they assess the situation. We have already laid down that every contractor is responsible for the testing of his work. If a fellow is just going to try it out to see if he likes it before he takes it on full-time, is he going to buy a megger and all the other necessary testing gear? He will pick the eyes out of the work; he will do the easier, cheaper jobs. I say to the Minister that this clause will have a detrimental effect on contractors.

Before issuing an applicant with a licence to contract, is the board going to ask him, "Have you testing equipment to enable you to comply with those parts of the Act that say that a contractor is responsible for testing?" There is nothing in this Bill setting out the qualifications required to become an electrical contractor. There is nothing in the Bill which says that a man who becomes an electrical contractor has to be proficient and have available to him testing equipment required to make sure an installation is safe. He does not need to have it inspected.

Mr. Camm: To get a contractors' licence, does he have to do it now?

Mr. HOUSTON: No, because they have never had to get it inspected.

As I said before, because a law is not being enforced, that does not mean that it is a bad law. What it means is that someone

is falling down on the job. But there was also the threat that an inspector could arrive at any time to inspect the job. Now the Government is laying down that it is lawful not to have a job inspected. There is quite a difference between that and where a person has to inspect. In fact, an ordinary contractor doing work that he knew would be checked by a megger or some other sophisticated testing advice could rely on a test lamp to indicate whether things were all right or not. He could rely on a cheap type megger to make sure the installation resistance was right. But now he will not be able to rely on that, because, after all, there will only have to be one death and he will be in serious trouble with the board. But worse still, he would continually be asking himself the question, "I wonder whether I was responsible." A lot of factors come into this, but the one I believe most strongly in is that the week-end fellow does not employ apprentices. He is not an employer we can use to give people work and to build up the number of tradesmen in the industry. Somebody mentioned plumbers earlier, and it is quite true that we became short of plumbers and brickies because those engaged in the industry were not training apprentices. In fact, it got so bad in the bricklaying trade at one stage that there were people advertising "labour only". Those people did not employ anyone.

Mr. Burns: Carpenters are doing it now.

Mr. HOUSTON: That's right, and how many apprentices do "labour only" people employ, even those who are at it full time?

A Government Member: None.

Mr. HOUSTON: That's right, and that is what Government members are advocating. We want more electrical tradesmen.

Mr. Burns: What about the Government employees?

Mr. HOUSTON: As the Leader of the Opposition has said, "What about the Government employees?" Is the Government going to deny them the right, because of some other Act——

Mr. Moore: They've done it before and they'll do it again.

Mr. HOUSTON: Just because the honourable member broke the law, just because he was the leader of that group, that does not mean we should advocate that others do it.

Mr. Moore interjected.

Mr. HOUSTON: The honourable member mumbles too much; I cannot understand him. Anyway, Mr. Hewitt, that is our case and we stand by it.

Clause 337, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 338 to 350, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 351—Positions to be advertised—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.44 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 176, line 14, insert after the word 'position' the words—

', but if in the opinion of the Commission or the Board in question, as the case may be, there is no suitable applicant who is then a person employed in the electricity supply industry, it may appoint another person who is qualified to perform the duties of the position.' "

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 351, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 352, as read, agreed to.

Clause 353—Superannuation scheme—

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (3.51 a.m.): A number of members of the S.E.A.Q. Superannuation Fund have approached me to make a submission to the Minister about their fund, and I place it on record now. They express some concern about the future of the fund and what has happened to the money that they have invested in it.

They say that the present S.E.A.Q. Superannuation Fund is an accumulation-type fund—that is, a subscriber contributes a percentage of his wage or salary (5.25 per cent) to the fund and this is matched by an authority contribution (in the ratio of 1:1.9). The fund is controlled by three trustees, two of whom are appointed by the authority and one of whom is elected by the subscribers. Contributions are invested by the trustees, and a subscriber's entitlement depends on the asset value of the fund. The earnings of the assets, of course, are returned to the fund.

In the near future it is possible that the fund will be altered so that subscribers will have a choice of remaining in an accumulation-type scheme as described or changing to a benefit-promise-type scheme under which a subscriber's entitlement is based on his or her years of service and final average salary for three or five years before retirement. Although it has not been stated specifically, it is probable that the new superannuation scheme envisaged for the electricity supply industry will be a benefit-promise scheme.

