

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 17 MAY 1978

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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:—

Orders in Council under—

Water Act 1926–1976.

Water Act 1926–1976 and Local Bodies' Loans Guarantee Act 1923–1976.

River Improvement Trust Act 1940–1977.

Ambulance Services Act 1967–1975.

Regulations under the Land Act 1962–1975.

PETITION

TRAFFIC SAFETY, DEIGHTON ROAD/PARK ROAD WEST INTERSECTION, DUTTON PARK

Mr. FOURAS (South Brisbane) presented a petition from 38 citizens of Queensland praying that the Parliament of Queensland will take all necessary steps to provide adequate standards of traffic safety at the intersection of Deighton Road and Park Road West, Dutton Park.

Petition read and received.

V.I.P. INSURANCES LIMITED (MOTOR VEHICLES INSURANCE) BILL

INITIATION

Hon. W. E. KNOX (Nundah—Deputy Premier and Treasurer): I move—

“That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider introducing a Bill to provide indemnity to persons whose motor vehicles are insured with V.I.P. Insurances Limited in compliance with the Motor Vehicles Insurance Act 1936–1975 and for related purposes.”

Motion agreed to.

DAIRY PRODUCE BILL**INITIATION**

Hon. T. G. NEWBERY (Mirani—Leader of the House) for Hon. V. B. SULLIVAN (Condamine—Minister for Primary Industries): I move—

“That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider introducing a Bill to consolidate and amend the law relating to dairy produce and its manufacture, sale and distribution and for matters incidental thereto.”

Motion agreed to.

HEN QUOTAS ACT AMENDMENT BILL**INITIATION**

Hon. T. G. NEWBERY (Mirani—Leader of the House) for Hon. V. B. SULLIVAN (Condamine—Minister for Primary Industries): 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 Hen Quotas Act 1973–1975 in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

SURVEYORS ACT AMENDMENT BILL**INITIATION**

Hon. J. W. GREENWOOD (Ashgrove—Minister for Survey and Valuation): 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 Surveyors Act 1977 in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

HOSPITALS ACT AMENDMENT BILL**INITIATION**

Hon. L. R. EDWARDS (Ipswich—Minister for Health): 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 Hospitals Act 1936–1976 in certain particulars and for another purpose.”

Motion agreed to.

RADIOACTIVE SUBSTANCES ACT AMENDMENT BILL**INITIATION**

Hon. L. R. EDWARDS (Ipswich—Minister for Health): 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 Radioactive Substances Act 1958–1970 in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE**1. CRITICISM OF COURT DECISIONS ON STREET MARCH ARRESTS**

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

With reference to a statement by the Deputy Police Commissioner, Mr. MacDonald, in “Sunday Sun” of 14 May in which he commented on recent

court rulings involving Queensland's street march laws that police feel their efforts to maintain the law in the interests of the total community are being eroded by some recent judicial decisions, as this casts doubt on the integrity of our judiciary, does he share this view or does he believe that members of our judiciary are acting with impeccable impartiality and integrity in making their decisions on evidence supplied by both the police and defendants in our courts in charges relating to street march arrests?

Answer:—

I have no intention of commenting on a statement reported to be made by the Deputy Police Commissioner, Mr. Macdonald.

I would, however, inform the Honourable the Leader of the Opposition that I have every confidence in the ability and impartiality of the judiciary of this State. This does not mean that there are not times when it is difficult to follow certain decisions handed down. I have had cause to query certain decisions and in appropriate cases, as the Attorney-General of the State, have directed that appeals be made against such decisions.

The Honourable the Leader of the Opposition should be well aware that under the State judicial system there are proper avenues of appeal on court decisions irrespective of whether the Crown or a member of the public is involved.

2. LEGISLATION TO PRESERVE BASIC FREEDOMS

Mr. Burns, pursuant to notice asked the Premier—

(1) With reference to the right to march issue and the attack by the Deputy Police Commissioner, Mr. Vern Macdonald, on magistrates and the courts over what he terms the failure of the courts to support the police over arrests on this issue, how many people have been arrested since the Traffic Act was amended last year, effectively banning all street marches that do not support the Government policies, how many of these citizens pleaded guilty and how many pleaded not guilty?

(2) Of those who pleaded not guilty, how many have been brought before the courts, how many were convicted and how many discharged?

(3) As the Police Special Branch chief, Inspector Hogan, is reported in "The Courier-Mail" of 12 April as having instructed police to clear the footway, as Constable John Gordon agreed in the Magistrates Court that there was no impediment to pedestrians walking past the group on the same side, and as senior police officers are publicly stating that the street march issue is destroying police morale and public respect for our Legislature, will he as a matter of urgency amend the laws to

allow the basic rights of free assembly, free speech and the freedom of peaceful dissent to be restored in this State?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) I am pleased to hear that when the Leader of the Opposition speaks of sneaking legislation through the House he adds "for a fortnight". He was allowed three hours on the Legislative Assembly Act and Another Act Amendment Bill to cover up his racist statements. That is in reply to his question this morning.

I am glad the Opposition Leader asked this question, because it gives me the opportunity to place the facts on record in this House.

In his question he referred to the arrest of members of a group calling itself Concerned Christians for obstructing the footpath outside Queen's Gardens in Brisbane on 9 April this year.

In speeches on two Bills before this House yesterday he referred to "one law for Government members and another for street marchers and Concerned Christians".

He also referred in the same manner to Mr. Iwasaki saying that "a number of clergymen had been arrested for singing hymns in the streets".

The Leader of the Opposition has been trying to spread this untruth for some time.

Firstly, I point out that, unlike the street marchers and the Concerned Christians, the two members of Parliament did not set out deliberately to break the law.

Secondly—and here I place this on record—no person was or has been arrested for singing hymns in the streets and no police direction was ever given to any group to stop singing hymns. The order to stop singing on 9 April was given by a voice in the group's own ranks.

Mr. Burns: Oh!

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: Yes, oh! That is so.

Mr. Burns: That's not what Inspector Hogan said in the paper.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: That's dead right.

Answer (contd.):—

Neither was anyone arrested in Queen's Gardens.

As the ministerial statement by the Police Minister, Mr. Camm, made crystal clear to everyone but the Opposition Leader, the Concerned Christians deliberately entered Queen's Gardens despite warnings from the police that they did not have the permission of the trustees,

required under law, to hold any kind of meeting in the park, and that police would have no option but to remove them.

No-one was arrested in the gardens. Arrests were made when the group ignored police directions to cease obstructing the footpath.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to decisions by Mr. Evans, S.M., dismissing charges against two of the group—the Rev. Dennis Conomos on 2 May and a person named Hughes on 4 May.

Honourable members will recall Mr. Evans's remarks about "a tainted aroma about the police evidence".

However, what the Leader of the Opposition failed to tell the House was that on 8 May Mr. Dwyer, S.M., convicted a person named Humphreys and on 12 May Mr. Petersen, S.M., convicted a person named O'Rielly, both from the same Concerned Christians group.

We now have the situation that one magistrate has dismissed charges against two people and two other magistrates have convicted one person each on charges arising out of the same incident.

Charges against four other members of the group are part heard or still to be heard at the latest information.

The Leader of the Opposition implied that more people were being found not guilty than guilty on charges arising out of street marches.

This is not the case, as the following table shows—

	No. of charges
No appearance, forfeited bail	381 596
Pleaded guilty	98 132
Pleaded not guilty but convicted	249 350
Charge dismissed or withdrawn	125 147

These were the totals as at 11 May.

I point out that many of these people have now made up to five appearances in court out of successive street marches. They form a hard core of about 200 protesters in a round robin of affiliated and associated protest groups.

If the Leader of the Opposition could read straight, he would have seen that Police Deputy Commissioner MacDonald's remarks were made about charges of disorderly conduct.

Apparently the Leader of the Opposition believes that if one policeman makes a criticism of the march law, that is right; but if another officer makes a criticism that does not suit the A.L.P., that is wrong.

Take the Opposition Leader's claims that there is no right of free assembly, free speech or the right to march. How many times now has the Opposition Leader been one of the main speakers at protest rallies in King George Square, the Roma Street

Forum and other places organised by the Trades Hall? And who do we always see standing shoulder to shoulder with him on the platform but such dedicated democrats as the State president of the Communist Party, Mr. Hugh Hamilton.

As for the right to march, the Opposition Leader well knows that there is no ban on street marches in Queensland. He knows that a total of 89 permits for street marches has been issued in the past six months. He should know that because he led one himself down Queen Street on Labor Day.

It is interesting that the Communist Party and its allies—the International Socialists, the Socialist Workers Alliance and so on—outnumbered the A.L.P. contingent. And there was Mr. Hamilton carrying one leg of the Civil Liberties banner.

To its shame, the A.L.P. meekly bowed to demands by the Communist-led Metalworkers' and Building Workers' Unions—Mr. Hamilton's union—that the Mounted Police contingent be barred from their place at the head of the parade they had led since Labor Day began.

The irony of it, Mr. Speaker, is that the police warned the Trades and Labor Council of trouble to come from the militants at the Exhibition Ground, but the Trades Hall chose to ignore it. Later, when Mr. Burns and the A.L.P. ran into trouble with these militants, the Trades and Labor Council Secretary, Mr. Whitby, officially asked for police assistance. What a change in tune!

And the very next day the Co-ordinating Council for Civil Liberties—the Marxist group spearheading the street marches—turned on Mr. Burns and bit him. They blamed him for the trouble at the Exhibition Ground. They went even further and in their statement said that Labor Day no longer belonged to the A.L.P.; that it belonged to the international socialist movement—in other words the Communists and the Marxists.

Alderman Sleeman attacked these extremists but the Leader of the Opposition lacks the courage to do the same. The Labor Party has lost control of its own Labor Day because of its spineless attitude and close affinity to the Communist infiltrators in its movement.

The other street march was in Mackay, led by none other than the A.L.P. Member for Mackay (Mr. Casey).

Where now are the claims by the Leader of the Opposition of no free assembly, no free speech and no street marches? The only ban is on street marches that could tend to end in violence. The Leader of the Opposition experienced that himself.

The police go on the record of those applying for a permit, and what a long record it is in the case of the small hard core of 200 spearheading the Brisbane marches. There have been many arrests—but most of them are the same 200 coming up four and five times before the court, as I pointed out. Their own literature urges them to get themselves arrested and so clog up the courts.

The Communists and their fellow-travelers always rely on democratic Governments weakening first. I emphasise that the Queensland Government has not weakened and will not weaken.

3. CLOSURE OF PHOSPHATE OPERATIONS AT MONUMENT

Mr. Berton, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Mines, Energy and Police—

(1) Is he aware of the recent announcement of the closure of the phosphate operations at Monument?

(2) What concessions were granted or offered to the company to assist it in its financial difficulties?

Answers:—

(1) Yes.

(2) The company was offered a reduction in the freight rates of \$1.70 per tonne up to 350 000 tonnes per year. This assistance was provided following an application by the company to the Queensland Government in February this year. In addition to seeking Commonwealth Government assistance in the form of direct grants, the financing of a stockpile of phosphate and providing funds for the beneficiation of Duchess phosphate in domestic plant operations, I also put forward a proposal to the Minerals and Energy Council in Hobart earlier this year that the Australian phosphate market be opened up to Queensland phosphate.

This proposal was supported by other State Ministers for Mines, and the Commonwealth Government was to investigate ways in which this could be implemented. However, the operating company has now announced that it intends to terminate phosphate production at an early date, and there appears to be nothing more the Queensland Government can do to keep this mining operation going.

The closure of this mine is a bitter blow to the company, to the miners employed there and their families, and indeed to the economy of this State. Perhaps it will bring home to the critics of the mining industry the high capital risks involved in developing new mining operations and the competition in gaining markets for the produce.

4. PRESSURE LOANS TO HOUSEWIVES

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

With reference to disclosures in New South Wales that certain finance companies have been involved in what has been known as the Housewife Loan Scandal, in which contracts are marked with the letters H.D.N.K., standing for "Husband Does not Know"—

(1) Have the Queensland Corporate Affairs Office and the Consumers Affairs Bureau carried out any investigations to discover whether such contracts apply in Queensland?

(2) Is there any evidence that loan companies that make door-to-door calls on borrowers have been following the Sydney practice of pressuring women into taking further loans at exceptionally high interest by saying that their husbands will be told of the original loan?

(3) Is there any evidence which suggests that the firm of Waltons has been involved in this illicit business practice?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) No evidence has been drawn to my attention that would lead me to believe that this practice referred to by the honourable member is occurring in this State. If the honourable member is aware of any instance where this is being done, he should draw it to the attention of my colleagues the Honourable the Minister for Mines, Energy and Police and the Honourable the Minister for Labour Relations.

Finally, I would repeat a warning which I have given publicly on a number of occasions to consumers, and indeed the public generally, to be aware of doubtful door-to-door salesmen with equally doubtful small-print contracts in their pockets. Unless people are completely satisfied with the bona fides of the salesmen or firms in these instances and fully aware of commitments set out in any contract, they should totally avoid entering into any business arrangement of this nature.

5. CONSULTANT FIRM, INCOME TAX PROFESSIONALS

Mr. R. J. Gibbs, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Labour Relations—

(1) How many complaints has the Consumer Affairs Bureau received regarding a tax consultant firm operating under the name of I.T.P., the Income Tax Professionals?

