

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**THURSDAY, 10 MARCH 1977**

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

**PAPERS**

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Proclamation under the James Cook University of North Queensland Act 1970-1974.

Orders in Council under—

River Improvement Trust Act 1940-1971.

Water Act 1926-1975.

Industrial Development Act 1963-1976.

Grammar Schools Act 1975 and the Local Bodies' Loans Guarantee Act 1923-1975.

**PERSONAL EXPLANATION**

**Mr. K. J. HOOPER** (Archerfield) (11.3 a.m.), by leave: The Minister for Survey and Valuation (Hon. J. W. Greenwood, M.L.A.) in this House yesterday misused the process of a ministerial statement to make a personal attack upon my reputation following disclosures in this House concerning his knowing breach of the Officials in Parliament Act by accepting moneys as fees from the Crown. The Minister attempted to create the misleading impression that he had in fact committed no breach, when in fact the only question in dispute was the financial worth to the Minister of the breach.

I regard the Minister's unjust attack on my credibility as both devious and disgusting and I draw his cheap ploy to the attention of the Parliament and the public he was elected to serve. If he had any decency or principle he would resign.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr. Moore:** Stop dumping your rubbish around your electorate.

**Mr. K. J. HOOPER:** You go and get a good hair tonic.

## QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

### 1. HOUSES PURCHASED FOR POLICE IN WARREGO ELECTORATE

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

What police houses have been purchased recently in the Warrego electorate and is consideration being given to purchasing houses for police at Augathella and Blackall?

*Answer:—*

The continuous efforts of the honourable member for Warrego to improve conditions generally within his vast electorate are recognised and would no doubt be greatly appreciated by his constituents.

I am pleased to advise the honourable member that one house for police has recently been purchased at Cunnamulla. In addition, consideration is presently being given to the purchase of further police houses at Augathella, Blackall, Tambo, Mitchell and another house at Cunnamulla. Whilst the acquisition of these additional houses is, of course, dependent on the availability of finance, the honourable member may be assured that every effort is being made to bring about the improvements he is trying so hard to achieve.

### 2. GREAT AUSTRALIAN PERMANENT BUILDING SOCIETY

**Mr. K. J. Hooper**, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Works and Housing—

(1) Further to my question of 24 November 1976 concerning the Great Australian Permanent Building Society and the signing of cheques by unauthorised persons, has his attention been drawn to the evidence under cross-examination of Detective Constable John Huey of the Fraud Squad that two directors and seven members of Great Australian Permanent Building Society had forged the names of registered signatories on cheques on various occasions?

(2) As this matter has now been made a matter of public record by the prosecution in this case of a director being charged with embezzlement, when does he propose to take the long-overdue action against the people named for forgery?

*Answer:—*

(1 and 2) This matter is sub judice. Until a determination has been made by the court, I am unable to make any comment. I should think the honourable member would know that by now.

### 3 and 4. QUEENSLAND PERMANENT BUILDING SOCIETY

**Mr. K. J. Hooper**, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Works and Housing—

(1) Is he aware that the last annual report of the Queensland Permanent Building Society showed a trading loss of

\$1,500,000 and a discrepancy in its computer operations of \$2,600,000 and that efficiency experts were being employed to advise on corrective measures?

(2) How much of the \$2,600,000 has been found?

(3) What will happen to the amount outstanding from this \$2,600,000 at 30 June?

(4) Have the efficiency experts reported yet and, if so, what did they recommend and will the Government ensure that their recommendations are implemented?

*Answers:—*

(1) Yes.

(2 and 3) The management of the Queensland Permanent Building Society has reported that until each member's account has been examined in detail and every transaction since 1974 reconciled, this information will not be known.

(4) The management consultants have submitted their final report and the office of the Registrar of Building Societies will ensure that the provisions of the Building Societies Act 1886-1976 are complied with by the society.

**Mr. K. J. Hooper**, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Works and Housing—

(1) Who make up the board of directors of the Queensland Permanent Building Society and what are their occupations?

(2) Are any of the directors in positions likely to be compromised because of conflicts of interest?

(3) Are any of the directors involved with any business which benefits from the operations of the Queensland Permanent Building Society?

*Answers:—*

(1) The statement lodged by the Queensland Permanent Building Society with the Registrar of Building Societies, containing a list of directors, indicates the following:—

Olsen, Francis Lloyd, Estate Agent; Postle, Donald Bradman Arthur, Estate Agent; Knowles, Brian Henry, Accountant; Hodgkinson, John Vincent, Accountant; Price, Lloyd Vivian, Building Society Executive; Frost, Joseph Robin Raglan, Building Society Executive.

(2) As previously advised in answer to a question asked by the honourable member on 2 December 1976, I have no knowledge of any conflict of interest of any director of this society. How many times has he to be told?

(3) Apart from Messrs. Olsen and Postle undertaking certain valuations on behalf of the Queensland Permanent Building Society, as also previously advised, I am not aware that the directors of this society are involved with any business which benefits from the society's operations.

5. FULL-TIME PROBATION OFFICER FOR  
BUNDABERG DISTRICT

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

Further to his answer to my question on 22 October 1975 with reference to a probation officer for Bundaberg and the Burnett/Wide Bay area, what is the present position regarding the appointment of an officer in this area?

*Answer:—*

By Executive Council decision dated 15 January 1976, approval was given for the creation of the position of senior probation officer to be located in the Wide Bay region. This officer's headquarters will be at Maryborough.

No appointment has been made to the position, pending the availability of suitable office accommodation. The Public Service Board has advised that suitable space has been allocated, and approval has been given for the refitting of the office to meet the needs of the probation service.

Accommodation is also being prepared for the probation service in Bundaberg, and the appointment of a district probation officer to that city will also be made within the existing approved staff strength when that accommodation is ready to be occupied.

It is realised that the honourable member is now well and truly "on the outer", but I can assure him that it is not my intention to permit his area to suffer a similar fate. Until the staff arrangements which I have outlined are made, the needs of the Wide Bay/Burnett community are being met by officers from the Rockhampton office of the probation service in the north, and from the Redcliffe regional office in the south.

6. ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT FOR BUNDABERG  
COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AND  
FURTHER EDUCATION

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

Is there a shortage of some equipment for the second-year electronics course at the Bundaberg College of Technical and Further Education and, if so, what equipment is not to hand and when is it expected that the college will receive it?

*Answer:—*

Yes, there is a temporary shortage of equipment in connection with the subject industrial electronics offered in 1977 for the first time at Bundaberg. Equipment items outstanding at the moment are—

- 3 BWD Mini Labs;
- 1 Digital Logic Trainer.

Delays in procuring the above equipment have occurred, but all essential equipment should be at the college by the end of

March. No student of the course has suffered because of the unavailability of equipment as the college has adjusted its order of teaching some curriculum topics.

7. PROPOSED CHANGES TO RADFORD  
SCHEME IN EDUCATION

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

(1) With reference to reports on the front page of "The Courier-Mail" recently which heralded changes to the Radford scheme in education and specifically to the proposed shift to what was referred to as a "competency-based assessment system", what is meant by the term and who proposed it?

(2) Has the Board of Secondary School Studies adopted the proposal as was stated in the newspaper report?

*Answers:—*

(1) I would point out that in its Press release the Board of Secondary School Studies stated that it had adopted five basic principles as guide-lines for determining its procedures in the future. One guide-line was that there be a change to a competency-based system of assessing and reporting the achievements of students.

A competency-based system of assessment and reporting seeks to describe a student's achievement in terms of his mastery of skills, understanding and knowledge in that subject. A student's achievement is compared with accepted standards of mastery and competency and assessments made are therefore absolute rather than comparative. A characteristic of such assessment is that a student's grade of achievement is independent of any other student's mark. His grade, therefore, will not be based on the distribution of marks of the group but on his own performance.

The proposed change has been adopted as a guide-line by the board following its consideration of the issues raised by the two research reports—the Campbell Study and the Schools Under Radford Study.

(2) No. The basic principles adopted by the board are to serve as guide-lines for the board's advisory committees in considering the practical implications of changes recommended by a subcommittee of the board headed by Professor Scott. Any significant changes finally agreed to by the board will be submitted to me as Minister and, if agreed to, will be phased in after all necessary preparations have been made.

As the honourable member is aware, arrangements have been made for members of the board to meet with members of my education committee to discuss the recommendations.

#### 8. BOATING PATROL OFFICERS, BUNDABERG AND GLADSTONE AREAS

**Mr. Ahern** for **Mr. Lamont**, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Tourism and Marine Services—

(1) Has any officer of the Harbours and Marine Boating and Fisheries Patrol issued an instruction to patrol officers to lay off known illegal crabbers in the Bundaberg and Gladstone areas and, if so, is this departmental practice?

(2) Did two young patrol officers go missing in the Bundaberg area three years ago and have their bodies not been found and, if so, does the department suspect foul play?

(3) Is he aware of widespread intimidation on a large scale by fishermen towards boating patrol officers and, in particular, was a young married patrol officer warned by a master fisherman in Gladstone that he should increase his insurance policy to provide for his wife and child?

(4) Is the department proceeding against Claude Appo, who allegedly assaulted a young patrol officer in Bundaberg when that officer attempted to seize a fishing net because of a suspected violation, and was the officer warned that he would "go up the creek like the other two"?

(5) Will he assure the House that his department will give full support to boating and patrol officers who are attempting to enforce the law under extremely intimidating conditions and not in any way be seen to be protecting suspected illegal fishermen?

*Answers:—*

(1) I am advised that a young patrol officer was instructed by the assistant superintendent, acting on police advice, to stay away from a certain fisherman until certain investigations had been completed.

(2) Two young patrol officers were lost off the coast in the Bundaberg area. No foul play was suspected. Some clothing was found. All evidence points to the conclusion that these officers were taken by sharks. The boat was found capsized near the scene.