All the provisions relating to superannuation are contained in a number of clauses from clause 353 onwards, and it is pointed out in the submission that clause 2 of the Fifth Schedule of the draft of the Bill allows for the continuation of the present funds after reorganisation until a new superannuation scheme for the industry under a new superannuation board is instituted. The assets of the existing superannuation funds are then to be transferred to the new board (clause 6 (1)), and they are a little concerned about the transfer of assets.

They go on to say that clause 6 (2) allows for the settling of any dispute between present trustees and the new superannuation board by allowing the possibility of having the State Electricity Commission appoint an independent person whose decision, assuming it is adopted by the Governor in Council, will be final and binding on both parties.

Clause 380 (4) specifically excludes present contributors to the State Public Service Superannuation Fund from contributing to the new scheme. Clauses 9, 10, 11 and 12 of the Fifth Schedule deal with contributors to the Brisbane City Council or local government funds who have the option of continuing to subscribe to the present funds or electing to transfer to the new industry fund.

The apprehension of some of the subscribers, and also of some of the trustees of the present S.E.A.Q. fund, is that the articles of the new fund need to be approved by not fewer than five of the eight new boards (clause 371 (3)). There is no guarantee that the interests of present S.E.A.Q. employees will be safeguarded, seeing that they will be employed by three boards—the Generating and Transmission Authority, the South East Board and the South West Board. It is likely that the new fund will be similar to the present N.E.A.Q. fund, since this is the fund that new industry employees are to join if they become employed before the new fund is introduced.

The submission says that actuarial calculations have been commissioned by the trustees—I do not think that this has been stated officially, but someone has been able to find out the facts—and they show that the asset value of the fund and also the earning rate is higher than that of the regional board and N.E.A.Q. funds. Thus, as the assets of the S.E.A.Q. fund are to be handed over and pooled with those of the other funds, it is likely that the S.E.A.Q. fund earnings will be subsidising the benefits paid by the new scheme instead of benefiting S.E.A.Q. subscribers. They believe that they are going to be disadvantaged.

It is submitted that, in order to overcome this possible injustice, and as the assets of the S.E.A.Q. fund are held in trust by the trustees for the benefit of the subscribers, the trustees should not be forced to simply hand over the assets to a new board without having the chance to appraise the new scheme and consider the conditions of transfer to the scheme.

Although, as previously stated, the Bill contains machinery for settling disputes between the present trustees and the new board, they say this machinery is inadequate in that (a) the State Electricity Commission could very well be the arbitrator, or (b) the commission, through the Governor in Council, could choose as arbitrator an independent person whether he or she is acceptable to both parties.

I know that is a very long submission, but I have seen the Minister nodding his head. The point the trustees make is that they are concerned because their fund has been a very good one.

Mr. Katter: A filibuster.

Mr. BURNS: That interjection is typical of the honourable member. These people are concerned about money they have paid into a fund for a long while. If he is not concerned about it, he ought to be.

I would like some answer on behalf of the S.E.A.Q. contributors.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.57 a.m.): I understand the concern, but I am somewhat surprised that the S.E.A.Q. has not brought this matter to us before this. No mention has been made of it to the commission or me. Every endeavour will be made to see that no-one is disadvantaged in his superannuation. It is not the intention that with the amalgamation of these undertakings anyone should suffer. If their superannuation fund is superior to the one envisaged, maybe they can carry it on. I have had no time to examine it. It has not been presented to the commission for our consideration. I will do my best to see that they are not disadvantaged.

Clause 353, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 354 to 370, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 371—The Articles—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.58 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 183, omit all words comprising lines 1 to 5 inclusive and substitute the following—

'(3) (a) Subject to paragraph (b), the Minister shall not submit the Articles to the Governor in Council for approval until the Commissioner certifies to the Minister that the draft of the Articles has been approved—

(i) by not less than five of the eight Electricity Authorities being the Generating Board and the Electricity Boards referred to in section 103 and that the Generating Board and The South East Queensland Electricity Board are included in those Electricity Authorities that have approved the draft of the Articles; and

(ii) by the trustees of each existing superannuation and provident fund referred to in clause 2 (1) of the Fifth Schedule the benefits, existing and accruing rights, privileges and liabilities of which are affected by the Articles.