(2) Is he aware that this firm advertises that it will train people at a cost of \$80 to become tax consultants and that a job is not guaranteed on completion of the course?

(3) In view of the number of complaints that I and other members have received and as the financial year is drawing to a close, will he instigate an immediate inquiry by the Consumer Affairs Council into this company?

(4) Will he have this matter brought to the attention of Commonwealth Taxation officers to ensure that taxpayers are not ripped off by incompetent and poorly trained advisers?

Answers:—

(1) None.

(2 to 4) As the Consumer Affairs Bureau has not received any complaints in this regard, before considering any inquiry by the Consumer Affairs Council, I would request that the honourable member forward to me the complaints which he has received.

6. CAMPAIGNING BY MR. P. KILLORAN IN COOK ELECTORATE

Mr. R. J. Gibbs, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Aboriginal and Island Affairs—

(1) As it is generally accepted that public servants play no part in the political activities of the Government they serve, which centres in the Cook electorate were visited by the director of his department, Mr. P. Killoran, during the 1977 State election campaign?

(2) At how many of these centres was he accompanied by the National Party candidate and then member for Cook, Mr. Eric Deeral?

(3) At how many of these centres were political meetings conducted and was the director present?

(4) Did the director remove a Labor Party information sign at Kowanyama which had been erected with the permission of both the manager and the chairman?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) I am advised by my colleague the Honourable C. Wharton, who was the previous Minister, that his director, as a proper matter of policy, accompanied him on his many visits throughout Queensland including the Cook electorate. However, the director did not participate in any way, either directly or indirectly, in any party-political activities; nor did he join with any group on any political platform.

The director of my department enjoys the highest reputation for probity, integrity and freedom from any suggestion of political bias in the exercise of his duties. I find it somewhat disgusting that a member should use the forms of this House to attack a responsible public servant with a view to securing some petty party-political advantage.

7. OFFAL AND HIDES

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

(1) What is the retail value of hides, horns, brains, cheek meat, neck meat, kidneys, kidney fat, liver, heart, oxtail, tripe, sweetbread, all blood and bones, etc., taken by meatworks when cattle are sold on a weight and grade basis, owner's account?

(2) What law validates meatworks' claims to ownership of offal, hides, etc, when the beef producer is paid only for the bare carcass, after all offal and hide has been taken from it, without one cent being paid to the starving beef producer for these valuable by-products?

Answers:—

(1) The retail value of the fancy meats and offal would vary from place to place and with time, but the honourable member should recall that I gave him a long list of approximate values in response to a question he asked last year. I have that same list with me and can give it to him if he wishes.

(2) There is no law which entitles private meatworks to claim ownership to fancy meats, offal, etc., but I assume that the management takes possession of them to cover the cost of slaughtering. This is an arrangement between the producer and management of the works. However, where service abattoirs are concerned, the items claimed by the abattoir and those retained by the operator are specified in the legislation. A slaughtering fee is charged at such abattoirs, and this also varies from one establishment to another.

8. MACHINERY INSPECTION OF BILOELA VEHICLES

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

(1) Is he aware that machinery inspection of farmers' and industrial owners' vehicles is not done at Biloea and that these persons are forced to take their vehicles to Gladstone or Rockhampton for approval by these inspectors, at great personal inconvenience, expense and loss of valuable time?

(2) Will he have this matter rectified by having a police officer or some suitable person appointed to Biloea to obviate such inconvenience?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) The inspection of machinery is carried out under the provisions of the Inspection of Machinery Act. It is suggested therefore that the question be directed to the Honourable the Minister for Labour Relations, who is the Minister charged with administration of this Act.

9. RAILWAY DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS

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

(1) In view of the tremendous loss to the State Government annually by the Queensland Railway Department, which is now being aggravated by a steep increase in freight rates of the order of 15 per cent, causing financial embarrassment to individuals, contractors, clubs and organisations in country areas throughout Queensland, which railway lines show a profit?

(2) How much money has been allocated this year for the electrification of suburban railways?

(3) What loss has been sustained by the Railway Department for each of the years 1970-71 to 1976-77?

(4) In view of the drastic losses, will he consider handing the railways over to private enterprise?

Answers:—

(1) I would refer the honourable member to Table 10 of the Annual Report of the Commissioner for Railways for the year ended 30 June 1977.

(2) The cost of electrification of the Brisbane suburban railways is shared by the Commonwealth and State Governments basically in the ratio of two-thirds Commonwealth and one-third State, as provided in the States Grants (Urban Public Transport) Act 1974. The final allocation of State funds for electrification for this financial year is dependent upon the outcome of submissions to the Commonwealth for approval of escalation, but is expected to be of the order of \$5,700,000.

(3) These details also appear in the Annual Report of the Commissioner for Railways for the respective years.

(4) No. A major function of the Railway Department is to contain transport costs in the provision of services despite the non-profitable operations which might result particularly in the area of branch lines. The losses registered by the Railway Department reflect the extent to which transport costs are subsidised not only in the case of city commuters but even more so where country dwellers are concerned. As the honourable member is aware, private enterprise depends for its existence on profitability and, if the railways were ever taken over by private enterprise, a significant increase in charges and the closure of non-paying lines could be expected.

I certainly cannot agree that the effects of the recently announced increase in rail charges will be as drastic as the honourable member so gloomily predicts.

10. ELECTRICITY TARIFF CONCESSIONS TO PENSIONERS ON KIDNEY DIALYSIS MACHINES

Mr. Austin, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Mines, Energy and Police—

(1) Is he aware that the electricity cost to operate a kidney dialysis machine is between \$2 and \$3 per week?

(2) As most persons using these machines are on a pension, will he make a concessional allowance in electricity charges to these consumers?

Answers:—

(1) Yes.

(2) The position in Queensland is that the existing legislation does not allow discrimination in electricity charges to consumers whose consumption falls into the same tariff classification. These consumers, like all other pensioners, are using electricity within a domestic installation.

The people who are dependent on these machines may have a strong case for an addition to their pensions or some special assistance towards meeting the costs of operating these machines. However, this is, in my opinion, a matter for the Commonwealth or my colleague the Minister for Health to consider.

11. 2,4,5-T

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

(1) Is he aware that tests performed on laboratory animals with the weed-killer 2,4,5-T have shown genetic abnormalities in the animals?

(2) What control does his department have over the sale of 2,4,5-T?

(3) What tests has his department carried out with 2,4,5-T regarding the effects that it may have on man or his environment?

(4) What tests has his department required of the manufacturers of or agents for 2,4,5-T?

(5) Will he call on the manufacturers or agents of 2,4,5-T to show that it does not cause genetic abnormalities?

(6) If this information is not or cannot be provided within three months, will the sale of 2,4,5-T be prohibited in this State?

Answers:—

(1) Yes.

(2) 2,4,5-T preparations must be registered by my department before sale. Registration is granted only after consideration by the Agricultural Requirements Board.

(3) My department has tested 2,4,5-T for its herbicidal properties. Questions relating to the effects of this material on man are ones for the health authorities.

(4) None. In relation to 2,4,5-T, we have relied on advice given by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

(5) No. My department has no power to call on manufacturers of or agents for a particular herbicide to carry out such tests.

(6) No. However, should health authorities decide that, because of human health risks, 2,4,5-T should not be used, my department would co-operate in taking whatever action may be deemed desirable.

12. METCON AND STATCON TRAFFIC SIGN SYSTEMS

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

(1) Is he aware that the Victorian Government provided finance for the introduction of a total major/minor road system throughout Victoria known as Metcon and Statcon, which provides for traffic-sign installation at all intersections throughout that State?

(2) Will he, as a matter of urgency, ensure that finance is made available to all Queensland traffic authorities, including the Brisbane City Council and the Main Roads Department, for the introduction of a similar system in Queensland?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) Yes, I am aware that the Victorian Government provided some finance for the introduction of traffic control systems known as Metcon and Statcon, though I am not aware of the exact details of that Government's contribution. However, I am not yet convinced that, as a matter of urgency, the Victorian example should be followed in Queensland, particularly as no other State of a size comparable with Queensland has done so.

Alternative approaches are being adopted in other States and these are under consideration to determine what system, if any, should be adopted in this State.

13. LABOUR EXEMPTIONS, MINING LEASES ON MORETON ISLAND

Mr. Warburton, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Mines, Energy and Police—

(1) Is he aware that the Mines Department records on 10 March showed that labour exemptions on 15 Moreton Island mining leases, including leases Nos. 1126, 1120 and 930 held by Associated Minerals, are not current?

(2) How many mining leases on Moreton Island are currently without labour exemptions?

(3) Are companies holding leases not being worked and without labour exemptions not fulfilling the conditions of their leases?

(4) If labour exemptions on any Moreton Island leases are not current, will he terminate the leases on the grounds that they do not comply with the requirements of the Mining Act?

Answers:—

(1) Mining leases situated on Moreton Island and held by Associated Minerals Consolidated Limited as at 10 March 1978, were mining leases Nos. 930, 1117, 1118, 1119, 1120, 1121, 1122, 1123, 1124, 1125, 1126, 1130, 1131 and 1132, Brisbane District.

Mining leases Nos. 930, 1119, 1120, 1126 and 1130, Brisbane, are amalgamated with mining lease No. 931, Brisbane, which was being worked on 10 March 1978 and is still being worked.

Mining leases Nos. 1117, 1118, 1121, 1122, 1123, 1124, 1125, 1131 and 1132, were not subject to exemption from labour conditions as at 10 March 1978.

(2) Five mining leases Nos. 930, 1119, 1120, 1126 and 1130, Brisbane.

(3) The question of a breach of labour conditions for which any action is within my discretion is not relevant as there is an undertaking not to carry out any mining on the subject leases pending a decision on the findings of the Committee of Inquiry, Future Lands Use—Moreton Island.

(4) See answer to (3).

14. NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Mr. Warburton, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Culture, National Parks and Recreation—

(1) Is he aware that the Director of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Mr. Saunders, in his second annual report to Parliament stated that the recent popularity of nature conservation with the general public has caused the work-load on administration to increase out of all proportion to the size of the department, that overtime is worked consistently in order to meet the demand and that some officers have had to work an average of nine hours' overtime per week?

(2) How many hours of overtime were worked by the officers during January, February, March and April, and how much money was paid for the overtime?

(3) Will he, at this time of grave unemployment in this State, increase the number of officers in the department rather than condone what the director refers to as consistent overtime?

Answers:—

(1) Yes.

(2) Clerical staff in Brisbane worked a total of 815½ hours' overtime during the months of January, February, March and April 1978, at a cost of \$6,853.08.

(3) The National Parks and Wildlife Service has been inspected by the Department of the Public Service Board and the clerical staff levels both in Brisbane and in the regional centres have been investigated. The report of the Public Service Board was received yesterday, and the recommendations contained therein will receive consideration.

15. DENTAL TECHNICIANS FOR CENTRAL WESTERN HOSPITALS

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

As the Longreach Hospitals Board and various others in the Central West have been without the services of dental technicians for periods in excess of 12 months at a time—

(1) What is his department doing to attract suitable applicants to these positions?

(2) Will his department consider allowing hospitals boards to send all their prosthetic work to outside private laboratories while they are without the services of a technician, as some persons have been waiting for over two years for dentures and/or denture repairs?

Answers:—

(1) The honourable member would be aware that dental technicians are employed by hospitals boards, which advertise vacancies as they occur. Should the Director of Dental Services become aware of a technician seeking an appointment with a hospitals board, the director would advise a hospitals board needing such a person.

(2) This problem has been recognised by my department and approval has been given for an additional dental technician to be appointed to the staff of the Brisbane Dental Hospital for the express purpose of providing a service to country dental clinics.

16. BLUE TONGUE DISEASE

Dr. Scott-Young, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Primary Industries—

(1) What is the date and place of the first and last proven case of blue tongue disease in Australia and in Queensland?

(2) If there has been a proven case in Queensland, in what district did it occur?

(3) If there has not been a proven case in Queensland, why has a demarcation line been drawn across the State?

(4) Is he aware that, because of the unscientific approach to the problem, cattle growers have lost millions of dollars, some have been forced out of business, and processing companies have increased their profits?

Answers:—

(1 & 2) As far as I am aware, no case of clinical blue tongue has occurred in Australia.

(3) A line was set down to demarcate an area in which blue tongue infection was known to be occurring, with a view to containing it until such time as a better understanding could be obtained of its precise distribution and its disease-producing potential. Blood testing has demonstrated the presence of blue tongue infection in cattle in the declared area of Queensland, but I would not expect clinical disease to show up in any case as the disease rarely affects cattle clinically. It has, of course, been shown that the virus which has been isolated does produce clinical effects in sheep experimentally.

(4) I am well aware that producers not only in North Queensland but to an even greater extent in the Northern Territory have suffered as a result of the restrictions applied to movement of cattle from the declared areas and the inconvenience and cost of handling their stock so that the status of properties and areas could be ascertained. Ways and means are being explored at both State and Federal level to ameliorate their burden.

It has appeared to be the sensible thing, both at the State and National level, that when we were fortunate enough to recognise the presence of blue tongue in the far northern areas, we should attempt to keep it there not only to protect the sheep industry throughout Australia, but also to benefit the growing export trade in live cattle.