(3) Reports have been received of intimidatory tactics adopted by some fishermen. No reports have been received relating to the warning allegedly made to a young married patrol officer. I will arrange for inquiries to be made in this matter.

(4) A report has been received on this matter, which has been referred to the Solicitor-General for advice.

(5) Yes.

#### 9. FLAMMABLE CHILDREN'S NIGHTWEAR

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

(1) With reference to an article in "The Australian" of 29 January which referred

to the possible dumping of children's nightwear in Australian States outside of New South Wales, has he seen the article and has his department received any communication from the New South Wales Minister for Consumer Affairs?

(2) If so, has he been able to ascertain whether such clothing has been brought into the State and, if not, will he institute some investigations regarding the matter?

(3) Has he given any consideration to reinforcing the present State requirement regarding flammable children's nightwear and, if not, will he consider doing so in the interests of children?

*Answer:—*

(1 to 3) I have seen the article referred to in "The Australian" of 29 January 1977 referring to the possible dumping of children's nightwear in Australian States outside of New South Wales. A communication has been received by me from the New South Wales Minister for Consumer Affairs.

At the present time the Queensland Factories and Shops Act requires that children's night clothes be clearly labelled to specify the type of fabric or fabrics contained in the garment and this label must also include a statement specifying particulars relating to the flammability of garments and warnings and instructions in accordance with Australian Standard 1249 for the Safe Design Rule for Children's Night Clothes.

As far as I am aware there has been no dumping in Queensland of children's nightwear which does not comply with the present requirements of the Act.

The Chief Inspector of Factories and Shops is a member of the Standards Association of Australia Committee TX/13, Burning Behaviour of Textiles and Textile Products, responsible for the preparation and revision of standards dealing with flammable clothing. The Chief Inspector has advised that these standards are presently being actively examined and it appears that certain fabrics may be banned for the purpose of manufacture of children's night clothes. As soon as these revised standards are published, consideration will be given to invoking appropriate provisions from the standards through the Factories and Shops Act, and it is understood that all States will take similar action to ensure that similar legislation is enacted.

#### 10. PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS IN HOSPITALS

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

(1) Is there a standard procedure at public hospitals regarding the admission of psychiatric patients whereby the patient wishes to be admitted voluntarily?

(2) Can a general practitioner or specialist revoke a court order which has been directed to a psychiatric patient?

(3) Should a general practitioner or specialist revoke such an order, may a psychiatrist retain a patient in hospital if he considered it to be in the interests of the patient?

*Answers:—*

(1) Voluntary admissions to hospital are the subject of section 17 of the Mental Health Act of 1974, which specifies that nothing will prevent a patient in need of treatment for mental illness being admitted to another hospital without any application, order or direction rendering him liable to be detained.

Following a misunderstanding by patients, their families and the media concerning the conditions of voluntary treatment, the largest general psychiatric unit has prepared a form which ensures that the patient signing that form requests admission for treatment on a voluntary basis only.

(2 and 3) The only patients admitted to hospital as a result of an order by a court are those patients who have been involved in criminal proceedings. Such patients by and large cannot be discharged except by direction of the Governor in Council.

#### 11. BUILDING SOCIETIES TAKEN OVER BY S.G.I.O.

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

(1) What is the position of the group of building societies taken over by the S.G.I.O. throughout Queensland in regard to their office locations in the respective cities or towns?

(2) What are the present staffing situations in these offices?

(3) Are staff numbers likely to continue and will present premises be retained?

*Answers:—*

(1 and 2) The present branch offices and staffing of these in respect of the S.G.I.O. Building Society are as follows:—

Bundaberg, 1 female supervisor and 1 female assistant;

Brookside, 1 female supervisor and 1 female part-time assistant;

Alderley, 1 male supervisor;

Garden City (Mt. Gravatt), 1 male supervisor and 1 part-time female assistant;

Toombul, 1 male supervisor and 1 female assistant;

331 Queen Street, 1 male supervisor and 2 female assistants;

1st Floor S.G.I.O. Building, 1 male supervisor and 2 female assistants.

There are approximately 30 people employed in the central administrative office of the society.

All activities of the society outside the above branch offices are undertaken on an agency basis.

(3) The management of the building society is understood to be reviewing branch office operations and it is likely that, where justification cannot be established that a particular branch is a viable one, monthly tenancies will be terminated and staff surplus to requirements dispensed with. Activities in these areas would then be undertaken on an agency basis.

#### 12. PROPOSED CHANGES TO RADFORD SCHEME IN EDUCATION

**Dr. Crawford**, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Education and Cultural Activities—

(1) What changes to the 1976 interpretation of the Radford system of assessing secondary education standards are contemplated for 1977 and, specifically, is it considered that the monitoring system needs modification?

(2) What does his department consider is needed to reduce the increasing number of illiterate school-leavers and is there any intention of expanding trade-training at secondary schools?

*Answers:—*

(1) No changes to the 1976 procedures of assessment for Junior and Senior Certificates are contemplated for 1977. Changes have been proposed for future trialling and are presently being considered by the Board of Secondary School Studies and its committees.

Honourable members will be aware that in 1976 Professor W. J. Campbell reported on a study of "Some Consequences of the Radford Scheme for Schools, Teachers and Students in Queensland" which he and other senior colleagues at the University of Queensland had undertaken from May 1974 to November 1975.

The Board of Secondary School Studies has responded to a finding of that report that the use of relativistic ratings in reporting achievement had a detrimental effect upon the students. The alternative to a system of relativistic ratings, that is, a system which compares the achievement of a student against the achievements of the State group studying a given subject, is a system in which a student's achievements are reported in terms of his mastery of the subject.

There is no suggestion that there be any relaxation of the monitoring system. What is proposed is a modification of procedures to place greater emphasis on the objectives of courses of study and the effectiveness of assessment techniques to determine whether objectives are fulfilled. Those who use the results of assessment will therefore receive more meaningful information.

(2) I am not aware of any evidence showing that there is an increasing number of illiterate school-leavers in the community. To try to help those students in secondary schools who have reading problems, resource teachers are being appointed

to all secondary schools to organise reading improvement courses and to assist teachers plan remedial programs.

In recent years there has been an expansion in the manual arts section of high schools to grades 11 and 12 to allow students to familiarise themselves with the working of machines and to introduce them to many other processes and experiences in association with trades other than the wood-working and metal-working trades.

This year the technical section of my department has introduced pre-vocational (trade-based) courses to provide students with a full-time educational programme, prior to employment, which will develop a range of immediately usable skills and knowledge and which will also develop an awareness of differing attitudes and values present in society. These courses have been introduced in the first instance at Bundaberg, Cairns and Eagle Farm.

### 13. SAND-MINING AT COOLOOLA

**Dr. Crawford**, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Mines and Energy—

(1) As there continues to be altercation in our community following the Fraser Island fiasco, is he aware of any application by any mining company to mine in the general area of Cooloola?

(2) Irrespective of any recent application for permits to mine in the Cooloola area, can he categorically reassure those who are concerned about possible mining there?

(3) Are claims by some citizens correct that mining companies do not wish to expand general sand-mining as the economic climate for selling of their products is so poor?

*Answers:—*

(1) No.

(2) I can assure the honourable member that if any such application is made, it will be considered in terms of the provisions of the Mining Act and prevailing Government policy.

(3) Mineral sands have often been subject to fluctuations in demand, as is unfortunately the case for several other sectors of the mining industry. As companies have to plan ahead and have sufficient reserves for future operations, mineral leasing is not necessarily related to a current demand situation.

### 14. TRIPLE-ANTIGEN IMMUNISATION OF INFANTS AND CHILDREN

**Dr. Lockwood**, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Health—

(1) Will he present a balanced statement on immunisation of infants and children against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis, comparing the danger from these diseases in immunised societies, such as Queensland, and unimmunised societies with the danger from immunisation itself?

(2) Will he publicise those conditions well known to general practitioners, such as acute illness with or without fever, chronic severe illness, allergies (past and present), nervous system conditions (past and present) and previous reaction to immunisation, which may cause a general practitioner to modify or postpone immunisation?

(3) Will he advise mothers to take their babies only to doctors who make time to take a history and, if necessary, fully examine a child before deciding to give a triple-antigen injection?

*Answer:—*

(1 to 3) The Communicable Diseases Committee of the National Health and Medical Research Council is at present examining this subject. When the council has finalised a report, an examination will be made to determine whether or not any amendment should be made to existing advice prepared by my Department, but I would point out to the honourable member that Queensland Government policy urges all parents to follow the existing immunisation schedule. As soon as the report comes to hand, I will discuss the matter further with the honourable member.

### 15. PRECAUTIONS AGAINST CHOLERA AND FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

**Dr. Lockwood**, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Primary Industries—

(1) Does he recall the frequent comparisons made by honourable members between human cholera and foot and mouth disease in inland streams during the debates on the so-called "Pig-swill Bill"?

(2) Have appropriate officers of his department been detailed to closely follow the massive health measures taken to protect our population from cholera by way of rapid diagnosis, screening of suspect cases or carriers, searching for the source of infection, testing water sources and supply and provision of alternative water supply?

(3) Has his department sufficient technology to isolate and identify foot and mouth disease from a freshwater stream?

(4) Should all meat waste be collected and sterilised to prevent the accidental contamination of inland streams with foot and mouth disease virus if infected meat passes through a garbage disposal unit and sewage treatment works?

*Answers:—*

(1) Yes.

(2) My colleague the Minister for Health has not requested the help of my department to assist in detecting the source of infection either from water supplies or from animal carriers, which would be a most unlikely source.

My officers would have little to gain from observation of or involvement with Health Department officers in the present exercise. Cholera is totally unrelated to foot and mouth disease and other major exotic diseases of animals both in causation and method of spread. My officers are involved in the development of detailed plans for controlling and eradicating exotic diseases and regularly undertake training in this field both in Australia and overseas.