'(b) Where the Commissioner cannot certify to the Minister in terms of paragraph (a) by reason of the fact that trustees of any existing fund have not approved the draft of the Articles in respect of provisions that are relevant to that fund, he shall certify to the Minister in terms of paragraph (a) as far as he is able and shall include in his certificate particulars relating to the absence of approval of the trustees in question, and the Minister may thereupon submit the Articles to the Governor in Council for approval provided he submits therewith a statement prepared by or on behalf of those trustees, if one is made available to him, setting out the reasons why approval has not been given.' "

This amendment is to overcome a possible difficulty which could arise in setting out the conditions for the industry superannuation scheme. The present provision is that the articles can be approved when a majority of the electricity authorities agree to the draft. However, it has been pointed out that the major employers, the generating board and the South East Queensland Electricity Board, could object to the articles and yet be bound to accept them because five other authorities were happy about the provisions.

Paragraph (b) is redrafted to make the intention about the trustees of the existing funds more clear.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Clause 371, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 372 to 447, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

First Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Second Schedule—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (3.59 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 223, line 18, omit the expression—

'1 July'

and substitute the expression—

'30 June'."

This is to correct an error. The variable interest stock of the Southern Electric Authority of Queensland was converted on 30 June 1975 not 1 July 1975.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (4 a.m.): I move the following further amendment—

"On page 229, after line 47, insert the following—

'14. Exemption from stamp duty. Any agreement made or document executed pursuant to this Schedule is exempt from stamp duty.' "

This is to remedy an omission.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Second Schedule, as amended, agreed to.

Third and Fourth Schedules, as read, agreed to.

Fifth Schedule—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (4 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 240, omit all words comprising lines 5 to 8 inclusive and substitute the following:—

'(3) The Superannuation Board and the trustees of the fund in question shall, in respect of an employee who has elected pursuant to subclause (1) to transfer to the Scheme, agree upon the basis for the transfer to the Scheme of an existing interest in the fund or a part of such an interest in the fund in respect of the accrued value in his case of the past service benefits, which shall be equitable in relation to the corresponding transfer of interests of all other employees who have, pursuant to subclause (1), elected to transfer to the Scheme.' "

The amendments to this clause and clause 6 are proposed following submissions by the Southern Electric Authority of Queensland. There was a feeling that the clauses as drafted did not clearly set out the intention to protect the existing rights of members of the authority's fund. This will protect the rights of people who have invested in S.E.A.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (4.1 a.m.): I move the following further amendment—

"On page 241, omit all words comprising lines 18 to 24 inclusive and substitute the following:—

'(a) separate accounts and such particulars of investments as are necessary to record properly and equitably the accruing entitlements in respect of the members of The Southern Electric Authority of Queensland Superannuation Fund—

(i) who do not elect to convert their existing interest in such fund to an interest in the Scheme;

(ii) who have entitlements arising out of additional voluntary unsubsidized contributions;

(iii) who have entitlements pursuant to clause 4 (3);'."

The reason for this amendment was explained when the amendment to clause 4 was considered.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (4.1 a.m.): I move the following further amendment—

"On page 242, line 36, omit the words—

'an employee of the Brisbane City Council'

and substitute the words—

'a person'."

Some employees of the Southern Electric Authority of Queensland who were engaged in its powerhouses undertaking prior to the Southern Electric Authority of Queensland accepting responsibility for all generation in South-east Queensland still contribute to the Brisbane City Council Superannuation Fund.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (4.2 a.m.): I move the following further amendment—

"On page 244, line 23, insert after the word 'board' the words—

'or The South West Queensland Electricity Board'."

This is to remedy an omission.

Amendment (Mr. Camm) agreed to.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (4.3 a.m.): I move the following further amendment—

"On page 245, insert after line 5 the following:—

'13. Exemption from stamp duty. Any agreement made or document executed pursuant to this Schedule is exempt from stamp duty.' "

Amendment agreed to.

Fifth Schedule, as amended, agreed to.

Sixth Schedule—

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (4.4 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

"On page 246, lines 38, 39 and 40, omit the words—

'Areas of electricity supply of The Capricornia Electricity Board and The Wide Bay-Burnett Electricity Board'

and substitute the words—

'Local Authority areas of the Shires of Miriam Vale and Gooburrum'."

Amendment agreed to.

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy) (4.4 a.m.): I move the following further amendment—

"On page 247, lines 17, 18 and 19, omit the words—

'Areas of electricity supply of The Capricornia Electricity Board and The Wide Bay-Burnett Electricity Board'

and substitute the words—

'Local Authority areas of the Shires of Miriam Vale and Gooburrum'."

Amendment agreed to.

Sixth Schedule, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

The House adjourned at 4.6 a.m. (Friday).