17. OFFSHORE OIL DRILLING

Mr. Jones, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Mines, Energy and Police—

(1) Does Gulf Oil, or any other large American company, hold extensive offshore exploration permits along the Queensland coastline? If so, what are the details and do such permits extend to areas of the Great Barrier Reef and, if so, what is the number, description and extent of the areas?

(2) Have seismic surveys been carried out in any of the areas and, if so, which areas, what were the results and, in each instance, to what extent do the surveys or leases show oil-bearing potential?

(3) In view of the findings of the royal commission and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, will he assure the

House that no experimental drilling programme on the reef has been carried out, or is contemplated, and that the reef will not be threatened by future oil-drilling?

Answers:—

(1) Six titles are held along the Queensland offshore, under The Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act of 1967:

Q/4P 397 Blocks	East of Rockhampton	Australian Gulf Oil Company
Q/5P 400 Blocks	North East of Rockhampton	Australian Gulf Oil Company
Q/6P 397 Blocks	East of Mackay	Australian Gulf Oil Company
Q/7P 356 Blocks	East of Townsville	Australian Gulf Oil Company
Q/10P 278 Blocks	North of Cape York	California Asiatic Oil Company, Texaco Overseas Petroleum Company
Q/11P 126 Blocks	Cape York	Gulf Interstate Overseas Ltd.

All six areas held under title cover the Great Barrier Reef in part. Q/10P in the far north extends westward to 140°29' East. Q/4P in the south extends southward almost to Sandy Cape.

Applications have been made for renewal in part of these permits, but no decision has been made by the State or Commonwealth Governments on renewal, and applications for renewal are still pending. In the meantime the permits are held.

(2) The following seismic surveys carried out in the Great Barrier Reef Province, extended over areas currently held under title:

Australian Gulf Oil	Swain Reefs, 1965	Q/4P,
	Swain Reefs, 1966	Q/5P
Tenneco Australia Inc.	Northern Great Barrier Reef, 1966	Q/10P
Tenneco Australia Inc.	Northern Great Barrier Reef, 1968	Q/10P
American Overseas Petroleum	Warrior Reef, 1968	Q/10P
Texaco Overseas Petroleum	Pearce Cay, 1969	Q/10P
Gulf Interstate Oil	Torres Strait	Q/11P

In addition, in 1973 Australian Gulf Oil Company carried out a series of seismic traverses over Q/6P under Section 123 of the Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Acts of 1967 relating to scientific investigations, and the Geological Survey of Queensland in conjunction with the Commonwealth Bureau of Mineral Resources recently carried out seismic profiling for scientific purposes in the vicinity of the Bunker Group (Q/4P).

All these seismic surveys have provided geological information on the distribution and structure of the sedimentary rocks underlying the sea-bottom, but did not provide any direct information on the presence or otherwise of oil.

(3) The only drilling known to have taken place in the Great Barrier Reef province since 1969 is extremely shallow (less than 30 m) core-drilling being done in the Bunker and Capricorn Groups by the Bureau of Mineral Resources for scientific purposes.

I can assure the House that, as far as future consideration of drilling of the Great Barrier Reef is concerned, the State Government will be guided by the findings and recommendation of the royal commission, which was set up at the instigation of this Government.

18. NEWCASTLE DISEASE FROM INDONESIA

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

With reference to the introduction of Newcastle disease by boat from Indonesia into the Cairns area last year and the recent Press statements by the Commonwealth Minister for Immigration, Mr. MacKellar, when referring to refugees from South-east Asia as "the boat people"—

(1) What action has he taken in these matters having regard to the great concern that such boats could introduce disease amongst livestock here?

(2) Have formal recommendations or objections been forthcoming from the Queensland Government?

Answers:—

(1) I have not taken any action in regard to the arrival of refugees from South-east Asia. None is necessary. On arrival the boats are met by Commonwealth Quarantine Staff dealing with human, animal and plant quarantine and a thorough check is made to ensure that the entry of disease affecting either people, animals or plants is prevented.

(2) No. None are necessary.

19. NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL FOR WOREE

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

(1) When will dates be determined for the construction of the new primary school at Bayview Heights, Woree, Cairns, formerly included in the draft works programme for 1977-78?

(2) Having regard to the need and secured site, is he aware of the eight class-rooms in four demountable buildings at Balaclava Primary School and that 234 residences have been built in this rapidly developing area during 1977 and, if so, will he grant special consideration and urgent priority to the new school at Woree in the 1978-79 financial year?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) My department's financial allocations for 1978-79 have not yet been determined and I am unable to give any indication at this stage as to whether a new school may be constructed at Woree in the next financial year.

The honourable member for Cairns knows full well that I visited Cairns recently and am quite aware of the classroom accommodation in demountable and modular buildings at Balaclava State School. The position at Balaclava is not an isolated case and this type of accommodation is an economy measure in use in most areas of the State. It is widely adopted in other States of Australia and overseas.

Balaclava is in no worse a position than other schools, many of which are in electorates of Government members as well as in Opposition members' electorates.

I would remind the honourable member for Cairns that his electorate has been very well treated in recent years and has had more than its fair share of the financial cake in expenditure on Government buildings.

This financial year to date approximately \$2,500,000 has already been expended, and a total of approximately \$13,000,000 has been spent in the last 4½ years in his electorate. It is not all due to the representations of the honourable member, either. This indicates that his electorate is not in any political wilderness, as he tries to convey to his constituents. A case in point is the tremendous new technical college development in Cairns.

I am sure that the people of Cairns appreciate what has been and is being done in this area, and their needs will be well considered in relation to finances available for development throughout Queensland.

20. TENDERS FOR ELECTRICAL WIRING OF HOUSES, CHARTERS TOWERS

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

(1) With reference to his answer to my question concerning the giving of contracts for the wiring of three houses in Hackett Terrace, Charters Towers, why were the other 12 electrical contractors at Charters Towers given no opportunity to tender?

(2) Will he set up some sort of mechanism to ensure that this injustice will not be repeated?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) The honourable member will recognise the difference between obtaining quotes and calling public tenders. The public tendering system is too costly and time consuming to use in little jobs like this. The costs of documentation, advertising and clerical work can be greater than the value of the job or urgent work can be held up. Public tenders are called for larger jobs.

It is standard practice in small jobs to ask several contractors to quote. At least three quotes are sought where possible.

Any contractor is more than welcome to register with the local inspector that he is available to quote for work in his area. He will then be advised when quotes are being sought.

Past experience is that Charters Towers tradesmen have been reluctant to undertake Housing Commission work.

I am advised that there are nine electrical contractors registered in Charters Towers.

21. RAILWAY RETRENCHMENTS FOLLOWING CLOSURE OF PHOSPHATE MINE AT MONUMENT

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

(1) Will he assure Railway employees on the Great Northern Line that they will not be retrenched following the announcement of the impending closure of the Monument phosphate-mining operations?

(2) Will he advise what Railway reductions will take place?

(3) Will these reductions be carried out only by transfers and non-replacements?

(4) As efforts will be initiated on 23 May by the Commonwealth member for Kennedy at a meeting in Townsville of all parties concerned to open Australian markets to this Australian producer, will he withhold any action until efforts being made bear fruit?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) The only information available to me on this matter is that conveyed in a telexed copy of a statement made by BH South Pty. Ltd. to the Melbourne Stock Exchange on 12 May 1978. In that statement it was indicated that the company intended to terminate production of phosphate rock at an early date.

It would accordingly be quite premature for me to make a prediction as to the likely consequences of the company's decision other than to assure the honourable member that should any staff rearrangement become necessary no member of the permanent staff will incur dismissal.

22. RENT INEQUITIES, UNITS AND FLATS

Mr. Miller, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Survey and Valuation—

(1) Will he consider taking action to overcome the serious situation in which people find themselves when they own a block of land containing a small number of low-rent flats which has a valuation equal to a block of land containing in excess of 20 units?

(2) Is he aware that, when the expected increase in rates is introduced by the Brisbane City Council, many of the owners of these older flats will be unable to meet the increased costs owing to a lack of opportunity to increase rents?

(3) Is he aware of the demand for these low-cost flats and the role they play for the low-wage earner?

Answers:—

(1) Queensland local authorities have for many years used the unimproved value of land as the tax base for the calculation of rates. Some other parts of the world use the improved value system—the value of the site plus buildings.

The problem with using an improved value system is seen in residential areas. The family which chooses to spend money on improving and extending the family home would raise the improved value of their property and pay more in rates than their neighbours who don't extend.

It is socially undesirable to penalise a man who is trying to spend money on improving his house and his family's standard of living. Unfortunately, the advent of town planning has created many problems in high density zones. Two adjacent blocks of land in a high rise zone may have identical unimproved values, yet because one has 20 home units built on it and the other has only three or four flats, the capacity of the owners to pay rates may be vastly different.

In 1971 the problem was partially solved by allowing single-unit dwelling-houses in high rise zones to be valued so that the zoning was ignored, and the value put on the land was simply that of unimproved land capable of having a single-unit dwelling put on it.

In 1977 the Act was again amended so that houses with granny flats were treated in the same way. In other words, two-unit dwellings of this type which had been built on land zoned as high rise were specially dealt with so they escaped the consequences of a high rise valuation and high rates.

It is difficult to extend the principle any further without abandoning unimproved value and moving into an improved value system. This would result in the undesirable social consequences which I mentioned earlier.

However, I undertake to have another look at the problem as I know that it is a real one. I would ask the honourable member to give me the facts and figures he has collected on this problem, and thank him for again raising it in the House.

(2 & 3) I am aware of the demand for low-cost flats and the disastrous effect of an increase in rates. I have read newspaper reports to the effect that it is expected that rates levied by the Brisbane City Council will be increased in the forthcoming financial year.

The Brisbane City Council is an independent authority, and if it chooses to increase the burden on the ratepayers of Brisbane that is its responsibility. Of course, it will have to answer for it at the local authority elections in March next year.

My Cabinet colleague the Honourable the Treasurer has already mentioned one method by which a rise in rates could be alleviated, and that is by the Brisbane City Council disposing of some of its enormous land holdings.

23. GOVERNMENT LAND ACQUISITION POLICIES

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

With reference to a report of the Law Reform Commission which proposed major changes in the law governing compulsory acquisition of land by the Commonwealth Government—

(1) How does the commission's suggestions in relation to a requirement that Governments acquire properties within two months of the decision to proceed, that notices be provided in plain English, that the Commonwealth Government is to notify the land valuation within 14 days of acquisition and pay 90 per cent of that valuation at the time, etc., compare with current Government acquisition policies in Queensland?

(2) Will he give consideration to the implementation of any of these proposals that are not now incorporated in Queensland legislation?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) The honourable member should be aware that I am responsible neither for the activities of the Australian Law Reform Commission nor for the administration of the Queensland Acquisition of Land Act.

However, I am aware that the Australian Law Reform Commission has a reference relating to the Commonwealth Lands Acquisition Act and has prepared a discussion paper containing certain preliminary conclusions on the subject.

I am advised that the commission is still hearing submissions and any conclusions reached so far are not necessarily those which will appear in its final report.

24. LIQUIDATION OF BUSINESSES

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

(1) Has the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce brought to his attention blatant cases of petitions for the winding-up of companies where the proprietor or main shareholder in the company has publicly indicated his intention to start operation in the same line of business within a matter of weeks?

(2) Did the chamber say that it believed in the principle that an organisation going into liquidation and owing thousands of dollars should not be allowed to commence trading immediately under a trade name without first meeting commitments to its existing creditors?

(3) Has his department carried out any investigations into the question of overall bad debts from these company failings?

(4) Did the chamber ask him to give serious consideration to introducing suitable legislation which would (a) force a company to have a reasonable paid-up capital or at least discontinue the practice of permitting a paid up capital of \$2 or some similar small amount and (b) restrain or restrict persons directly and financially involved in the liquidation of a company or firm from commencing the same type of business for a definite period of some years and, if so, what action has he taken on the matter and when will such legislation be introduced?

Answers:—

(1) The Brisbane Chamber of Commerce did write to me concerning company failures involving bad debts. The chamber did not refer to any specific instance, but asked that serious consideration be given to introducing suitable legislation relating to this type of activity.

(2) Yes.

(3) I am not clear as to what the honourable member has in mind when he refers to companies failing with bad debts. If the honourable member has in mind the situation of a company continuing to trade whilst insolvent, I have been assured by the Commissioner for Corporate Affairs that, where evidence is obtainable to sustain a prosecution, steps will be taken to bring those responsible within the company before a court to account for their activities. However, the honourable member will no doubt be aware of the difficulties in successfully prosecuting these matters.

(4) Yes. The honourable member will be aware that a meeting of Commonwealth and State Ministers was held at Maroochydore on 13, 14 and 15 May, 1977, at which time a number of proposals for amendments of the Companies Act and the Securities Act were examined.

At this conference Ministers decided that further consideration of a minimum paid-up capital for companies should be deferred at this time.

The matter of restraining persons who have been directly and financially involved in the liquidation of a company from recommencing in the same type of business within a definite period was also considered by Ministers at the Maroochydore conference. It was the consensus view that this matter will be one of the issues referred to a properly constituted law reform body which it is anticipated will be established under the proposed co-operative Commonwealth/State scheme for the regulation of companies and the securities industries.