(3) Freshwater streams are a most unlikely source of foot and mouth disease infection. National plans for this disease provide for any suspect material to be forwarded to the International Reference Laboratory at Pirbright, U.K., for isolation and identification. Foot and mouth disease material could be handled only in high-security laboratory facilities in this country and these are not yet available.

(4) I am advised that there is no risk of spreading foot and mouth disease though dispersal of contaminated animal products through sewage systems. The virus is rapidly killed in the presence of alkalis including ammonia produced from faeces and urine. The high level of dilution would prevent an infective dose from reaching a susceptible animal even if the virus did survive.

#### 16. GOVERNMENT HOME-OWNERSHIP SCHEMES

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

Will he give a resume of the results achieved to date by two most progressive house-ownership measures introduced by his department in late 1976, namely, the \$200 deposit scheme for home purchase by existing Housing Commission tenants and the release of \$10,000,000 for lending at concessional interest rates to prospective home owners unable to afford normal commercial housing loans but falling outside the means test applied to Housing Commission loans?

*Answer:—*

I thank the honourable member for his question and for his praise of this Government's initiatives to assist modest-income earners towards home-ownership. These schemes show that, unlike the A.L.P., we act and don't just talk. Honourable members opposite are just big bags of wind. They are led by the honourable member for Archerfield, who is ably seconded by the honourable member for Bulimba and the Leader of the Opposition. They have now been joined, of course, by the honourable member for Mackay, who also is a great big bag of wind and has, at last, got to his rightful place.

I must acknowledge the State Treasury's first-class financial management which has enabled it to allocate \$10,000,000 to a

special scheme, which not only will help home-buyers but also has helped to lift the struggling building industry.

In respect of the special advance of \$10,000,000 injected to assist people to buy new homes at concessional interest rates, the figures to date are—

285 loans approved to a value of \$5,130,000;

96 applications in process to a value of \$1,730,000.

With 550 loans available, the honourable member will see that progress is excellent, and, judged on the response from builders and buyers, the scheme has brought new heart to many.

In respect of the other scheme where the commission is empowered to sell a house-and-land package at concessional interest with an advance of up to \$25,000, the figures show that from February to July, the six months before the amount of advance was increased, the commission sold 147 houses to tenants. In the period of six months from August to January it sold 435 houses. This points again to a high level of consumer satisfaction.

How the honourable member for Archerfield can tell deliberate lies on this matter, I will never understand.

I take this opportunity to clarify a point on deposits. The \$200 is a minimum cash deposit, but of course the purchaser has to find the difference between the sale price and the amount of advance.

Again I thank the honourable member for asking such a good question.

#### 17. DARRA EXPLORATION LIMESTONE-MINING AND CLINKER WORKS, GLADSTONE

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

(1) Further to my questions that could not be answered on 18 November 1976, as tenders have now been called for work in relation to proposed limestone-mining and a clinker works, has Darra Exploration now met all the requirements of the local authorities in the area?

(2) Has a franchise agreement been agreed to by the State Government and the company or will one be agreed to?

(3) Will the agreement take from the local authority its powers under the Local Government Act or by-laws in respect of this project?

*Answer:—*

(1 to 3) I would suggest that the honourable member direct his question to the Honourable the Premier.

**Mr. Prest:** I do so accordingly.



18. BRIDGE AND ROAD-WORKS OVER  
CALLIOPE RIVER

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

(1) As the Co-ordinator-General reported in July 1976 that talks had been held with Darra Exploration in relation to bridge and road-works over the Calliope River, has the local authority of the area been taken into talks with the department and the company concerned?

(2) When will tenders be called for these important bridge and road-works?

(3) What is the estimated cost of the bridge and the road-works and what proportion is to be paid by the company?

*Answer:—*

(1 to 3) I would suggest that the honourable member direct his question to the Honourable the Premier.

**Mr. Prest:** I do so accordingly.

19. PROTECTION OF COMMERCIAL FISHING,  
CORIO BAY AND FISHING CREEK

**Mr. Prest**, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement and Fisheries—

As the proposed Iwasaki tourist project may become a reality, what action has been or will be taken by his department to protect the fishing industry at Yeppoon, where 59 permanent commercial fishing vessels operate, to operate the Corio Bay/Fishing Creek area, which is a known marine nursery and breeding grounds, and to protect the livelihood of the fishermen who have a total investment of \$1,600,000 in the industry and where the catch in prawns alone has risen from 136 500 kg in 1971-72 to 454 500 kg in 1976 within 16 km north and south of Corio Bay?

*Answer:—*

I can advise that as a result of representations by the honourable member for Callide, arrangements have been made for my Fisheries Service to maintain an oversight on what are currently suggestions for development of a tourist project in the Yeppoon area. The service will closely examine firm proposals when they are made to ensure that the interests of commercial fishermen are protected as well as the environment of Corio Bay, Fishing Creek, Water Park Creek and all tributaries thereof including mangroves which were set aside as Fisheries Habitat Reserve No. 17 by Order in Council on 14 March 1974 for the purpose of protecting and conserving these important fish-breeding and fish-feeding areas.

20. COMET RIVER BRIDGE

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

What is the latest situation regarding the construction of the Comet River bridge?

*Answer:—*

Tenders for construction of the foundations closed on 28 February 1977. These are being examined, and a recommendation regarding the awarding of the contract is expected in the next few weeks.

An order has been placed for the fabrication of the prestressed concrete beams which form the main structural element of the superstructure.

Release of the balance of the scheme is anticipated in the near future in sufficient time to ensure continuity of work as the foundations are completed.

21. MORE CATTLE "K" WAGONS FOR  
CENTRAL QUEENSLAND

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

What is the present progress of his efforts to make more cattle "K" wagons available to shift cattle in Central Queensland?

*Answer:—*

Contracts have recently been awarded to Industrial Engineering Pty. Ltd. for the manufacture of 125 "KL" cattle wagons and to Vickers Ruwolt-Scotts of Ipswich Division for 100 wagons of the same type. In addition, 50 wagons are being modified in the Ipswich Railway Workshops for use as cattle wagons.

22. TRANS-AUSTRALIA RAILWAY

**Mr. Lester**, pursuant to notice, asked the Premier—

Is the proposed construction of a trans-Australia railway to service twin steel mills, one in Western Australia and one in Queensland, by carrying Queensland coal and Western Australian iron ore a positive step to provide more jobs for Queenslanders?

*Answer:—*

Yes.

I have been trying for a long time to create more jobs and job opportunities in this State. We are making every endeavour to be self-sufficient. That is why I undertook the recent visit to the Middle East and I believe that visit will prove to be the first step in creating a relationship which will provide mutual benefits to those countries and the State of Queensland.

## 23. POLICE POWERS OF DETENTION

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

(1) With reference to the suggestion made to the Criminal Law Inquiry of giving police the power to detain for 24 hours without arrest people suspected of committing serious crimes, has this suggestion his support and, if so, what is the rationale behind what many people interested in civil liberties would consider to be shades of "Idi Amin Dada"?

(2) What is meant by "reasonable grounds", which was one of the safeguards put forward when the suggestion was made?

(3) How does he, as a Minister pledged to uphold the rights of citizens, reconcile this suggestion with the fundamental right of a person to be considered innocent until proven guilty?

*Answer:—*

(1 to 3) One of the terms of reference of the Criminal Law Inquiry states: "whether police powers of investigation, interrogation, search, seizure and arrest are adequate to meet the needs of the community in present day circumstances."

In this regard the committee received submissions from a number of quarters concerning the power of detention by police of people suspected of committing serious crimes, such as murder, arson, rape and robbery. If the committee of inquiry feels that changes are necessary in this area, it will no doubt make such recommendations when its findings are published. Until that time, I feel it would be improper for me to comment on this matter as it could be considered that I am endeavouring to influence the findings of the committee.

## 24. CRIMINAL LAW INQUIRY

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

(1) With reference to the Criminal Law Inquiry, why were submissions taken only from witnesses in Brisbane and why did the inquiry not travel to other areas of the State so that Queensland citizens, including police officers, living outside the metropolitan area would have the opportunity to give evidence?

(2) How many people put submissions to the secretary of the inquiry from (a) the Brisbane metropolitan area, (b) other districts outside Brisbane and (c) any of the State prisons?

(3) Of the total number of submissions put to the secretary, (a) how many were presented to the inquiry and (b) how many were from police officers?

(4) What is the total cost of the inquiry to date?

*Answers:—*

(1 to 3) It would not be proper for me to comment on the conduct of the inquiry, which has not yet been finalised. I suggest that the honourable member await the report of the committee before prejudging its conduct of the inquiry.

(4) It is not possible to assess the cost of the inquiry at this stage.

## 25. POLICE RAID ON CEDAR BAY COMMUNE

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

(1) In view of the decision of a magistrate to commit for trial three police officers, does he still stand by previous statements made to this House and to the media on the Cedar Bay affair?

(2) Will he affirm that a prime reason for the raid on Cedar Bay on 29 August was the recapture of a prison escapee?

(3) In view of the outcome of the Magistrates Court case on Cedar Bay, will he now apologise on behalf of Government members to the World Council of Churches, Action for World Development and the Council for Civil Liberties for the vicious and unwarranted attacks made on them because of their efforts to see justice done over the Cedar Bay affair?

*Answer:—*

(1 to 3) As previously stated in this House in answer to a question by the honourable member, I do not propose answering this question or any other question on this subject pending finalisation of court proceedings.

I would point out, however, that the honourable member in directing this question to me is asking me to adopt a policy of prejudging the guilt or otherwise of persons before all evidence is heard and the decision of the court is given. Whilst he and other persons and organisations may be in favour of pre-empting the court's decision, in the interests of fair play and justice I am not.