I would like to add for the information of honourable members that a number of significant initiatives that will greatly strengthen the powers of the regulatory authorities in combating corporate crime were considered at the Maroochydore conference. These will be introduced as soon as possible as part of the proposed co-operative scheme.

25. TRAINING OF DISABLED WORKERS

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

(1) What facilities are available for the training of disabled workers?

(2) Are any facilities available in provincial cities or country areas and, if so, in which towns and what types of training do they cover?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) Vocational assessment and sponsored training of disabled persons lies within the province of the Commonwealth Department of Social Security. I am advised that in addition to the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Centre in Brisbane a further centre is under construction at Townsville.

As well as these facilities provided by the Commonwealth Government, the State Health Department provides rehabilitation programmes in many hospitals throughout the State.

26. S.G.I.O. PROPERTIES IN CABOOLTURE SHIRE

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

(1) Will he advise the House of the properties purchased by the S.G.I.O. in the Caboolture Shire and the area and location of each property?

(2) Will he advise the names of the respective vendors and the purchase price paid for each property?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) It is a firm policy that in the competitive areas in which the S.G.I.O. operates details of commercial transactions entered into between the office and other parties be kept confidential.

Without confidentiality the position could be quickly reached where no-one would be prepared to enter into negotiations of any sort with the office.

It is public knowledge, however, that approximately 839 hectares of land in the area between Morayfield and Burpengary is owned by the S.G.I.O. A total of 131 hectares is to the east of the railway line, with the balance of this land in question being on the western side of the line.

27. BRISBANE ABATTOIR DEBT

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

(1) At the end of the last financial year, what was the total debt owed by the Metropolitan Public Abattoir Board relevant to the construction of the new Brisbane Abattoir?

(2) What burden of interest is this debt imposing on the operation of the Brisbane Abattoir?

(3) What is the rate of redemption of this debt and when is it anticipated that this burden will be removed?

Answers:—

(1) The total debt as at 29 April 1978 in respect of construction of the new Metropolitan Public Abattoir at Cannon Hill was \$16,819,836.

(2) The current annual cost of servicing the above debt is \$1,671,840. The components of interest and redemption fluctuate annually. However, in 1977-78 interest will be \$1,458,510, whilst redemption will be \$213,330.

(3) The periods of the loans raised by the board range up to 40 years and the last loan repayment instalment is due in the year 2015.

28. PUBLIC ACCESS TO GOODS IN CONTAINERS AT NEW PORT

Mr. Lane, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Maritime Services and Tourism—

Has a decision been made by the Port of Brisbane Authority to give the general public access to goods arriving in Brisbane through the new port in containers?

Answer:—

Proposals for the operation of a container terminal at the Fisherman Islands have been invited from experienced operators and are presently being considered by the port authority. The

authority's aim is to provide an efficient service to the public in delivery and receipt of cargoes.

29. NEW BRIDGE OR TUNNEL, BRISBANE RIVER

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

(1) As it is now seven months since the Minister for Main Roads made the statement that the Government was to construct a bridge or tunnel in the lower reaches of the Brisbane River and as there is no visible sign of any progress, what stage has the project reached?

(2) How much money has been expended from State funds on the project?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) As the honourable member should well know, a major project of this nature does not become a reality overnight.

Lengthy discussions concerning the basic options have taken place with my colleague the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. As a consequence, Cabinet has approved the formation of a steering committee comprising the Co-ordinator-General, the Under Treasurer and the Commissioner of Main Roads to manage the preparation of documents to be used as a basis for calling tenders for either a bridge or tunnel toll facility from Kingsford Smith Drive to Lytton Road later in the year. Under this steering committee a local firm of consulting engineers with international specialist affiliations has been commissioned to undertake preliminary design of a tunnel facility. Main Roads Department technical officers are undertaking preliminary design of a bridge facility and additional foundation information has been obtained.

As at 30 April 1978, some \$83,000 had been spent on this work.

30. RELIEF OF UNEMPLOYMENT

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

(1) Has the State Government made any request to the Loan Council for permission to borrow millions of dollars from overseas sources for unemployment relief works as announced on 21 January?

(2) If any request has been made, what are the details of any requested loan, including (a) the amount, (b) the lender, (c) the period and (d) the interest to be charged?

(3) If no request has been made, why did the Government change its mind?

(4) If, as reported, no decision can be made on this matter until June, what action has the State Government taken to relieve unemployment in the meantime?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) Agreement amongst the members of the Australian Loan Council has almost been reached in relation to the establishment of guide-lines to enable State authorities to undertake major projects in addition to their normal annual Loan Council programmes with the use of funds from overseas sources. It is hoped that these guide-lines will be finalised when the Loan Council meets again towards the end of next month.

In the meantime a submission is being prepared putting forward areas of development in this State for initial consideration, with other projects being named for possible approval in later years.

The major aim of this arrangement is to enable State developments to proceed where the State could not otherwise make provision for the funding of such development without inhibiting its normal responsibilities for the provision of public facilities. While such prospects will obviously create employment opportunities, they are projects which, by their very nature, will take time to initiate and relief of unemployment is not their main purpose.

It is not appropriate that the projects likely to be assisted under these arrangements should be named until detailed submissions have been made and Loan Council approvals obtained.

The honourable member will no doubt be aware that we have already obtained approval for developments at sugar ports involving \$50,000,000 of borrowings, with an initial \$15,000,000 of overseas raisings during the current financial year. The negotiation of this borrowing from the Bank of Tokyo is reaching finality and I will be signing documents on behalf of the State in the near future.

These developments represent an aggregate investment in new facilities amounting to some \$120,000,000 over a period of four years, the balance in excess of the proposed borrowings being funded directly by the sugar industry through the Sugar Board. The programme includes major port improvements at Bundaberg and Lucinda, including the conversion of Lucinda to a deep-water port involving construction of a 5.7 kilometre trestle and dolphin berths with associated bulk-handling systems, and the provision of major storage increments and associated works at Bundaberg, Lucinda, Mackay and Townsville.

In relation to the portion of the honourable member's question which relates to action taken by the State Government to relieve unemployment, I would remind him of the State Budget provisions for special employment creating works totalling \$50,000,000 in the current year which we later increased to \$55,500,000. This followed allocations of \$69,000,000 for this purpose during the preceding year.

As a State Government is obliged to live within its financial means, these allocations represent major achievements towards the solving of the unemployment problem.

We have also endeavoured to encourage major development projects by private enterprise and several such developments are presently getting under way including the Norwich Park and Gregory coal developments which involve massive investment outlays.

31. PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS;
COMPOSITE CLASSES

Mr. Houston, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Education—

As many qualified primary school-teachers are available for employment, why is it necessary for schools to use composite classes, in some cases in excess of 30 children per class?

Answer:—

This reply deals with the question from two standards—(i) organisational and (ii) educational.

(i) From the point of view of numbers of teachers, to remove all classes containing children from two or more years (grades) and to replace them with classes containing only one year (grade), even if this were confined to larger primary schools, would require an increase of many hundreds of teachers on the State pay-roll, and I doubt if there would be any true educational gain.

The present staffing scale in larger primary schools aims to provide one class teacher for 33 children. Within the majority of school staffs there are many grades below 33 children and only some above the normal class size number. To provide an additional teacher for each year group exceeding the normal class size number may involve a fifty per cent increase in staff. Such action is neither practicable nor warranted.

I would point out that, in addition to class teachers, the staffing scales for larger primary schools provide for other teaching staff such as principals, deputy principals, teacher librarians, music specialists and local relieving teachers.

I believe that the numbers of teachers involved in the education of our children is a better indication of the standard of teacher provision than simple measures of class size, and I can assure the honourable member that in this regard the provisions for Queensland primary schools compare favourably with those in the other States.

(ii) Secondly, I believe there is no educational justification for discontinuing composite classes in primary schools. The Queensland primary school syllabuses recognise that there are individual differences in abilities and achievements of

children. Effective teaching practices cater for these differences by small group organisation for appropriate instruction. In any class of 35 children, whether they be nominally in the same grade or not, there will be a spread of three or more years' achievement. Teachers who teach 35 children as one group progressing at the same pace are professionally irresponsible. Every class in practice is a composite class.

In schools where composite classes (that is, generally for children from two year groups) are organised, it is usual for the total number to be smaller and the children to be selected to reduce the spread of achievement. Composite classes are a feature of almost all smaller (fewer than 200 children enrolled) schools and there is no research evidence to indicate lesser achievement by pupils in these schools. In fact, there is some evidence of better performance in such schools. If the honourable member provides me with the names of schools which he regards as being disadvantaged because of composite classes, I shall have each of them examined and assessed.

32. BOWEN KNIFE BELT

Mr. Powell, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Mines, Energy and Police—

(1) With reference to an advertisement appearing in the "Australasian Post" of 4 May advertising the Bowen Knife Belt and as the wording of the advertisement states, *inter alia*, "and for any emergency needing a sharp knife", can this so-called belt be regarded as a concealable weapon and, if so, is such a product illegal and will steps be taken to withdraw the article from sale?

(2) If the article is legal, what changes to the law are required to make such weapons illegal?

Answers:—

(1) Yes. However, under normal usage it is no different from other types of knives, such as pocket-knives, sheath-knives, etc., which can also be regarded as concealable weapons.

As advised to another member of this House on 13 April 1978, the Queensland Police Department has examined the belt and, in conjunction with the New South Wales Police Department, has made representations to the Commonwealth Department of Customs in Canberra in an endeavour to have this article declared a prohibited import.

(2) Under present legislation the sale and possession of such an article, under normal circumstances, is no offence. The matter as to whether or not this article will be declared a prohibited import is presently under consideration by Commonwealth Customs authorities.

33. MARITIME SERVICES OFFICE, URANGAN

Mr. Powell, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Maritime Services and Tourism—

(1) When will the Maritime Services office at Urangan be ready and open for business?

(2) What services to the public will be available at the office?

(3) During which hours will the office be open?

(4) How many officers will be stationed at Hervey Bay?

Answers:—

(1) The Maritime Services building at Urangan is already in use.

(2) The building is not intended for use as a general public office. Its main purpose is as an operations base for the safe storage of the Hervey Bay Boating Patrol vessel and associated equipment together with safe storage for confiscated illegal fishing equipment and a small workshop. However, accommodation is provided for the boat harbour overseer.

(3 & 4) Apart from the boat harbour overseer, who will be present as required, patrol officers will not be stationed at Hervey Bay. The four officers from Maryborough Station will alternate in patrol duties in the Hervey Bay area using the boating patrol vessel.

34. INDUSTRIAL ESTATES, BUNDEBERG, HERVEY BAY AND MARYBOROUGH

Mr. Powell, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Industry and Administrative Services—

(1) What is the area of the industrial estates at (a) Bundaberg, (b) Hervey Bay and (c) Maryborough?

(2) How many industries are currently manufacturing goods on each of the above estates?

(3) Of these industries, how many, in each place, are currently leasing the buildings from which they are operating?

Answers:—

(1) (a) Bundaberg—123 hectares; (b) Maryborough—88 hectares; (c) Hervey Bay—27 hectares.

(2 & 3) Bundaberg—Twenty-two sites have been leased. A further two sites are under negotiation and one factory building erected under the Pioneer Industry Scheme is leased. Nineteen manufacturing firms are in production and another two firms are engaged in the construction of factory premises.

Maryborough—Two sites have been leased. A further site is under negotiation and one factory building erected under

the Pioneer Industry Scheme. Two firms are in operation, of which one occupies the Pioneer Industry rental factory building.

Hervey Bay—Three sites have been leased and two firms are in production. Both these firms provided their own factory premises.

35. BIKEWAY, CARINA-CAPALABA ROAD

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

(1) Has provision been made for a cycleway in the existing plans for stage one of the four-lane road from Carina to Capalaba presently under construction?

(2) If not, will he look at the possibility of a cycleway being included, as many cyclists use this road to travel to and from work each day?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) Provision has not been made for a cycleway in the works now under construction on the Cleveland subarterial road at Carina.

As I indicated in answer to a question yesterday, the matter of provision of bike-ways is under review and this particular case will be considered in the light of the decisions made following that review.

36. CONSUMER AFFAIRS PRACTICES

Mr. Wright, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Labour Relations—

(1) Is he aware of the announcement by his ministerial counterpart in New South Wales, the Hon. Sid. Einfeld, that legislative changes are being made (a) to empower Consumer Affairs inspectors to impound unsafe goods, (b) to prevent double ticketing, that is, the practice where two or more prices are stamped on goods, (c) to extend the jurisdiction of the Consumer Affairs Commissioner to investigate complaints relating to real estate and (d) to expand the definition of the term "consumer" to include farmers and people engaged in small businesses?

(2) How do these changes compare with the existing powers of Consumer Affairs personnel and laws in Queensland, and will he consider making similar amendments with the view to further upgrading consumer laws in this State?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) As I have announced previously the Consumer Affairs Act is presently under review by a subcommittee of the Consumer Affairs Council. For the information of the honourable member the subcommittee will take into account recent amendments throughout Australia without necessarily slavishly following those amendments.