## 26. DECLARATION OF CARDWELL AND HINCHINBROOK SHIRES AS DISASTER AREAS

**Mr. Jones**, pursuant to notice, asked the Premier—

(1) In view of his announcement on 8 March declaring disaster areas in the Shires of Cardwell and Hinchinbrook, under what circumstances will these people suffering the personal disaster of floods inundating their homes be granted assistance?

(2) Will similar terms and conditions be applied in this disaster as were operative in the recently declared disaster areas in Cairns city and the Mulgrave and Johnstone Shires?

(3) If so, what form of means test applies in these instances?

(4) What are the cut-off points and the general disqualifying provisions in these cases and why have flood victims in disaster areas been denied Government assistance?

*Answer:—*

(1 to 4) On 8 March the stipendiary magistrates at Cairns, Ingham, Innisfail and Townsville were advised that the approval for the application of the personal distress and hardship provisions of the State Disaster Relief Plan to those persons so affected by cyclone "Keith" should be extended to meet the current flood emergency.

It is completely incorrect for the honourable member to state that flood victims in those areas have been denied assistance by the Government. I suggest that in future he check his facts before making cheap assertions of this nature.

#### 27. PRE-SCHOOL FACILITIES, CAIRNS AREA

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

Further to his answer to my question on 2 December 1976 concerning establishment of pre-school facilities at Hambleton and Bayview Heights, what is the present position and which other schools in the Cairns area are to be provided with pre-school facilities in 1976-77 and 1977-78?

*Answer:—*

Tenders have recently been called for construction of a single-unit pre-school centre at Hambleton and a double-unit centre at Cairns North. Provisional planning is proceeding with a view to constructing a double-unit centre at Bayview Heights in the context of the 1977-78 Loan Works Programme.

#### 28. INNISFAIL TRAMWAY

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

(1) Why has the Innisfail tramway, which in 1958 was the most profitable section of the Queensland Railways, showing a 10 per cent profit on capital outlay, degenerated into a position where it is alleged to have lost \$291,631 for the year ended 30 June 1976?

(2) Have the consignors who use the tramway been charged exceptionally low freight rates, which have not kept pace with the inflationary trends occurring in the industry generally?

(3) Was the same haulage rate applied for week-end work as was applied for normal week-day haulage?

(4) Did the Railway Department in recent times completely overhaul and update this section of the railways?

(5) What was the overall cost of carrying out this work and why was it done if, as is claimed, the State Government has been considering selling the tramway for some years past?

(6) Why were tenders for the purchase of the tramway not called?

(7) What area of railway land is involved in this sale?

(8) What is the sale price?

(9) Who were the purchasers?

*Answers:—*

(1) Revenue has failed to keep pace with the astronomical increases in wages and other operating costs during the period intervening since 1958. Wages alone have increased by 287 per cent.

(2) The movement in freight rates for cane and sugar carried on the tramway has not been any more favourable than has been the case in respect of the rates on similar commodities conveyed elsewhere in the State during the past 10 years.

(3) Yes, but this is not peculiar to the Innisfail tramway; it applies throughout the State.

(4 and 5) The attention given to locomotives, rolling-stock, track and other facilities was that required to maintain the desired standard of operating efficiency. In fact, major maintenance on the Queensland Bridge was carried out in 1972 when the line was still making a profit.

(6) For many years the tramway has been operated solely for the conveyance of sugar cane to the two mills in the area and sugar to Mourilyan Harbour. It was logical, therefore, that negotiations for sale would be conducted with the users of the tramway.

(7) Approximately 90 acres.

(8) It is not considered proper that this be revealed until the sale has been finalised. I will then issue a complete statement.

(9) Howard Smith Industries Pty. Ltd. and the South Johnstone Co-operative Sugar Milling Association Limited.

These answers reinforce the information that the honourable member for Mourilyan has supplied to her constituents over the last few months.

#### 29. CHOLERA OUTBREAK

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

(1) Are human and/or animal faeces the only avenue of propagation of the cholera germ?

(2) If so, have all streams which flow into the Luscombe Weir and the Albert River between Plunkett and Beenleigh been

thoroughly checked and have all persons who use or might use these streams for the disposal of effluent of any kind also been thoroughly checked?

*Answer:—*

(1 and 2) The reservoir of infection of the disease of cholera is man and the mode of transmission is through ingestion of water or food contaminated with faeces or vomitus or soiling by hands or flies. This textbook mode of transmission is not completely accepted and animal reservoirs of this disease have been and are being explored thoroughly.

Teams of officers of the Division of Public Health Supervision have daily continued an intensive investigation, including the checking of places of disposal of effluent, and the thorough testing and sampling of all water sources in the suspect locality.

### 30. CHECKS ON REPAIRS CARRIED OUT UNDER MOTOR VEHICLE INSURANCE

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

(1) In view of the increasingly high cost of motor vehicle insurance and the corresponding escalation of accident repair bills, will he investigate the growing plight of motorists who are obliged, in order to release their vehicle, to sign a so-called "certificate of satisfaction", which virtually frees the repairer from any consequent liability resulting from poor workmanship?

(2) Will he urge motorists to protect their interests by securing, prior to signing a certificate of satisfaction, an independent, authoritative assessment of the work carried out by the repairer?

*Answers:—*

(1) It is the normal practice of insurers to require repairers to rectify any faults in their repair work that are discovered after completion of the certificate of satisfaction.

(2) In view of the control exercised over repair work by insurers and insurance assessors, this action should not be necessary. If the honourable member has reason to believe that the system is not adequate to protect the consumer, then I welcome further submissions.

### 31. HAZARDS OF INFLATABLE SWIMMING AIDS AND TOYS

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

(1) Will he consider banning the manufacture and sale of flimsy inflatable toys as used by children when swimming at beaches?

(2) Is he aware that the Product Safety Committee of the New South Wales Labor Ministry of Consumer Affairs is now investigating the safety of water aids and toys?

(3) Is he aware that three children were drowned after being swept from a rubber raft off North Wollongong beach, New South Wales?

(4) Is he aware that surf lifesavers in Queensland are constantly rescuing children who have got into difficulties because they relied on unsafe water aids and toys?

(5) When can the parents of Queensland children expect the State Government to act to prevent drownings off the Queensland coast associated with the use of rubber inflated swimming toys?

*Answer:—*

(1 to 5) While there is provision in the Health Act for the prohibition of the sale of articles injurious to life or health, it is not applicable in the case raised by the honourable member. I share the honourable member's esteem for the Surf Life Saving Association. I would point out to him that whilst Government has a responsibility in such matters, parents too must accept their responsibility in the supervision of their children.

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

#### HIGH RATE OF INFLATION IN QUEENSLAND

**Mr. BURNS:** I ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer: Is he aware that the rate of inflation in Brisbane has been consistently higher than the national rate for the past year, with prices now increasing in Brisbane at the rate of 14.9 per cent compared with the national rate of 14.4 per cent? What specific action is the Government taking to reduce or control prices in Queensland?

**Mr. KNOX:** These indexes fluctuate. While at the present time the Queensland index is certainly higher, as the honourable member pointed out, if he cares to look back over the record he will find that there were occasions when our index was lower than those for the other capital cities for a number of items, including for a long period the price of bread, whereas South Australia, which has price control, has the highest-priced bread in Australia. Many commodities which are price controlled by the Prices Justification Tribunal for the whole nation virtually are often subject to increases in price. Price control does not mean a reduction in the price of a commodity. All it does is appear to regulate the increases. The Government of Queensland is not going to introduce price control in this State.

POSSIBLE CUT-BACK IN QUEENSLAND'S TAX REIMBURSEMENT

**Mr. BURNS:** I ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer: Is he aware that the New South Wales and Victorian State Treasurers are preparing a case for the Premiers' Conference called yesterday by the Prime Minister for 12 and 13 April for a cut-back in tax reimbursements to Western Australia because of increased mining royalties raised by that State Government? Is he aware of any moves by those two bigger States to reduce Queensland's future tax reimbursement allocations because of mineral royalties received by this State, and has this criterion been taken into account in Queensland's submissions to the normal Premiers' Conferences?

**Mr. KNOX:** I am always aware that the heavily populated States of New South Wales and Victoria are anxious to retain their position in the sharing of the available funds. The Queensland Government must therefore be alert to the possibility of losing its entitlement as well as its proper share of the financial resources of this nation. With that in mind, the Queensland Government has been on guard continually against these possibilities. I am not aware of the specific nature of the matter raised by the Leader of the Opposition but I do not doubt that the Labor Government of New South Wales would want to prejudice the interests of Queensland because we have been a lot more successful in running our affairs than it has.

CONTRACTS FOR SUBURBAN RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION SCHEME

**Mr. BURNS:** In asking the Minister for Transport a question without notice, I refer to the Brisbane suburban railway electrification programme and the current unemployment in metal trades and electrical manufacturing shops in Queensland, and ask him if he will ensure that all contracts for engines, carriages and electrical work associated with the rail electrification scheme, both now and in the future, are let to Queensland firms, and that all goods supplied for the scheme are manufactured in Queensland, if that is possible? Will he also give an undertaking that goods will not be imported from overseas and assembled in Queensland, thus cutting employment opportunities for Queensland workers with the possible loss of long-term profitable work for Queensland workshops?

**Mr. K. W. HOOPER:** I have already announced that tenders received for coaches were, with the exception of one, all from Queensland. The matter of content is of concern to everybody. I give an undertaking that, where possible, parts will be made in Queensland. I think the honourable member is aware that much of the electrical equipment is not available in Australia. We are looking very closely into this matter. I give an undertaking that, where possible, we will certainly be expecting local content to be included.

LOSS OF COMMONWEALTH GRANTS RESULTING FROM DEATH DUTIES ABOLITION

**Mr. MELLOY:** I ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer: At the proposed Premiers' Conference in April to discuss the review of interstate financial relations, what argument will be used to ensure that Queensland does not lose any Commonwealth grants as a result of the lost revenue-raising capability flowing from the abolition of death duties?

**Mr. KNOX:** The Commonwealth Grants Commission, as presently constituted, takes into account the special needs and aberrations that may occur in the redistribution of the revenue of the nation. Last year Queensland was the only State that successfully applied to the Grants Commission and, as a result of that application, it received something like \$27,000,000. No other State applied.

I assure the honourable member that the interests of the State have been extremely well looked after as a result of the visit of the Grants Commission here just before Christmas, when all departments made submissions in the normal way. As will be known, the processes of that commission are confidential, and we await its determination.

As to the future—the matter specially raised by the honourable member gives me some concern. I do not believe that the Grants Commission should become the adviser to the Federal Government regarding the sharing of the revenues. If it did, where would the States then go to get special assistance to look after the aberrations and apparent shortcomings in the apportionment?

On that basis I made a public statement some months ago, prior to the last meeting of the Grants Commission in this State, that I do not believe that the Grants Commission, a judicial body which the States and the Commonwealth recognise and support and whose determinations they observe, should be in fact an administrative body, which it could easily become if it acted in the way in which the Commonwealth appears to announce or intends that it should act. In other words the Grants Commission, under those circumstances, would be distributing the funds, which we believe is the responsibility of somebody else, and the States would have nobody else to appeal to should there be any aberrations, and I have no doubt that there would be.

HUMAN ORGAN DONATIONS

**Mr. DOUMANY:** I ask the Minister for Health: In view of the statement attributed to the chairman of the Law Reform Commission (Mr. Justice Michael Kirby) on page 4 of today's "Australian", calling for serious consideration of the notion that every dead person be regarded as an organ donor in the absence of an objection registered prior to death, will the Minister inform the House (a) as to the current restrictions and procedures in Queensland governing organ donations and (b) as to any contemplated changes regarded as desirable by the Government?

**Dr. EDWARDS:** It is true that the Law Reform Commission—

**Mr. Knox** interjected.

**Dr. EDWARDS:** The Commonwealth Law Reform Commission, as the Deputy Premier reminds me, is investigating this matter. I am pleased to receive his reminder; that must be made quite clear.

The Commonwealth Law Reform Commission has circulated a working paper, a copy of which has come to my department. I have circulated copies to some members of Parliament for their comments. If any other honourable members would like to have a copy, I would be pleased to give one to them and they could make submissions direct to the Commonwealth Law Reform Commission.

The Commonwealth Law Reform Commission representatives came to Queensland. We had discussions with them and pointed out to them the principles of the Queensland law, which in their opinion were acceptable and were working very well.

The present situation in Queensland is that donations of tissue can occur only with the authority of the relatives of the deceased person or following arrangements prior to the death of that person. The law in this State has worked extremely well and we are looking at suggestions made by the Commonwealth Law Reform Commission.

#### DENTAL CARE PROGRAMME

**Mr. DOUMANY:** I ask the Minister for Health: In view on the hypocritical article in today's "Courier-Mail" entitled, "MPs and the 'dental gap'" in which University of Queensland senior lecturer (Dr. Jago) placed the onus for children's dental problems on parliamentarians and the Government, will the Minister set the record straight regarding the State dental care programme?

**Dr. EDWARDS:** That article was drawn to my attention this morning, and I would like to place on record in this Parliament the fact that the Queensland Government has led the field in Australia in its promotion of dental hygiene and health. Through our Health Education Council, which has now been disbanded and replaced by the Division of Health Education, we have set up a programme of dental health education and only last year we had a special week set aside for the promotion of dental health in the community. It has been so successful that the Australian Dental Association recently had discussions with me about it, and in June this year the association and my department will be working together on the basis of a programme which will be used not only throughout the State but throughout the nation to inculcate in the community an awareness of dental health and hygiene.

I think that the gentleman who wrote the article was referring to the fact that politicians have to make a decision regarding the

mandatory fluoridation of water supplies. I want to make it quite clear that the Government has considered this matter and that Cabinet has made a decision that at this stage it is not considered necessary to introduce legislation making the fluoridation of water supplies mandatory. Through the Department of Health we have made it quite clear that we encourage parents to give their children fluoride tablets. This programme has proved most successful and we are pleased with its outcome.

**Mr. K. J. Hooper:** You want a dollar each way.

**Dr. EDWARDS:** The Labor Party is prone to this sort of attitude because when it was in power in the Commonwealth it did nothing whatsoever about the promotion of dental health. I want to make it quite clear to the honourable member—

**Mr. Houston:** What about Tasmania?

**Dr. EDWARDS:** It is quite interesting that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition mentions Tasmania. In the three years since we have introduced this programme we have gone further ahead than has Tasmania in all the years in which its programme has been operating. The Queensland dental health programme is now recognised as one of the most effective in the nation.

I want to ask Opposition members if they are prepared to make clear their stand on mandatory fluoridation. Obviously the Labor Party supports mandatory fluoridation of water and I ask honourable members opposite if they are prepared to deny it in this House.

#### CHOLERA OUTBREAK

**Mr. GIBBS:** I ask the Minister for Health: Has he received a copy of a widely distributed letter addressed to him from the Beenleigh branch of the A.L.P. asking six already-answered questions concerning the cholera outbreak? Does he see this as an attempt to make political capital out of what could have been a most serious medical problem?

**Dr. EDWARDS:** It is true that the Beenleigh branch of the Australian Labor Party wrote to me. It was not asking questions, but it was asking for an open inquiry along the lines of the questions to which the honourable member referred. I wish to make it quite clear that I believe this was just a political attack to try to use this very serious situation for political purposes. I am sure it is not supported by members of the Opposition. If it were, of course, it would be a most disgusting state of affairs.

I should also like to place on record my deep appreciation of the attitude taken by the honourable member for Albert, into whose electorate this particular problem has come and on which he has made representations. He has acted in a most responsible way in leaving it to the public health

authorities, who are the experts in this particular field. I stress that this matter should not be made into a political football, as the Beenleigh branch of the A.L.P. has attempted to do. I feel very strongly that it should be placed on record in this House and before the people that the honourable member for Albert (Mr. Gibbs) displayed a responsible attitude in keeping right out of the situation, because it is a public health matter and not a political matter.

**Mr. Houston:** He wasn't even there.

**Dr. EDWARDS:** The honourable member for Albert was there at all times and was most helpful in his attitude towards my officers and towards the local authority, and I want to place on record my appreciation of that. The A.L.P. in the Beenleigh area has tried to make a political football of the matter, and that is not acceptable to us in any way.

As to whether the Government will have an open inquiry—it is obvious, Mr. Speaker, that members of the Opposition would like an open inquiry into everything. They are like their counterparts in Canberra, who had hundreds of commissions that proved nothing whatever and got us more into debt and created more problems. An open inquiry is certainly not warranted. We have been completely open on every aspect of this incident. In fact, it was the Government and the Health Department that announced the incident. It was also the Government and the Health Department that kept the people of Beenleigh and the people of Queensland aware of every detail. I place on record that I have no intention of recommending to the Government that there be an open inquiry. I am absolutely satisfied, as is the Government, with the way in which the incident has been handled, and I again place on record that the world health authorities and the Australian health authorities fully endorse my views on this matter.

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

#### COAL AND OIL SHALE MINE WORKERS (PENSIONS) ACT AMENDMENT BILL

##### INITIATION

**Hon. R. E. CAMM** (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines and Energy): 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 Coal and Oil Shale Mine Workers (Pensions) Act 1941–1975 in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

#### IRRIGATION ACT AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

##### INITIATION

**Hon. N. T. E. HEWITT** (Auburn—Minister for Water Resources): 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 Irrigation Act 1922–1973 and the River Improvement Trust Act 1940–1971 each in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

#### LIBRARIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL

##### INITIATION

**Hon. V. J. BIRD** (Burdekin—Minister for Education and Cultural Activities): 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 Libraries Act 1943–1974 in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

#### UNIVERSITIES ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

##### INITIATION

**Hon. V. J. BIRD** (Burdekin—Minister for Education and Cultural Activities): 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 Griffith University Act 1971–1973 and the James Cook University of North Queensland Act 1970–1974 each in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

#### IRRIGATION ACT AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

##### INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

(Mr. Kaus, Mansfield, in the chair)

**Hon. N. T. E. HEWITT** (Auburn—Minister for Water Resources) (12.7 p.m.): I move—

“That a Bill be introduced to amend the Irrigation Act 1922–1973 and the River Improvement Trust Act 1940–1971 each in certain particulars.”

The amendments proposed do not cover significant new areas, but in general clarify existing provisions, formalise administration procedures and provide machinery for the implementation of those procedures.

The Bill proposes one amendment of the Irrigation Act 1922–1973 and amendments to sections 3, 11, 12 and 13 of the River Improvement Trust Act 1940–1971.

I will refer firstly to the Irrigation Act 1922-1973. The amendment clarifies the situation concerning a charge made on sugar-mills in respect of assigned lands in certain irrigation areas.

The joint report on the Bundaberg and Eton irrigation undertakings, as laid before this House in considering the resolutions for establishment of those undertakings, provided that revenue from the projects would include charges to sugar-mills in respect of farm peak on lands served or benefited by the schemes. The introduction of the schemes will eliminate present variability of costs and profits of mills and stabilise the mills at an economic level of production. Mills will also benefit from increased production resulting from the schemes. The basis of the charges was accepted by the mill owners in both areas prior to the approval of the schemes.