37. CRIMINAL LAW INQUIRY REPORT

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

(1) With reference to the report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Enforcement of Criminal Law in Queensland and the special State Government three-man committee appointed in May 1977 to report on the recommendations arising from that inquiry, as it is now one year since the special committee was appointed, when is it anticipated that the special committee's report will be completed?

(2) If a submission has already been received, will he lay on the table the basis of recommendations made to date?

(3) If no submission or report has been completed, what action is he prepared to take to expedite proceedings in view of the important nature of some of the recommendations of the original inquiry and the need to implement same?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) The report of the committee was received by me on 16 March 1978 and submitted to Cabinet on 17 March 1978. As this report was obtained for the information of Cabinet only, it will not be tabled in Parliament.

This committee was appointed by Cabinet and the honourable member should be aware it was that committee's responsibility to report to Cabinet through me.

Cabinet decided that the Ministers whose departments are concerned with recommendations of the Committee of Inquiry into the Enforcement of Criminal Law in Queensland which are capable of implementation without extending police powers should submit what action they intend to take for Cabinet approval.

In the meantime I propose to examine the experience of other countries in relation to the tape-recording and video-recording of police investigations whilst overseas and will report to Cabinet on my return.

38. "EVENTIDE", ROCKHAMPTON

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

With regard to "Eventide", Rockhampton—

(1) What is the present average waiting period for (a) male and (b) female applicants?

(2) What Government action is being taken or is planned to provide much-needed additional accommodation for the aged, specifically at "Eventide" or generally in Rockhampton?

(3) What Crown land is available in Rockhampton for the establishment of another Eventide-type complex?

(4) If the necessary land is available, what consideration has been given to such a proposal?

Answers:—

(1) It is impracticable to average waiting periods for admission to "Eventide", Rockhampton, as admissions are not necessarily effected in order of receipt of applications but rather on assessment of need of applicants.

I am advised that nursing ward applications on hand as at 16 May 1978 comprised 31 for males and 50 for females. Of these applicants, eight males and 12 females are considered to warrant priority consideration.

As at 16 May 1978, residential ward accommodation was available for one male and six females and cottage accommodation was available for four males and one married couple.

(2 to 4) The Rockhampton Hospitals Board has been given approval for the development of the hospital reserve at North Rockhampton to provide additional nursing home beds as and when funds become available for the purpose.

Sketch plans are currently under consideration in respect of a 40-bed nursing home unit as the first stage of this development.

39. COMMERCIAL VEHICLE REGISTRATION IN COUNTRY AREAS

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

What requirements are necessary to obtain registration of trucks, trailers and commercial vehicles in country areas of this State?

Answer:—

If the vehicle concerned has a gross vehicle mass less than 4 tonnes (or in the case of a trailer less than 1.02 tonnes) or if the vehicle is not equipped with axle groups, all that is necessary is for the owner to obtain an application for registration, fill it in as far as possible and arrange for the police to inspect the vehicle. If the police are satisfied that the vehicle meets with the regulations, they will complete the certificate on the application for registration. This application should then be lodged with the nearest registration office or clerk of the court. This procedure has applied for many years.

If, however, the vehicle has a gross vehicle mass in excess of 4 tonnes, or is a trailer (except a boat trailer, a caravan

trailer, a horse float or a box trailer not used commercially for carrying goods) with a gross vehicle mass in excess of 1.02 tonnes, and in either case if the vehicle is equipped with an axle group, then in addition to the requirements listed previously, it will be necessary for the vehicle to be inspected by an authorised departmental officer to ensure its compliance with new regulations now in force.

For the information of all honourable members, this does not mean that owners seeking registration must travel hundreds of miles for an inspection. The authorised officers are specialised personnel who in the course of their normal duties travel throughout the district to which they are attached. It is therefore possible for inspections to be arranged in most towns in the State. Thus people seeking to register such a commercial vehicle, and dealers in particular, should contact the nearest departmental district office or registration office to see what arrangements can be made for local inspections when the authorised officer is in the area.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

DEATH OF SIR ROBERT MENZIES

Hon. C. R. PORTER (Toowong—Minister for Aboriginal and Island Affairs) (12.1 p.m.): Without the normal opportunity of a motion concerning the death of an ex-member of this House, I felt that some mention should be made, certainly some modest tribute paid by myself in a personal way, of the passing of a very great Australian in the death of Sir Robert Gordon Menzies. I am not being in the least party political in this, because one should recall that when he resigned from the House in 1965 it was Arthur Calwell who paid a very eloquent tribute to him and referred to Sir Robert's integrity, his intellect, his service to the political ideals that he held and his deep dedication to the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy, and I know that it was Arthur Calwell's tribute that Sir Robert Menzies most prized.

I think one can say, Mr. Speaker, that R. G. Menzies belonged to a particular era of Australian history. Australia had just emerged from a trial of a massive total war effort, and it was an era of great growth; that was really the keynote of the period. There was a tremendous optimism; there were great aspirations; many fine constructive things were happening. This was the tenor of the times. Perhaps in a political sense he was lucky to be leader of the country in those times, but without doubt it was a period when there were political giants in the land—Casey, Chifley, Page, McEwen, and towering over all these other giants was Menzies.

I was fortunate enough to be associated with him from the very earliest Liberal days. As a matter of fact, the party that I served, the Queensland People's Party, pre-dated the Liberal Party and acted as its Federal agent until 1949. I ran all its campaigns, and was a member of the Liberal Party's national planning committee. So I knew R. G. Menzies quite well, sometimes too well. I made recommendations to him; I argued with him; I advised him; and very often I was frustrated by him; but I always knew that very definitely he was a man of tremendous intellect, and, quite assuredly, he was the leader of the party, and when he became Prime Minister, he was clearly the Prime Minister.

I think all of us who were associated with him in those days will recall him very well—a towering and a commanding, if, perhaps, a portly figure, dressed in the almost inevitable double-breasted suit, sometimes with a frosty look that could quell a roomful of journalists, sometimes with the raised eyebrow which struck terror into almost anybody's heart, and then the characteristic head falling on the chest if he wanted to give some thought before answering a question. I can see him very clearly at this moment.

If I asked myself what it was that made R. G. Menzies clearly the giant above all other giants in the period I have got to say to myself that it was not only his intellect—and it was enormous—but I think it was because he had the highest regard for the institution of Parliament, that he saw politics as a very admirable public duty. He was never ashamed to say that he was a professional practising politician. He saw Parliament as an instrument that was infinitely powerful but also infinitely to be cherished, something which one had to woo and win and then serve it with heart and mind. So as I say, for me, anyway, he has got to be seen as a man who was quite proud to be a politician and who practised all the skills of it with a professional dedication.

I know he had a wonderful reputation as an impromptu speechmaker. Those of us who knew him well knew that his speeches were seldom impromptu. A tremendous amount of work and thought went into them; but once they were prepared he tore them up, and he had that in his mind to use as the impromptu speech that he then made so eloquently and effectively on so many occasions.

Similarly, he had a great reputation for ripostes to hecklers at meetings, and these were virtually all thought out beforehand. He anticipated what a particular audience would do and how it would react to the particular speech he was going to offer. So, anticipating the calls from the crowd, he was able to have his answers prepared. In other words, as a good practising professional politician, he worked at his craft, and he had a deep feeling for a flow of events, for being able to identify the signs and read the omens, and find out what was happening.

In the 1949 campaign we came to the final city hall meeting, and I walked with him from Lennon's Hotel around to Adelaide Street, up Albert Street and along Ann Street in complete silence. That was all he required—somebody to walk with him—until we got near to the city hall. He then said, "How do you think the election is going?" I said, "I think we might have a modest victory in Queensland. How do you think it is going?" "Well", he said, "I don't know, and I never prophesy about elections; but this time", and he leant forward in a confidential way, "this time I feel in the marrow of my bones that this one is ours." And that, I think, is the essence of what makes a good politician. You can have the best intellect in the world, but you have to feel things in the marrow of your bones; you have to have a gut feeling for what is the right and proper thing to do, and he had it.

I think it is perhaps not well understood by many people, particularly at this length of time from the period when he was active in public affairs, that despite his eminence and his world stature and the fact that he bestrode the Australian Parliamentary scene like a colossus, he was essentially a shy and lonely man. He was often charged with being aloof and austere and autocratic, and I suppose to some degree all those charges can properly be laid; but I think that much of that was due to his incapacity easily to pursue all the normal small exchanges of social communication. These things came hard to him.

After major meetings up here in the Liberal Party, our plan was to have a supper for supporters afterwards, and to try to bring Sir Robert to these functions—well, really it would have been easier to rope a wild horse and drag it there. Eventually Dame Pattie used to do the job. He apparently loathed the sort of thing that so many other politicians do as second nature.

In the 1949 campaign we had him meeting the people—going up and down Queensland, going into mines, wharves, shearing-sheds, and into pubs, and selling this proposition to him was an enormous task. He really bucked at the thought of going on tour—on exhibition, as he put it. But he eventually did it, found that he liked it, and did it very well. One of my fondest memories is a superb photograph that we had of him, taken in Mt. Isa, I think, with a little black child on his knee while he sang to her "Here comes the Galloping Major". Pretty good electioneering material it was, too!

Those of us who were fortunate enough to hear him speak on public occasions will never forget his oratory—his polished phrases, his careful presentation, his eloquent building of his speech—and what a giant he would be in today's world of so many occasions when leaders are mechanical readers of somebody else's prepared speeches.

He was a master, too, of the art of under-talk and not over-talk. The first "Meet the Press" on television began in Sydney, with three very prominent journalists, and one of them, when Mr. Menzies, as he then was, went on, was his arch enemy. This man prepared a long involuted, or perhaps I should say convoluted, question which had so many factors in it that no matter how Sir Robert answered it, he was bound to get caught. Having asked this long question—"In view of such-and-such-and-such, and if so-and-so occurs, and recognising such-and-such, do you not think, Mr. Menzies, so-and-so?"—he sat back with a smug look and waited for Mr. Menzies to trap himself on an answer. All Menzies did was wait for two or three seconds, raise an eyebrow and look at this man and say, "No." That completely demolished the panel and left him as master of the scene. He was a man who was able to recognise that there are many occasions when one gives only the necessary answer and does not embroider it. I wish to goodness that this could be learnt by many people today.

He was the apotheosis of lucidity, too. He was able to go on T.V.—a medium he never liked but tolerated—and reduce complex abstruse matters to simple comprehensible terms so that Mrs. Housewife could turn to her husband and say, "There you are, dear; that's exactly what I've been saying all the time." His views are perfectly expressed in a speech he made in 1949 when he said—

"Democracy rests upon the view that the people are rulers as well as the ruled; that the Government has no authority and no privilege beyond that granted by the people themselves; that while sovereignty attaches to the Acts of the Parliament, that sovereignty is derived from the people and has no other source."

That is a concept I have tried to cherish throughout a long political life. I am sure all of us in this House are generous enough to say of Robert Gordon Menzies that we are the poorer for his passing but vastly richer for his having been amongst us.

INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT OF SUBMISSIONS ON NEW POWER-STATION

Mr. VAUGHAN (Nudgee) (12.11 p.m.): Today I wish to speak about the planning of the future power requirements of this State, a matter which is of serious concern to me, the Opposition and the people of Queensland, as I believe it should be to Government members.

The Gladstone Power Station currently under construction was originally designed to cater for power demands in Central Queensland in particular and the rest of Queensland in general. It will be recalled that the proposed building of the Comalco smelter at Gladstone was one of the basic reasons for the construction of the Gladstone Power Station. There were also rumours

about a fertiliser plant and new coal-mines that were going to be opened up in that area. Originally Comalco intended to take 640 megawatts of power from the Gladstone Power Station, but in January 1976 did not exercise its two options of 320 MW, and reduced it to the one option of 320 MW.

To cater for anticipated increase in demand for power, the State Electricity Commission of Queensland in 1972 received tenders for coal supply to the next power-station in Queensland. In all 16 tenders were received. In June 1973 the State Electricity Commission submitted a report to the Government recommending that the next power-station be constructed at Tarong. The commission considered 20 possible sites. I emphasise the point that at that particular time the anticipated capacity of the power-station at Tarong was 4 x 275 MW units, a total of 1 100 MW of power, compared with the 4 x 350 MW units proposed for the next power-station to be built in South-east Queensland. I would also emphasise that the recommendation was based on coal offers received and other conditions and circumstances prevailing at the time.

The cooling water for the proposed Tarong Power Station was to come from Somerset Dam or a new dam to be built on Cooyar Creek. I draw a comparison here with the recommendation of the State Electricity Commission concerning the current proposal for a power-station at Tarong with the water supply coming from either the Boyne River, the Wivenhoe Dam or the Brisbane River just south of its junction with the Stanley.

In April 1974, subsequent to the receipt of additional information on comparative ramifications of various locations for the next power-station, the Government decided that no action would be taken to decide on a new power-station until such time as Comalco gave the Government a definite decision to absorb the agreed proportion of the output of the Gladstone Power Station. In the last few years there have been repeated announcements that the Comalco alumina refinery would be going ahead, but to this date we have not heard any definite announcement about the construction of that smelter. I do not believe that any definite announcement will be made for quite some time. Of course, this is one of the major problems associated with the planning of power requirements for this State.