Provision for procedures to prescribe the charges was included in the Irrigation Act by the Water Act and Another Act Amendment Act 1973 by the insertion of clause 33A in the Schedule Part II—"Subject Matter for Regulations".

The Solicitor-General, in considering a proposed regulation to prescribe the charges, advised it was doubtful whether the clause confers sufficient power to make the regulation. He suggested the Act should be amended.

An amendment is proposed to clarify the powers for making and levying a charge on owners of a sugar-mill in respect of lands within an irrigation area assigned to a mill and supplied with water from or benefited by works constructed by the commissioner. This does not create a new charge, but clarifies powers in respect of this form of revenue, which was in effect adopted by the previous agreement of this Parliament to resolutions approving the establishment of the Bundaberg and Eton Irrigation Areas.

The balance of the Bill proposes amendments to the River Improvement Trust Act 1940-1971.

Nineteen river improvement areas and trusts are constituted throughout the State. In general, the responsibility of the trusts is to carry out and maintain work to improve stream channels to increase their flood-carrying capacity, to prevent or repair bank erosion and to mitigate flooding. Trusts are autonomous bodies.

The annual conference of the trusts requested the commissioner to consider a number of matters where amendment of the Act would clarify provisions and facilitate the conduct of a trust's affairs. The amendments proposed arise from their submissions.

#### Constitution of River Improvement Areas—

Subsection 2 of section 3 sets out that any two or more local authorities may make

joint application for the constitution of a river improvement area. A proviso to the subsection provides that a single local authority may make application for the constitution of a river improvement area. The wording of the subsection has created doubt as to the validity of a trust constituted on the application of a single local authority.

Opinion has been obtained that trusts so constituted are valid. However, the section could be expressed more clearly. The amendment proposed does not alter existing requirements but will clarify the wording of the section in that a single local authority may make application or any two or more local authorities may make a joint application for the constitution of a river improvement area.

The second proposal refers to section 11 of the Act, which provides for the issue of a notice in writing, called an Improvement Notice, to prohibit an owner or occupier of lands within a river improvement area from doing or continuing any act or thing which caused or contributed to damage by cyclone or flood or is likely to cause or contribute to any such damage in the future. To enable the issue of the notice to be endorsed on the title or noted on the relevant register, the notice is required to be served on the owner or occupier. Problems have arisen where the owner is deceased. The amendment proposed will widen the provisions to enable a notice to be issued on the personal legal representative of a deceased owner or occupier.

The next amendment is proposed to give effect to a Cabinet direction that each trust shall budget to build up an emergency fund for the carrying out of urgent works following cyclone or flood damage, where no provision has been made for such works. Cabinet also recognised that a number of trusts are located in areas where emergencies likely to involve considerable expenditure are not likely to arise and provided that, on application, the Minister may exempt such trusts from the need to establish or maintain an emergency fund. Some trusts have established an emergency fund and it is considered desirable that Cabinet's direction be formalised by an inclusion in the Act.

Amendment of section 12, which provides for "Funds of Trusts" is proposed to give effect to the direction and provide for the exemptions referred to. Except in respect of maintenance or repairs of works rendered necessary by flood or cyclone, the Act has no provision whereby a trust may make a disbursement not provided for in its budget, or a disbursement in excess of the estimate in the budget for that item. The necessity for such expenditure, generally of a minor nature, does occur and trusts have in such instances, by resolution, declared such disbursement as emergent and made the payment. This is not in accord with the Act.



Amendment of section 13 is proposed to enable such a disbursement to be made, provided that before making same a trust shall by resolution approve the making thereof and obtain the approval of the Minister. This will provide machinery in this matter and ensure effective control of any such expenditure.

The final amendment is in respect of section 13 subsection 4, which provides that the budget requirements shall not prevent a trust from expending loan and/or revenue funds upon any works, maintenance or repairs rendered necessary by the occurrence of a flood or cyclone during any year, provided that the commissioner shall, with the consent of the Governor in Council, approve of the works before any such expenditure is incurred.

As the budget of a trust is approved by the Minister and the circumstances generally arise as a matter of urgency, an amendment is proposed to provide for the consent of the Minister in lieu of the Governor in Council.

I trust members will agree with the purposes of the amendments.

I commend the Bill to the Committee.

**Mr. CASEY (Mackay) (12.14 p.m.):** The provisions outlined by the Minister appear to be quite reasonable. Recent events have shown that where there may be doubt about the validity of levies and fees charged by the Government, the position should be clarified. For instance, charges made under the stock assessment levy have recently caused chaos in the grazing industry in Queensland. At this stage the Minister for Primary Industries does not appear to be clear on exactly what is happening in the matter of the levy, so before schemes get under way in the Bundaberg and Mackay areas, it is well for the law to be clarified so that we will all be certain of the way in which the cost/benefit analysis of the scheme has been compiled and how the scheme will continue to operate.

I am referring to that part of the Irrigation Act covered by the Bill before the Committee; however when a Bill such as this is before us, it is vital that we look at the particular projects and the progress being made in each of them. It is as well for us not only to clarify the charges that are to be made but also to ask what has been happening with the projects. We know that the Monduran Dam is part of the over-all Bundaberg Irrigation Scheme. In 1970 the Commonwealth agreed to fund the dam and associated works. At that stage it looked as if the level of funding agreed upon would substantially complete the works, with only some State funding being required. However, as at 30 June 1976 a total of \$17,190,000 of Commonwealth funds had been spent, leaving virtually \$11,000 as the Commonwealth's remaining contribution—with the channels yet to be constructed. All

the money has gone, but to date we have not received any further financial support from the Commonwealth.

It is a disgrace that in the Bundaberg district there is water in the dam and the barrages for holding back the salt-water in the Burnett and Kolan Rivers have been partly completed, so that the water can be diverted from the Monduran Dam and into the channels, but the channels themselves have not been constructed. In many places the pipes have been lying there for three or four years. They have been purchased out of the original Commonwealth Government funding but they cannot be used because the amount of money necessary to complete the work is not available from State sources.

A considerable number of unemployed persons reside in the Bundaberg district. They are capable of doing the work, but nothing is happening.

**Government Members interjected.**

**Mr. CASEY:** Certain Liberal members in the Chamber can guffaw as much as they like, but they must bear in mind that the hold-up is being caused by their Liberal colleagues in Canberra. It is the Fraser Liberal Government that has refused to substantially support the Bundaberg scheme at this stage by not providing further funds for it.

**Mr. Powell:** What absolute rot!

**Mr. CASEY:** The honourable member for Isis wants to deny it. Perhaps it is the Country Party fellows in Canberra who are holding it up; I do not know. In any case, he knows as well as I and every other member of the Committee that it is a Liberal-National Country Party Government in Canberra that is holding up completion of the work.

Let us consider for a moment the sugar industry in a year such as this. The severe flooding in the North will mean a substantial reduction in the sugar produced from that area during the crushing season later in the year. On the other hand, the Bundaberg area is experiencing an unusually dry year. In such times the immediate cost benefit from the supply of water to Bundaberg sugar growers would be seen. The additional quantity of irrigation water available to farmers in the area would enable the added productivity that the sugar industry needs to meet its over-all commitments. So it is in a year such as this that we see the need for the Bundaberg Irrigation Scheme.

The Commonwealth Government is paying out large sums of money in Bundaberg every week in unemployment benefits. It is paying money to people to sit on their back-sides. Men are receiving it for doing nothing. By slightly increasing its investment

in the area, the Government could be gainfully employing men to work on this project and they are seeking work. Nobody who is worth his salt wants to sit on his backside if he can find work. He wants to earn his money. But in the Bundaberg area today large sums are paid out in unemployment relief while work is waiting to be done on the irrigation scheme. The Federal Liberal-National Country Party cut-backs result in economic and human waste in respect of irrigation and water supply schemes that should and could be funded in Queensland with moneys being paid out in unemployment benefits.

The Kinchant Dam is no exception. In 1973, the Whitlam Government allocated \$5,000,000. Surprisingly enough, Billy McMahon had said that the job was not feasible. After the Government changed in 1972 it was discovered that the Prime Minister's Department had not even had the scheme examined. The State Government and the people in the Mackay area knew that it was feasible.

Then we had a change of Commonwealth Government and a change of heart and the scheme was funded initially with \$5,000,000. Perhaps the State Government was a little slow off the mark in getting the project under way, but by the start of the 1976-77 financial year only \$814,000 of Commonwealth money remained to be expended on this project. This meant that there could be no significant progress on the project during the year because on projects such as this expenditure has to be on a rather large scale and the money should be spent rapidly.

The State Government, through the Minister, has now allocated an additional \$400,000 to keep work going in the area. That is nowhere near sufficient to make proper progress on the job, as the Minister, the officers of the department, the honourable member for Mirani in whose electorate it is situated, and every honourable member of the Committee, including me, know. That money will merely keep the job open, that is all that it amounts to in a year such as this. Because the project is only just being kept moving, the Kinchant Dam will probably take 20 years to complete.

Again I say that this is an example of Fraser federalism. It is an example of what the Commonwealth Government is doing to bring about some sort of economic scheme of its own. The funding of these schemes must be such that rapid progress is possible. Money can be made available for them. All that needs to be done is for it to be added to the existing unemployment benefits that are now being paid to people for doing nothing.

There is no doubt that the Fraser Government has welshed on the Bundaberg and Eton schemes. What chance have we in the future of getting money from the Commonwealth Government for the Burdekin extension scheme or the Urannah scheme, which

was supposed to be high on the priority list of water supply projects in Australia? What chance have we of getting money for the Karumba water supply or additional funds for the Mt. Isa Water Board, where the people are paying excessive rates for water for personal and city purposes?

This is at a time when there is severe flooding and resultant hardship in North Queensland. Millions upon millions of gallons of water are flowing out to sea and going to waste.

**Mr. Jones:** Uncontrolled.

**Mr. CASEY:** Completely uncontrolled.

This water could be harnessed for the development of Queensland and particularly North Queensland. This water is going to waste when the world is looking for alternative sources of energy. The water could be put to use in hydroelectric schemes in North Queensland, such as those on the Barron and Tully Rivers in the Cairns area.

Every North Queensland member would agree that along with the water that is flowing down to the sea go the tears of the North Queenslanders. Year after year this has happened and year after year it will continue. Year after year we get the same reply from those knot-heads in Canberra who would not know B from a bull's foot on these matters.

**Mr. Lane** interjected.

**Mr. CASEY:** The honourable member for Merthyr supports them. He is one of those who, in his rather loud, raucous and jarring voice ran around the countryside during the 1975 election campaign and sang out loudest and longest, along with other Government members, in an endeavour to get Fraser into Canberra. He now has Fraser in Canberra and Fraser is putting the prod into him and he does not like it one little bit. Fraser will continue to put the prod into him because Fraser has no regard for Queensland, particularly North Queensland. We have not seen him up there.

**Mr. Jones:** What about the Herbert River?

**Mr. CASEY:** As the honourable member for Cairns said, the people in North Queensland have been crying out for years for the Herbert River scheme. Some 15 or 20 years ago the Co-ordinator-General's Department carried out a thorough investigation of the Herbert River area. If the Herbert River had been harnessed properly there would be no need for the Premier to be flying up there today to have a look at the flooding and the 1,000 people made homeless in the townships of Halifax and Ingham. Floodwaters have caused this damage because we cannot get enough sense out of the people in Canberra, nor will they provide proper funding to enable us to undertake these schemes which would give us sufficient

water storage to avert these flood situations and also build up our energy resources. These schemes would enable us to provide a stable economy in the flood-prone areas of Queensland, and if any member of the Committee doubts that irrigation schemes provide a stable economy let him have a look at the reports of the Bundaberg and Eton irrigation schemes.

**The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN** (Mr. Kaus): Order! The honourable member will keep to the provisions of the Bill as outlined.

**Mr. CASEY:** Most certainly I shall, Mr. Kaus. The Bundaberg and Eton irrigation schemes were planned to increase and assure productivity in the sugar industry in the mill areas which will have their funding guaranteed under the auspices of this Bill. If honourable members look at the reports I have mentioned, they will see how the schemes were to be funded and how they were going to bring about economic stability in the areas concerned. If they had been undertaken, there would be no need for farmers to go out and see their cane growing only one or two feet high in dry seasons and covered by floodwaters in the wet season. The main purpose of the Bill is to bring about stable productivity in these areas, but it is not going to get anywhere unless we get the sponsorship and support of Canberra Governments.

Let me now turn to the provisions outlined by the Minister in relation to the River Improvement Trust Act. Again I accept that these provisions are very good, and I accept what the Minister has said about them. We will have a good look at the Bill to see if there are any ramifications which may require further discussion, but the same point is again made—the necessity for the establishment by river improvement trusts of an emergency fund so that when we do have major floods after cyclones the trusts will have funds immediately available to start doing something about relieving the situation. It is very good to see this initiative coming from the river improvement trusts. Many other organisations in the community could follow their example. Organisations that want to set up their own emergency fund legally and constitutionally so that when any disaster occurs they can immediately call on their own self-help organisation should be enabled to do so. Too often in our community today we see organisations that sit tight while everything is going well but start crying for the Government to do something when things suddenly go wrong. This provision in the Bill shows that the river improvement trusts are prepared to get off their backsides and do something for themselves. They are going to set up their own funds and have them ready should an emergency occur such as we have seen recently in North Queensland.

Only a matter of three or four weeks ago when there was flooding in the Mulgrave River area while the Deputy Premier and Treasurer and the Minister for Police flew over the area in a helicopter, the honourable member for Cairns and I drove through the area to have a look at the problems. We got into a boat with the farmers in the area and had a look along the Mulgrave River to see where erosion problems were occurring. We saw instances where, thanks to river trust improvement work, further damage to canelands was prevented. But we now find that there are other areas where rivers have broken their banks and caused further damage and the river improvement trusts will have to start work as soon as the floodwaters recede.

We have a big problem in northern streams in that, before flood damage can be corrected, further flooding causes even more damage. This has occurred recently in the Mulgrave, Johnstone, Barron and other river systems in North Queensland. Now the same thing is happening along the Herbert River. These new provisions will make a big difference, but it does not follow that the people in the areas concerned will not have to take the work even further. It is incumbent upon them to do so.

It is interesting to note that a section of the Act relating to the issuing of notices to persons concerned is to be amended and that, under such circumstances, work can be carried out immediately. In recent years there has been a tendency in farming areas for farmers to cultivate almost down to the river-bank. When you inspect a fast-flowing stream after severe flooding, Mr. Kaus, you can see the erosion that was made possible because vegetation had been removed right down to the river-bank. It has even happened in the Brisbane River. It was quite clear that some of the flooding that occurred and some of the flood problems that arose in 1974 were the result of development of areas right down to the river-bank. Rivers should be allowed to follow their natural course.

Anyone who sets himself up in agricultural industry on the flood plain of a river must expect that at some stage, whether it be once in 10 years, once in 20 years, or once in 100 years, he will have a flood problem because of the very nature of the soil. Therefore, river improvement trusts in Queensland will have to strive more and more to overcome problems relating to rivers and streams.

There is only one thing that I wish to add at this stage, and I am not sure whether this is a matter covered by the River Improvement Trust Act or whether an amendment of that Act will meet the situation. I refer to the problem of drainage, particularly in sugar-growing areas. I know that the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission, in conjunction with the Department

of Primary Industries and other State Government departments, has investigated drainage problems in some farming areas. Sometimes there are hollow areas on farmlands. When rivers and streams overflow, the water continues to lie in those hollow areas and kills the cane or whatever crop has been planted there. There are already many areas in which drainage is a problem, and there will now be many areas in North Queensland where cane will rot because water cannot get away.

In many instances drainage boards under local authorities deal adequately with drainage problems, but their work seems to bog down because adjoining landholders block drainage and prevent the water from getting away. In the long term it will be necessary, either by an amendment of the River Improvement Trust Act or in some other way, to provide a method of instituting adequate drainage schemes for farmlands in the wet areas of Queensland, particularly in the wet cane-growing areas of the North.

**Mr. POWELL (Isis) (12.33 p.m.):** I welcome the introduction of the Bill and thank the Minister for bringing it before the Committee at this stage. It is necessary for the correct organisation of the irrigation schemes that are already being undertaken in this State.

Finance for irrigation is very important but very difficult to obtain. I think that the Minister made some reference to that in his opening remarks, and I know that he has always been very sympathetic to requests from me and members of the Bundaberg Irrigation Committee for additional finance for the very worth-while and necessary scheme in that area.

The honourable member who preceded me in this debate made a great deal of noise. I suppose that in his newly found status and in his returning to the fold, as it were, he feels that perhaps he is not a voice crying in the wilderness and that he has 10 members behind him to reinforce his submissions. Of course, he knows jolly well that they will rat on him as smartly as they accepted him into the fold if they get half a chance.

He tried to blame the present Federal Government for the fact that the Monduran scheme has not been completed. I invite honourable members to consider for a few moments the full ramifications of the rather wild and ridiculous statements he made. The Monduran scheme was commenced in 1970 and a Federal Government undertaking was given. Unfortunately we did not get an undertaking from the Federal Government to complete the work but we extracted from it a certain amount of money. The Monduran scheme was costed at \$47,000,000, but we now find that it is going to cost \$100,000,000. Our friends in the Labor Party seem to blame Mr. Fraser for the fact that we cannot get enough money to finish the scheme.

The 1976 Year Book reveals that from 1962 to 1972 the average annual inflation rate was 4 per cent, making a total of 40 per cent over that period of 10 years. When the scheme was commenced, it was reasonable to assume that \$47,000,000 might be the amount that it would cost to finish it. But what happened between 1972 and 1975? A disaster hit Australia in the form of Whitlam and his socialists. Of course, he has a few mates around here, too. Between 1972 and 1975 the annual inflation rate rose to nearly 15 per cent. In the three years from 1972 to 1975 the rate rose 44 per cent, compared with 40 per cent in the previous 10 years. We can therefore understand why the Federal Government has not been able to obtain the funds to finish the scheme. It's as plain as the nose on your face that the fault does not lie with the Fraser-Anthony Government but with the Whitlam Government. It was that Government that allowed inflation to run out of control in this country, thus making public works cost an astronomical amount.

The honourable member for Mackay spoke about using the unemployed around Bundaberg to continue work on the scheme. I agree that that would be an excellent idea, but the problem is that the money for it would have to come from somewhere. Unlike the Labor Party, we do not adopt the irresponsible attitude of simply printing money. We believe that there must be some production as an indication of what can be earned and what can be spent. Therefore it is useless to say that unemployed persons should be used to continue the scheme, particularly if those people have not the required skills and the money is not available.

Those who live in the Bundaberg area are very concerned that the scheme is taking a long time to complete. Only a couple of weeks ago the Minister for Works and Housing was in my electorate. At that time I showed him some of the drought-stricken cane in the Givalda/Electra area. He, like everyone else who sees that area, was very concerned. I know that since his return to Brisbane he has spoken to the Minister for Water Resources and other Cabinet colleagues about the serious position that exists in that area.