In September 1975 the Government approved an additional 2 x 275 MW units at the Gladstone Power Station. This was brought about because of the indecision by Comalco in respect of its refinery and also because of a recession in the coal-mining and other industries in Central Queensland.

In June 1976 tenders were called for the supply of coal to the next power-station. Seven tenders for up to 100 000 000 tonnes were received. In January 1978 the State Electricity Commission submitted a report

to the Government and recommended Millmerran as the site for the next power-station. We have all heard a great deal about that report; it has been well and truly canvassed in this Chamber.

In February 1978 Cabinet, in its wisdom, decided that the next power-station should be built not at Millmerran, as recommended by the State Electricity Commission, but at Tarong. I emphasise the point that the decision to build the next power-station in South-east Queensland provided not for 4 x 275 MW units as originally planned but for 4 x 350 MW units. I believe that is one of the reasons why the State Electricity Commission changed its recommendation from Tarong to Millmerran.

On 24 April 1978, Millmerran Coal Co. commented on a statement made by the Premier in this House. It will be recalled that on 18 April he made a rather lengthy statement as to the reasons why Cabinet had decided not to accept the State Electricity Commissioner's recommendation. I believe that Cabinet's decision was wrong and that in years to come we will live to regret it. I would appeal to the Government to reconsider the matter and to have an independent inquiry into the siting of the next power-station in South-east Queensland.

In view of the long history of controversy surrounding the construction of the next power-station, and as over \$8,400 million of Queensland taxpayers' money is involved, it is wrong to decide on any location until an independent study is made of all the reports. I know that I might be rehashing something that has already been thrashed out in this Chamber, but in view of the conflicting statements and the vast sum of money that is involved over the next 25 to 30 years, there must be an independent study of the information that the Premier received and the information set out by the State Electricity Commission in its report.

I believe that the Premier is wrong in insisting on Tarong and that in years to come we will regret that decision. It must be changed now before it is too late. If the next power-station is built at Tarong, there is every possibility of a serious power crisis occurring in Queensland in 1985. Evidence of that is set out in the report of the State Electricity Commission.

I have studied that report (numerous copies of it are available), I have studied the annual reports of the State Electricity Commission from 1972 to 1977, I have been to New South Wales and spoken to officers of the Electricity Commission of New South Wales and I have looked at the manner in which that commission locates its power-stations in that State. We simply cannot take a chance in relation to the next power-station. We must hold an independent inquiry. So again I appeal to Government members to press Cabinet for a review of the decision. I do not believe that at this stage the decision is a firm one.

The Premier is determined to have his own way, and the problem is that he will not be in Parliament in 1985 to accept responsibility for the problems that will go with power distribution in this State in that year.

The recommendation put forward by the State Electricity Commission foreshadowed three situations. The first is that if the Comalco refinery goes ahead—which I doubt—Queensland will be in serious trouble by 1985; the second is that if the project goes only partly ahead, we may be safe until 1986; and the third is that if the refinery does not go ahead at all we have until 1987. Beyond that date, however, the State will be in serious trouble.

I believe that in insisting on Tarong the Premier has been conned by C.R.A. just as he was conned by Iwasaki, Milan Brych and a number of other persons. I do not believe that the people of Queensland should pay the penalty for the Premier's indiscretions.

I am reminded of a statement made by him in December 1975 that the people of Australia would remember for a long time to come that it was the Queensland Government that, by appointing a non-Labor senator to replace the late Bert Milliner—thereby breaking convention—helped Mr. Fraser to get his chance for an election. His statement was reported in the Rockhampton "Morning Bulletin" during the 1975 Federal election campaign. The people of Queensland will not forgive or forget what the Premier has done, and is doing, to the State, particularly when the black-outs occur in the mid 1980s because of the water problems we will have with the Tarong station.

While the Premier rejected the recommendations made by the State Electricity Commission, he will not be here to accept the responsibility, but many members in the House will have to accept responsibility for his decision. I call on Government members who are genuinely concerned about the future of the State to join with the Labor Party in calling for an independent assessment of the submissions on the construction of the next power-station in Queensland.

The only consolation for members on this side of the House is that the people of Queensland must make a decision in the mid-1980s which will result in our winning Government. However, as I said, that is a hell of a way for us to come to power. I do not want to see our party come to power on that basis.

(Time expired.)

FUNDING OF ROAD-WORKS BY SHIRE COUNCILS

Mr. BOOTH (Warwick) (12.21 p.m.): I wish to raise one matter of public interest that concerns country councils particularly. I refer to their funding of road-works. Trouble may be experienced by city councils, but shire councils certainly feel the pinch. I do not intend to highlight the lack

of funding by the Federal authority but I will try to highlight the lack of advance knowledge available to local authorities. At about this time of the year shire councils try to plan their budgets. In bringing this matter to light I do not intend to ignore the next six weeks of fairly difficult times that shire councils may go through. I also wish to highlight another matter that is affected by a chain reaction. In the course of my speech I will make a plea for something different to be done. Because of my personal knowledge of the difficulties that shire councils have faced over the years it is obvious to me that their plight will be much worse this year. In past years they may have been able to live off their fat for a while, but this year because of the worsening rural recession most of them will have no fat to live on. In the circumstances they will be looking to see what they can get in advance.

An Opposition Member: Is this your maiden speech?

Mr. BOOTH: I might say that it will be as good as my maiden speech.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: I will tell you that we are very interested in what you are saying.

Mr. BOOTH: Judging by their expressions, I am sure that Opposition members are. I do not intend to be side-tracked from saying what I intended to say.

In the balance of the current financial year many shire councils will find that they have either to retrench staff or to mix it with people in the earth-moving or gravel-carrying business. When transport companies find that shire councils compete with them and win some of their main roads work, they resent it. They believe that shire councils enjoy certain privileges with sales tax and so on that they do not get. Some of the troubles could be overcome if shire councils had an advance estimate of what they were to get.

I do not suggest that the Minister for Main Roads has not done the best that he can to alleviate the position. I understand that most shire councils have received certain advice and are not quite as worried as they were a few weeks ago. But they are as worried as they have ever been about the situation that could develop early next year when they have to strike a budget without knowing what they are likely to get. This places a very heavy strain on both the councillors and the staff.

The staff draw up a budget and then get the councillor's views on how much they can find. At the present time, because of high interest rates, shire councillors are somewhat diffident to overcommit their councils. They are aware of the large amounts of both redemption and interest that have to be paid. They have a responsibility to their communities. It is no use their saying, "We will strike a budget and we will not worry about how much funding we will get. We will just

go ahead with it." When they attempted to collect those rates, they could find themselves grossly embarrassed.

I would like to say a little more about the chain reaction that embarrasses earth-moving people and gravel carriers. They reach the stage where they, too, have a staff. They are possibly well organised. If they have got through the year at this stage, with about six weeks to go, they possibly find that certain contracts they have anticipated would become available have been tendered for by the shire council. If they have not lost all of the contracts, they have lost at least some. So some staff will be retrenched from the shire council or from an earth-moving or carrying firm.

I am not suggesting for one moment that shire councillors should have taken away from them any of the privileges that they enjoy. They are responsible for day-to-day repairs. They are repeatedly under pressure to get those repairs under way. Therefore, I think that it is in their interests—and certainly in the best interests of the community—that they be given these privileges.

At the same time, problems are caused with the carrying firms. I believe that the only way we could overcome this is by establishing well in advance the exact amount of funding that will be available. Carrying firms have a fair idea of the amount of work that will be in the pipeline. Consequently, a budget can be drawn up by both the shire council and private enterprise.

The decision facing shire councils now of whether or not to retrench staff is a worrying one. I suppose it can affect employment figures, too, in various parts of Queensland. I am not suggesting that it is in all parts of Queensland, but the situation can confront a council which has to retrench staff now. It will lose men that it might possibly want in two or three months' time. Those people may not stay in the same locality. They have to make a livelihood and they may have to move on.

I think that is probably one of the most difficult decisions that the shire councillors face at this moment. If they are going to overcommit their borrowing and try to generate some thrusts in their works programme and keep all these people employed—which they want to do if they are good men—somewhere in the middle of the financial year they might find themselves unable to employ very many people. The result could be a worsening of the situation in many towns. I am speaking principally of the people I represent in the smaller country towns. However, that probably applies equally right across the State.

I think that the long-term answer lies in a greater amount of funding, both by loan and by grants from the Federal sphere. Not only should there be a greater amount of funding, but it should also be known well in advance. I know that in the past we have had five-year plans and three-year plans

for local authority road-works and bridge-works. I would like to see those plans developed into a still longer period. I see no reason why a five-year loan works programme should not be the minimum, and I would like to be looking towards a seven or eight-year programme, if shire councils are to be put on the business footing that most of us who have been shire councillors would like to see them put on.

I know that it may be said, and it will be said, that shire councils face the prospect of bringing down budgets well before the Federal Budget has been introduced—and possibly the State Budget, too. Although I accept that, surely it should be possible for an estimate to be given in advance of the amount of money that could be made available, to give them an idea of how they could go about framing a budget that will not put them into an invidious position.

I made the point earlier—and I am going to make it again—that, whilst I think shire councils have perhaps taken a few risks in the past, they now find that most of their loan programmes have been completely utilised. At the end of the year at least some of them will experience a deficit and they will not be able to take risks. They will have no alternative but to curtail works and perhaps retrench staff. I am not advocating that; nor would any thinking person. Then, perhaps in six, eight or 12 weeks' time they might want to re-employ some of those people and will be unable to do so because the people might have left the district or changed their occupations when there was no need to do so.

The plea I make is simply that we endeavour to influence our Federal counterparts to increase the funding and let us know in advance so that there can be some rationalisation and some rational thinking when shire councils get around to framing their budgets.

PARA ENERGY RESEARCH

Dr. LOCKWOOD (Toowoomba North) (12.31 p.m.): I rise to address myself to a matter of public interest with a firm medical belief that what I am doing is in the best interests of the people of this State. The matters that prompt me to speak today go back to 26 April 1978 when a Mr. P. V. Leahy—no relation of the Minister—came to visit me in this House, having asked me if I would care to be an observer in a programme being conducted by an organisation known as Para Energy Research. I thanked him for coming to see me, but I have had to take great exception to the matters contained in a quite thick, blue portfolio he left with me.

Acting as an observer in a programme such as he is undertaking, where he is seeking to have 20 persons with long, chronic histories of disease cured, would involve a great deal of expertise in observation. I am afraid that such a great deal of

expertise is not available to Para Energy Research within its own organisation. The observer would in fact be the recipient of statements from patients. As I go along I shall outline the problems that could be encountered in considering this form of medical or paramedical research.

The people coming forward are invited to complete two forms. The first is headed "Para Energy Research" and has a logo in the form of a circle on top of a T, which was a form of cross used in ancient Egyptian times. I am not quite sure of the symbolism of this logo or sign. The form is then headed, "Permission for Access to Personal Medical Records." There is room for the name and address and the person then signs a declaration which reads—

"I . . . hereby give my permission for the Minister for Health in the State of Queensland to have full access to my medical history which is available from the doctors I have designated."

While this might lead the people in Para Energy Research to believe that full histories would be available, I venture to suggest that going back through medical documents over a great many years, in retrospect, is an incredibly difficult process. It would be unbelievably expensive and I doubt that Para Energy Research is prepared to pay for the full research of histories. I might mention that some of the histories that I have seen in this blue portfolio go back over a great many years and could cost in the order of \$1,000 to \$2,000 to resurrect fully.

The other form that the applicant is asked to consider is headed "Conditions for Inclusion in Free Treatment Program." It enumerates nine matters. My main objection is to the first one, which reads—

"Participants' names, address and personal details to be supplied to any relevant authority or media."

Straight away there is not so much a treatment here. The person is going straight from treatment to being a guinea-pig on stage. We are all aware of a great many personal medical problems which are not amenable to display on the media. Doctors are well aware of this, and I am sure the lay public is, too.

Publicity may be required at any stage during the programme. Films and interviews with media must be accepted. I know of nowhere else where persons undergoing any form of treatment must rush forward and present themselves to the media for examination. I can be very critical of this because, while they are saying the patients must go forward to the media to present themselves, they do not say that the patients are required to go and present themselves to doctors. If I were to be the observer of the treatment of any patient, I would expect access to that patient before, during and after the programme.

Participants are required to complete the report at the commencement of the programme stating in detail in their own words their medical condition. Herein lies the great trap. Many of the reports that I have read, which were supplied to me by Para Energy Research, contained wrong diagnoses by these patients. For instance, in the case of arthritis, I can inform this House that to write down the symptoms of arthritis could involve writing two or three foolscap pages, so for someone simply to write down that he has arthritis is like saying that he has a sore knee. It is not a diagnosis but merely an expression of a symptom.

When treatment is completed, participants are required to return to their doctor to have their condition reassessed. There are problems associated with that system also, as I will outline later. Many conditions do have periods of remission. Even acne and pimples, as we all know, come to a head and can be quite nasty for a short time and then disappear. That is just a simple illustration of what I mean—in reverse, as it were.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: Dr. Lockwood, have you ever seen the pimple on the Premier's shoulder?

Dr. LOCKWOOD: No, I have not. The honourable member is much more privileged than I am if he has seen it.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: It is spelt "K-n-o-x".

Dr. LOCKWOOD: The attendance of participants at the clinic is required when instructed. That is another example of compulsion that I do not think is of great benefit.

I have been through the folder and I have discovered that Para Energy Research refers to what some people regard as parapsychology, and there is in parapsychology mention of travel which is described as astral travel.

Mr. Powell: There are parasites, too.

Dr. LOCKWOOD: There could be parasites.

Astral travel is the type of travel where there is a subjective sensation of the soul leaving the body, and it has been described on many occasions where persons have nearly died from the effects of surgery, anaesthetic or a motor accident. It is a state very near death, when in fact the observable signs of life may no longer be present; it is difficult to record a pulse and it may be difficult to record respirations. These cases are well recorded. There has been an attempt to have people reach this physical state of near death, and I believe that this is what Para Energy Research is all about. The proponents say in their pamphlet that if a person will not submit fully to the process of inducing a lower and lower metabolic rate so that he approaches death of his own free will—without a full and adequate preparation—it will be impossible to receive further energies. And they talk vaguely of energies entering bodies and injury may even result.

According to the pamphlet issued by Para Energy Research, in this folder, they are in fact hinting that their treatment could be dangerous in the hands of those who are untrained and those who in fact are approaching the treatment with any reservations of any kind should be very careful.

Also in the folder are copies of letters forwarded to many doctors, mentioning many doctors and I think nine major hospitals. I believe that Para Energy Research, while trying to promote their own ends, may in fact be leaving themselves wide open for litigation in publishing the names and addresses of doctors who have treated patients over the years, apparently without a cure. They have boasted that they will cure most of these conditions and they have advertised 20 in Brisbane and 10 in Toowoomba.

The first one that strikes my eye is multiple sclerosis, a condition which I think is still incurable, and this is why we have our own multiple sclerosis society here in Brisbane. It is a disease that has natural remissions. There is muscular dystrophy, and it is a disease which I believe is genetic. Promising a cure is, I believe, something approaching the promise of the resurrection when the body will be made whole and pure again, and I do not believe that Para Energy Research can do that. I think it is cruel to promise a cure to people who have multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, advanced arthritis, and even diabetes. For a great many of these cases there is no cure. Indeed, in reading through the subjective reports, which I am afraid are all guilty of expressing what is known in medicine as a placebo effect, I found that the subjects invariably said, "I felt better". That is always seen in the placebo effect, and the lay person can read about it in a recent issue of "Readers Digest".

(Time expired.)

RESIGNATION OF DR. ALAN SALTAU AS MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT, MILES HOSPITAL

Mr. K. J. HOOPER (Archerfield) (12.41 p.m.): The matter of public interest that I wish to raise today concerns the resignation of Dr. Alan Saltau as Medical Superintendent of the Miles Hospital because of the political bias exhibited by the National Party-controlled board. I knew I would bring the Minister for Health into the Chamber. There is more in the Saltau case, Mr. Deputy Speaker, than just a clash of personalities with the manager. This is a clear case of victimisation. This man has been victimised because he is a member of the Australian Labor Party and had the temerity to stand as an endorsed Australian Labor Party candidate for Roma at the recent State election.

At the outset, let me say that Dr. Saltau was a very popular doctor in the town of Miles, and the "This Day Tonight" segment last Monday week clearly showed that, when

half the town turned out to demonstrate in his favour and then walked through the board's office carrying placards in support.

The next night on television, the Minister for Health, who I am pleased to see back in the Chamber, appeared on "This Day Tonight" but was shockingly unconvincing. He wrung his hands like the poor man's Uriah Heap and said, "Look, he resigned. I know nothing about it.", and he was very evasive. He might not know about it, because we all know of the rift that has occurred between the National Party and the Liberal Party, and possibly the National Party-controlled board has kept it from him.

Dr. Alan Saltau is a very gifted surgeon. He is studying all the time to better himself, and his resignation as superintendent is a dreadful loss to the Miles Hospital. I might add, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Dr. Saltau recently passed with honours an examination that entitles him to be admitted as a Fellow of the General Practitioners Society of Australia.

His popularity and his support of the A.L.P. were the basic reasons for his resignation being accepted so quickly. His popularity had the Minister for Transport (Mr. Ken Tomkins), who is the member for Roma, dead scared. To put it bluntly, the Transport Minister did an Eric Robinson on Dr. Saltau. He used his influence on the Chairman of the Electoral Commission, Mr. Archer, to have Miles excised from the Roma electorate, where it had been for years, and put into the electorate of Balonne, represented by "Silent Don" Neal. It is common knowledge around the town of Roma that the Minister was boasting months before that he would have "that troublesome Dr. Saltau" taken out of his electorate and put into another electorate. I think you would agree, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is no greater tribute to an opponent than to have the boundaries changed to put him at a disadvantage.

The actions of the honourable member for Roma are parallel to those of the honourable member for Yeronga, who I see is now in the House, back in 1972, when he heard that Clem Jones was a candidate. The first redistribution left the suburb of Rocklea, which is a Labor-voting suburb, in the electorate of Yeronga. However, when the Government found that it had a first-class candidate in the person of the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Alderman Clem Jones, against the member for Yeronga, there was a second redistribution and Rocklea was taken out of the electorate of Yeronga and put into the electorate of Archerfield.

Mr. Casey: Saved his political hide.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: He had his political hide saved again by the Government redistribution committee.

I point out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that during the four and a half years Dr. Saltau has been in Miles he has had to put up

with some very petty actions by the hayseeds on the hospital board and its lackey, the manager, Mr. Swan. I will list some of those.

On the Friday before the State election, Dr. Saltau, as the endorsed Australian Labor Party candidate for Roma, travelled from Miles to Roma to meet the Leader of the Opposition, who was campaigning in Roma. I think it is natural for a candidate to do that if his leader is in a town. As a result of his travelling from Miles to Roma, he was fined \$30 by the hospital board. That was an act of pure political spite on the part of the National Party-controlled board. I suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if Dr. Saltau had been a National Party candidate and the situation had been reversed, he probably would have received not only his wage but also his expenses.

A Government Member interjected.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: I will repeat the statement. I am terribly sorry that the honourable member for Caboolture is not in the Chamber, because it would even penetrate his thick skull. I will repeat the statement so that the honourable member can get it into perspective.

The Miles Hospitals Board is run by the National Party or its stooges. In many small western towns we see the effect of the dead hand of the National Party. If anybody in those towns dares, as a Labor supporter, to hand out how-to-vote cards at a polling-booth on election day, he or she is victimised by the National Party-controlled businesses in those towns.

A couple of weeks after Dr. Saltau was fined \$30, he was fined an additional \$30 for being half an hour late in attending at out-patients. But for sheer spite on the part of the National Party board, the next one really takes the cake. After performing a three-hour operation on a public patient, Dr. Saltau had a cup of coffee in the nurses' dining-room at 11 p.m. For that he was fined \$50.

Mr. Casey: A shame!

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: Of course it's a shame. It's a public scandal.

That fine was implemented following a decision at a meeting of the board held on 26 April this year. On Tuesday 2 May Dr. Saltau sought an explanation from the manager regarding the \$50 fine. The manager refused to talk to him, and ordered him from the office. Fancy a little tinpot manager of a hospitals board in Miles refusing to talk to the medical superintendent! It would have to be a breach of professional ethics, I am sure.

Dr. Saltau then sent a telegram to the Director-General of Health tendering his resignation as superintendent of the Miles Hospital effective three months from that date in accordance with his contract with the Health Department. Who could blame

him after the lousy treatment he received at the hands of the National Party board of Ben Bowyangs and rural hicks?

As with all things National Party, this board was long on promises but very short on action. In his five years as medical superintendent, Dr. Saltau was not provided with the house or private surgery stipulated by his contract. He was harassed consistently by National Party hatchetmen. They even pried into his private life. The situation would be comical—possibly a Gilbert and Sullivan situation—but for the fact that the board and its stooge, the manager (Mr. Swan), are prepared to play with a person's life to get back at Dr. Saltau. The Minister should dismiss the board forthwith.

On 6 May—a Saturday—Dr. Saltau referred a patient to the hospital with a suspected ruptured spleen. Honourable members opposite will not need to worry about this complaint as I am told on good authority that that organ is missing from most of them. If not treated quickly, the condition causes serious internal bleeding, and can result in death. The manager refused admission because the patient was referred by Dr. Saltau. I say that that was a dereliction of duty, and the manager should be transferred to Birdsville to look after the health of emus and kangaroos. The patient lay in the ambulance for another one and a half hours before being driven 90 miles, over what the Minister for Local Government and Main Roads euphemistically calls roads, to the Taroom Hospital where he was admitted.

The whole tragedy of the situation can be fully realised when I point out that had an operation been necessary, Dr. Saltau, as the only registered anaesthetist in the district, would have had to travel the 90 miles to Taroom to administer the anaesthetic. What a ludicrous situation brought about by an incompetent and politically-biased Tory board! The people of Miles know the calibre of the board. They called for its dismissal at a public meeting. They have demanded a say in the appointment of a new board.

I am pleased to see that the Minister for Health is back in the Chamber now that he is again a legitimate member. He has lost the stigma of illegitimacy. I call on him now to send this mob of National Party hacks packing, and that includes their stooge, the manager. The board has shown that it is more interested in playing politics than caring for people's lives. I hope the Minister for Health will show the same guts in this matter as he did when he stood up to Queensland's reactionary Premier over the cancer quack, Dr. Brych. However, I am not hopeful of that now that he has been restored to the House by courtesy of the Premier. It may put his job in jeopardy if he does anything about the Miles board.

Dr. Edwards: Are you going to tell the truth tomorrow?

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: I am telling the truth.

Dr. Edwards: I will tell the truth tomorrow.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: It will be the first time in the Minister's life that he has done so.

Dr. EDWARDS: I rise to a point of order. I take exception to that comment by the honourable member and ask him to withdraw it.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Miller): Order! I ask the honourable member to withdraw that statement.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: Of course I will, Mr. Deputy Speaker; it leavens up the speech. I withdraw the remark. Nevertheless at times the Minister handles the truth rather carelessly. In fact on "This Day Tonight" he handled it rather carelessly when he said he did not know the full facts concerning Dr. Saltau's resignation. He knew all right. What he was doing was covering up for this reactionary National Party-controlled board.

Mr. Lee: You nearly got a writ, didn't you?

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: As a matter of fact, the person who served the writ on me has now been charged with a very serious indictable offence, and I will be able to paper the lounge room in my home with his writ.

(Time expired.)

PLIGHT OF THE BEEF INDUSTRY; IMPORTS OF FOODSTUFFS

Mr. HARTWIG (Callide) (12.51 p.m.): One could be excused for asking what has happened to our once-great beef industry and where it is going. Beef is a perishable product. Unlike sugar, it cannot be stored; nor can it be held indefinitely in cold storage. Once a beast is slaughtered, a ready market must be found almost immediately for the beef.

These days Australia is exporting more beef than ever before. For example, Australian beef exports to the United States of America rose from 278,000 tons last year to 296,000 tons this year. There is, however, a glut of imports into our great primary-producing nation.

Mr. Davis: What do you put that down to?

Mr. HARTWIG: In the first instance, to the two fellows Whitlam and Barnard who came together and declared that the price of beef in Australia was too high and therefore had to be reduced. I can assure honourable members that nothing pleased the beef exporters more than the demand made upon the producers to reduce the price of beef. Today meat is not a cheap item in any country. In fact, in many countries beef is the dearest item on the

plate. Today many producers are going to the wall. It is high time that the producers were offered some concrete proposals by the Federal Government.

Increased costs are another nail in the coffin of the primary producer. Fuel costs have risen, and this has been a tremendous blow to them. Similarly, wages have risen and the cost of machinery, spare parts and so on have also gone up. The primary producers have no way of passing on those increased costs. Because beef prices depend largely on seasons, and because beef is a perishable product, the increases certainly cannot be passed on to the consumer.

It is time that Canberra took a hard look at what is happening to the beef industry. The cattle producer cannot continue bearing the high cost of production.

Look at what has happened in the dairy industry. Production fell from 10,992 tons in 1976 to the lowest-ever level of 7,000-odd tons in 1977.

Mr. K. J. Hooper interjected.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Archerfield has had an opportunity to address the House.

Mr. HARTWIG: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker; he should pull his head in.

In the past 12 months imports of canned and frozen meat and vegetables have increased astronomically. Their value now exceeds \$50,000,000 a year. The labels on many of these imported products are changed by the huge department stores and the goods are sold with Woolworths or Coles brands on them at prices that coincide with the Australian cost of production. That is a complete rip-off of our producers. They cannot get these high prices for their products. Australians are eating canned meat and vegetables produced in countries where the standards are not as high as those in this country. The imports are still flooding in despite the fact that we have a Liberal-National Country Party Government in Canberra.

Many shops, particularly in Sydney, which I visited recently, feature New Zealand rump.

Mr. Lee: Do you feel that some of the exporters are selling their export rights?

Mr. HARTWIG: That could be right.