It is ironic that there can be such varied climatic conditions in the State. While there have been serious floods in North Queensland and some flooding in southern and western parts of the State, until yesterday the Bundaberg area had almost entirely missed out on rain. We badly need rain in that area, and we urgently need the completion of the Burnett/Kolan scheme. Perhaps if previous members representing the Isis electorate had represented their constituents more adequately the priorities of the Bundaberg Irrigation Scheme would not be as they are, and perhaps the Givalda/Electra area and the rich cane lands of Isis would be receiving water earlier. As the scheme is designed, they cannot receive water until the main

channel to take the water across to the Burnett River from the Kolan River is finished, and that could be another five, six or even ten years. There is a desperate need for finance in this area. It is interesting to note that in the 1976-77 year the Federal Government made no funds whatever available for irrigation throughout Australia. We are confident, however, that in the next financial year the Federal Government will make money available for this most worthwhile scheme.

While talking about irrigation schemes, I would mention the proposal to construct a barrage across the Mary River, also in my electorate, upstream from Maryborough. That area is another that suffers from spot drought, if I might use that term. Like Bundaberg, it seems to miss out on rain. An assured water supply is necessary to enable reasonable forecasts and estimates of the sugar-cane crop to be made. Although a number of growers pump water from the Mary River, in very dry times the intrusion of salt into the water renders it unfit for use.

I know that the Minister for Water Resources has looked at this problem closely and that his department is presently undertaking a survey in connection with it. I add my plea to those of the people who grow cane along the Mary River upstream from Maryborough for the provision of a barrage. Its construction is important not only to those people but also to the economy of the whole of the Maryborough area. In recent years, and particularly the past year or two, the area's economy has been depressed for a number of reasons beyond the control of the leaders of industry and commerce in Maryborough. The barrage would assure primary industry of an adequate water supply.

As we are all aware, a city or town whose economy is based on a variety of products is a city or town that prospers. The supply of adequate water to the agricultural lands around Maryborough would allow it to prosper, as does Bundaberg. So it is of utmost importance that finance be forthcoming.

The accusations levelled by the Labor Party are so hollow that they disgust me somewhat. I think most honourable members realise the problems that the Government faces in obtaining finance. I think they realise that the reason for the delay in bringing the irrigation scheme to finality is the massive escalation in costs resulting from inflation. It is almost impossible to keep up with rising costs. Personally, I would like to see the Burnett/Kolan scheme finished as quickly as possible.

As the Premier stated a couple of years ago, the present situation is a disaster. I am sure honourable members will remember that when Mr. Whitlam was on one of his

overseas visits and inspecting ruins in Greece or somewhere else the Premier pointed out to him that he did not have to go to Greece or any other overseas country to look at ruins; he only had to visit Bundaberg, where he would see a large number of pipes lying around the countryside ready for laying in the ground for the completion of the irrigation scheme.

If the shadow Minister for Water Resources, or whatever the honourable member for Mackay now is, cares to come to Bundaberg and lets me know beforehand, I will certainly show him around and acquaint him with the needs of the district. The only way to find anything out is to go to the area concerned and obtain first-hand knowledge of it. It is useless sitting in Brisbane, as some members do, and merely listening to one or two persons speaking on their problems. A member has to get up and go to an area to find out what the problems are all about.

I know that the Minister for Water Resources has visited Bundaberg regularly. Whenever a problem arises there he has no hesitation whatever in jumping into his car and driving up to have a look around and to try to solve the problems.

The Bill is welcomed. It gives us another opportunity to push for the completion of this scheme, which is of great importance to the mills and the industry as a whole, in the Burnett particularly and also presumably in the Mackay area.

To enable industry to be conducted on a sound basis, it is necessary to plan for the future. But it is impossible to so plan without having some control over the forces that affect industry. I do not think that even the Labor Party would suggest that the Government is to blame for the rain falling in North Queensland at the moment or the periodic droughts that occur in my area, Western Queensland and elsewhere, but Labor members do tend to imply that the Premier or the Government is at fault when rain does or does not fall. When they are honest they would agree that the Government is not at fault, and when they try to blame the Government for heavy rain in North Queensland their remarks should be treated as purely facetious. We do have problems in Queensland with the vagaries of the weather but the Government is doing all in its power to overcome them.

I welcome the Bill. I congratulate the Minister on its introduction and I look forward to further debate on it.

**Mr. CORY** (Warwick) (12.46 p.m.): I enter the debate to raise two matters. The first concerns the amendment of the Irrigation Act. I take this opportunity to again stress the importance of the completion of Stage II of the Leslie Dam and to press for a definite commitment on this matter. I have urged the Queensland Government to include

in the 1977-78 financial year an allocation for the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply for final work on the specifications for this job so that it may be started.

As the Federal Government has stated categorically that it is not prepared to assist in financing this job, the stage has been reached where the Queensland Government must sort out its future priorities and make a definite commitment on the start of Stage II. The needs are obvious and so are the results. These matters have been the subject of feasibility studies in the past and all that is needed is a definite commitment on when moneys can be made available.

I appreciate what the Minister and his department are doing. Having found that nothing is forthcoming from the Commonwealth they are battling for money, but we now need to know definitely when something can be done.

When thinking of irrigation, particularly from rivers on the Darling Downs, it must be remembered that, irrespective of the number of storages provided, there is insufficient water to meet potential need. I stress that, in the future, water must be allocated on an insurance basis so that everybody gets a small quantity to maintain existing enterprises rather than large quantities being allocated for specialised irrigation production.

As earlier speakers have said, off-stream storages built to cope with the larger flows are a good idea because they ensure that water does not go to waste as happens in so many areas. This method of storage is good in principle but it is so costly that many people do not have the necessary resources. I am sure that as the years go by we will see more of this type of storage.

While all this development is taking place—and it does not happen quickly—we have to look very carefully at how our available water is allocated. We must approach it from the insurance aspect by making the best use of our available water before we allocate large sums at the expense of the small landholders who want only a small amount. We must ensure that we do not impose large sums on them for the purpose of specialised irrigation production, which is not cheap.

I well remember 10 years or more ago when the first irrigated sorghum came on the market. In the first year the producers of that sorghum asked the Government for some assistance with freight to the seaboard. In the same year the dry-land farmers growing sorghum, who were getting exactly the same price, were quite happy that they had received a reasonable margin from the sale price. However, the cost structure for those growing under irrigation was too great for them to cope. It is not a cheap method of production. While it is not cheap, let us use our available water as an insurance against calamity rather than

as a measure to allow the large-scale production of grain that could be grown under dry-land conditions. By all means, let us have a little bit of insurance so that we are assured of a crop. All the landholder really wants is to be assured of a fair crop. If he can grow his crop at a reasonable cost, he will be better off.

I turn now to the river trust amendments. I believe that all streams right throughout Queensland should be under the control of some sort of river trust.

**Mr. W. D. Hewitt:** And major rivers as well.

**Mr. CORY:** I agree entirely. All streams, major or otherwise, and drainage systems should be encompassed within the responsibility of some type of river trust. The amendments that have been outlined by the Minister will tend to make the operation of the trusts more flexible in many directions. That is good. It will make them workable. In many cases it will overcome some of the difficulties that have occurred, as the Minister has mentioned, upon the death of a landholder. The result will be that the operations of the trust will not be hampered; they will be carried on regardless of changes in ownership at any time.

However, we should be looking for greater co-operation between the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission and river trusts. I am not suggesting that there is no co-operation or that there is argument between them. However, from time to time there is the feeling that the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission is made up of expert technical men while river trusts are made up of men who have, in effect, put their money where their mouths are. They are the people being levied to support river trusts. They are the landholders who are paying precepts through their local authorities to finance the operation of the trusts. In the broader context, the two groups have to get closer together so that their work does not overlap and so that there is no conflict between them.

That can happen on some occasions. For instance, a trust might levy precepts on its members to finance a lot of stream-clearing work and allow for an increased flow of water by clearing channels. Then another authority might give permission to actions that might counter some of the advantages resulting from those improvements. That sometimes happens with our road-building authorities in the construction of bridges and so on. We have to ensure that the good work done by one group is not countered or hindered by technical advice from another section. I look for greater co-operation among all those involved. I associate with those remarks the Department of Primary Industries and its soil conservation schemes, which are becoming larger and larger. We must make sure that we are all going one way, that the effort and expenditure are not

overlapping and that the good work done by one group is not hindered by actions from another.

I wish to comment on the creation of the emergency fund. We agree that the principle is good. I agree with the honourable member for Mackay that the important thing is the way a person runs his own business. He tries to put something aside to meet emergencies that arise from time to time.

The provision of the money by the trusts with which I have had experience will be the problem. They are up to the limit to which they can service interest and redemption year after year. They will find difficulty in justifying the levying of a sufficiently high precept to provide them with the extra money that we are looking for.

I appreciate that the principle is right. It means that a trust will be able to hold a sum of money after 30 June. It will allow for the continuity of operation and the keeping of a reserve. But there will be a problem in the fixing of a levy to provide the extra money required.

The trusts in my area have done a very good job. In the main, they have completed the initial clearing process. Having done that, they have incurred this debt and, as I said, they have reached the limit of their financial capacity to pay. We must ensure that they remain financially viable enough to continue in operation and to maintain the good work that they have already done. If they do not have sufficient money to do this, so much of the money that has been spent will have been wasted. The maintenance of a job well done is vital. Whether the maintenance concerns the control of regrowth in trees or river straightening, unless the work is maintained properly so much of the money spent will have been wasted. Nobody wants this to happen. I repeat that the financial structure of individual trusts is very important for the continuance of this work.

River-banks are going through a settling-down process. Perhaps they are reverting to their original state—in our case before the advent of the willow tree, which created great silt traps in streams. They are becoming steeper and steeper. Also, the construction of smaller and lower bridges in the old days created silt traps. I commend the Main Roads Department for its attitude to the crossing over Freestone Creek near Clintonvale, where the silt build-up had made the getaway of water quite ineffective. That is the kind of thing we are talking about. The department has had a look at the problem and, with the building of the new bridge, has instigated a great opening-up programme.

I bring these matters forward as being of importance because stream management will become more and more important in the future.

Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 1 p.m.