Dr. Everingham said that we were exporting fresh, chilled and frozen meat to New Zealand. I challenge him to prove that we are exporting one kilogram of that meat to New Zealand. We are certainly exporting meat products, but not fresh, chilled or frozen beef. However, choice cuts are coming to this country from New Zealand.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: Mr. Miller, I rise to a point of order to draw your attention to the state of the House.

(Quorum formed.)

Mr. HARTWIG: The same number of people are in the House as when an Opposition member was speaking and denigrating a doctor from Miles, yet the honourable member saw fit, as the A.L.P. has done so often, to denigrate the primary producers of our great State. A.L.P. members do not want to hear anything about this matter. They do not like to hear the truth. When the Australian Labor Party was in office in Canberra, it created ruin. I emphasise that today an Opposition member took up some of the valuable time that I wanted to devote to our once-great primary industries. It is a shocking disgrace to the A.L.P. that this man who claims to represent the workers of the State should do that. He should hang his head in shame.

Today 40,000 cattle are still in the paddocks in Central Queensland because of industrial strife in the meatworks. Because they have not been slaughtered, the producers have not been paid for them.

A few weeks ago I asked the Minister for Primary Industries a question about drought mitigation. He replied that an investigation was held in 1966. That is not good enough for me. Whenever we suffer from drought we have trouble in getting shires declared as drought-stricken. We have to get down on our knees, write to the department and ask that they be investigated. What tommy rot that is! Why don't we prepare to meet drought with fodder conservation and water conservation? We must play a more active role in this sphere.

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

[Sitting suspended from 1.1 to 2.15 p.m.]

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

(Mr. Row, Hinchinbrook, in the chair)

Hon. F. A. CAMPBELL (Aspley—Minister for Labour Relations) (2.15 p.m.): I move—

“That a Bill be introduced to amend the Workers' Compensation Act 1916–1974 in certain particulars and for other purposes.”

This Bill does two major things: it marks the separation of workers' compensation insurance from the State Government Insurance Office and the establishment of an office to be named the Workers' Compensation Board of Queensland; and it enunciates several important improvements and concessions. I will deal with each aspect and, for the benefit of honourable members, summarise the business of workers' compensation.

The justification for separation from the S.G.I.O. is that it is considered that workers' compensation is a social service and therefore should be administered along the lines

of a taxing/social service. The benefits of this approach are that it provides an economical avenue for the employer to meet his statutory obligations and, for the employee, a secure, perpetual and easily accessible cover. In this context, the operation is seen as one which must be run in a no-loss situation to avoid the need for subsidies.

In other States, in broad terms, the situation is that there is a workers' compensation commission controlling workers' compensation and licensing insurance companies to underwrite workers' compensation policies for employers. While the commissions act as insurers of last resort, the employee can be put to considerable trouble in being forced to negotiate with a defaulting employer or insurer in the first instance.

It is proposed to directly ally workers' compensation with the operation of a Government department involved in occupational accident prevention, while maintaining the basic philosophy of the current operation. This department is the Department of Labor Relations. There are many benefits accruing from such an approach, since this will bring together under the one administration all major worker-orientated legislation in Queensland. Considerable benefits are possible from this approach in respect of overall statistics and expansion of the already well-established occupational safety services.

It is proposed that the new office—the Workers' Compensation Board of Queensland—will remain within the Public Service. The board will be established to advise the Minister, and will comprise the permanent head of the Department of Labour Relations (Chairman), the appointed general manager of the office of the board (Deputy Chairman) and four persons appointed by the Governor in Council—a Government nominee, a person representative of employers, a person representative of employees, who will be nominated by the Minister, and, as the fourth person, a medical officer of the Department of Health, who will be nominated by the Minister for Health.

The main thrust of the current legislation is unchanged. However, opportunity has been taken to clarify and amend certain provisions. The major provisions are:—

(a) the definition of worker has been varied so that—

(i) paid sportsmen are excluded, except player coaches. The rationale for this amendment is the precedents established by judgments in New South Wales and supported by legal advice in Queensland.

(ii) persons who supply plant equipment (other than tools designed for use by hand) are to be excluded, for example, owner-drivers. There are often difficulties in establishing whether the owner-driver is a contractor or an employee. This amendment will clarify the situation for all parties.

Mr. Houston interjected.

Mr. CAMPBELL: Self-employed persons are out but they still have the opportunity of taking out voluntary insurance with the commission, as is the practice now with workers' compensation.

Mr. Houston: They take it out with a normal insurance company?

Mr. CAMPBELL: No. The honourable member did not hear me. Perhaps I did not speak clearly. A self-employed person will still have the opportunity that he has had all his life, since the beginning of the Workers' Compensation Department. He can take out voluntary cover for himself.

Mr. Houston: With this new set-up?

Mr. CAMPBELL: Yes, it is a carry-on.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! There is far too much audible conversation on my left, and honourable members are having difficulty in hearing the Minister. I ask the Chamber to come to order.

Mr. CAMPBELL: The major provisions continue—

(iii) As the Act presently stands, members of a family living with an employer are presently excluded from the benefits of the Act.

Representations have been made from time to time to include such persons as workers. It is now proposed to do this by amendment. This brings the Queensland Act into line with all other States.

(b) Benefits

In fatal claims—for which compensation is \$26,350—the additional benefits for dependent children have been increased to—

(i) allow \$500 for each child for each year between the date of death and age 16 and a further annual payment of \$500 for each child between age 16 and age 21, while the dependent child continues as a student. The overall maximum is to be \$2,000. Presently this is \$710;

(ii) Allow non-award workers compensation for the first 26 weeks at the rate of 80 per cent of their weekly salary, if such workers receive a higher salary than the Mechanical Engineering Award;

(iii) allow medical expenses for any one claim on an unlimited basis. The present maximum is \$1,200; and

(iv) Widen the terms under which compensation is reduced, having regard to other payments being received, for example, invalid pension granted during currency of workers' compensation benefits.

However, total benefits will not be reduced below that which a worker would have received if he was in full employment.

These increased benefits are consistent with the excellent record of an office that is very big business indeed. For example, last financial year income from premiums totalled \$98,500,000 and \$51,010,000 was paid to claimants. Also, last financial year, pay-outs under the merit bonus scheme totalled \$25,500,000 and, in general bonuses, \$4,200,000.

Queensland is the only State with a complete merit bonus scheme and has had it since 1962. Safety conscious employers in the 1976-77 adjustment year were able to enjoy up to a maximum merit bonus of 60 per cent. As honourable members would know, the level of merit bonus is based on the ratio of claims to premium for each individual policy and the scale slides from a ratio of under 5 per cent to allow a 60 per cent bonus to 49.9 per cent for a bonus of 5 per cent.

I must also add that the premium rates per \$100 wages in Queensland are substantially lower than in all other States, while the benefits, in terms of the Act, are comparable with those in other States. Moreover, rates in Queensland were reduced by 10 per cent in January of this year and in 1977, and the expenses rate for processing workers' compensation is the lowest in the Commonwealth.

It is interesting to note that, owing to excellent work being done by the Department of Labour Relations in the area of occupational safety and owing to greater appreciation by individuals of the importance of safe work procedures, the number of claims is dropping. Last financial year, claims totalled 80,844, compared with 84,891 in 1976, 87,045 in 1975 and 92,000 in 1974.

I do not claim that progressive reduction is due in excessive proportion to the work of industry safety committees, but I should like to place on record the wonderful co-operation the Government has received from the National Safety Council and from employer and employee groups.

There are now industry-wide tripartite organisations dedicated to promoting safety and to the introduction of safer working practices in the meat, land transport, timber and building industries. It is my hope that other industries can be brought under this umbrella.

In fact, we are currently looking at the prospects of establishing a similar body in the metal trades, from which a substantial proportion of accident claims emanate.

I could elaborate on many other aspects of the office's operations, and, in fact, I shall do so as this measure progresses through the House.

But I feel I have said enough at this stage in justification of both the Bill and its amendments to be confident of their complete acceptance.

I commend the Bill to the Committee.

Mr. YEWDALE (Rockhampton North) (2.26 p.m.): I believe that the subject-matter of the Bill introduced by the Minister this afternoon is a most important aspect of government. I say that because I believe that protection for injured workers who are unable to continue in their livelihood is very important, not only to themselves but also to their wives and families, and to their very way of life. I tend to feel a bit sceptical about the movement of workers' compensation away from the general functioning of the State Government Insurance Office.

An immediate consideration that comes to my mind about the new format of workers' compensation is whether all parties involved with this facet of government have been consulted prior to reaching the position in this Bill before us today. When I say "all parties", I am referring to the current government department that administers workers' compensation and those unions that have thousands and thousands of members throughout the State. I am interested in whether they have been consulted about this proposed change.

I did make some general inquiries on this matter, and the Treasurer said that he had some discussions with people working in the areas affected. I approached the predominant organisations at the Trades Hall and they informed me that there had been no consultations with Trades Hall unions. In fact, I do not think that a great deal of discussion has ever taken place with the State Service Union.

Members might think that it is a hardy annual to keep referring to consultations with people by Government departments and Ministers, but I believe that it is a very important aspect of government. It is a good method of handling the matters that affect the community, in this particular case, workers' compensation. What I suggest is that changes that come about without consultation and communication often cause resentment and dissatisfaction among the people.

I am told that a minor survey was conducted, but it was badly organised and it was very narrow in collecting the attitudes of the persons concerned. Perhaps the Minister will elaborate on that during the second reading of the Bill and that particular aspect will be brought out.

The initial approach to moving this segment of government from the S.G.I.O. seems to have come from the metal trade industries. Apparently, they have seen fit to make the approaches for this move in order to shift workers' compensation from the confines of the S.G.I.O. to the set-up which is presently being discussed.

I wonder what the motives of a group such as the Metal Trades Industry Association might be for making such an approach. I believe that the approach was made some time ago, and I am also led to believe that

it was received fairly sympathetically and to some extent has been instrumental in having the Bill introduced. I am sufficiently suspicious to think that the employers would like to completely isolate the workers' compensation section as is now proposed.

Mr. Moore: Why?

Mr. YEWDAL: I will continue. If the honourable member makes a sensible interjection, I will accept it.

Mr. Moore: I just asked why.

Mr. YEWDAL: My personal opinion is—I could be wrong, but I must express my opinion—that the objective would probably be to isolate workers' compensation from the other functions of the S.G.I.O.—fire insurance on homes and furnishings and personal insurance—and continue to lobby for the elimination of the other functions and leave workers' compensation as the sole responsibility of the board that is now to be set up. This could be the long-range objective. I may be wrong in that view, but I suggest to honourable members that they think seriously about it because it may come about in the future.

It is fairly common knowledge that the S.G.I.O. function is moving to Comalco House and that administration will begin from 1 July this year. The board will be under a general manager, and the persons mentioned by the Minister will make up the board.

I have one comment to make about an employee representative, and I ask the Minister to note my inquiry. From what area or from which category will that representative come? Will it be an employee from the area covered by the State Service Union, an employee from the general area, or an employee from the trade union movement or other organisations of that type that work within the industry generally? I am sure that employees generally would be very interested in knowing who that representative might be.

In my opinion, shifting to new accommodation will pose some problems. The facilities of the S.G.I.O. as they are housed at present could broadly be said to serve all the sections covering the various forms of insurance. Probably the board will find it necessary to use computer facilities away from Comalco House, which probably would be somewhat inconvenient, and also provide individual facilities required for its own functions. That could cause some problems; it could also add to the cost.

I understood the Minister to say that workers' compensation will be withdrawn from owner-drivers and people who are supplying plant who are working for employers. Football players are of personal interest to me, and I note that workers' compensation will be withdrawn from the ordinary registered player playing football but that player coaches will still be covered.

Of course, they are professionals who take out contracts, and I know the procedure involved.

I am concerned about the withdrawal of workers' compensation from owner-drivers and people supplying plant, more particularly the owner-drivers. There probably are thousands of owner-drivers in Queensland who are members of unions and who work for employers. I should like the Minister to explain why it was decided that owner-drivers and people supplying plant should not be eligible to be covered for compensation as employees.

The general change of procedures involved in coverage by a Workers' Compensation Board will probably cause problems within the staff. Although I cannot cite specific examples at the moment, I would be very concerned about what will happen in my home town of Rockhampton, where both the S.G.I.O. and the Workers' Compensation Section cater for a very wide area of the Central Queensland district.

The building they are currently housed in is quite a new one, and perhaps it could be suggested that they are to some degree crowded, but, if the Workers' Compensation Section is taken out and housed somewhere else, it will mean that once again accommodation will be an imposition on the funds of the State, and the facilities will be scattered. I would like the Minister to explain whether that is going to happen in Rockhampton and other major provincial cities.

In some areas housing is provided for officers of the State Government Insurance Office, including officers employed in the Workers' Compensation Section. I am not quite clear on procedures here so I would ask the Minister to indicate at the second-reading stage what will happen about housing presently occupied by departmental officers in the Workers' Compensation Section if they are moved out to become a separate group? Will that housing be retained for officers in that area of workers' compensation or will it be retained in the general insurance area? What will the circumstances generally be with accommodation?

The Minister said that there has been a decrease in workers' compensation claims. I applaud that because it is obvious that the fewer claims made, the fewer people are being injured. The idea is bandied around that everybody on workers' compensation is a bludger, but I will not accept that. Safety standards are being observed to a greater degree. It should be the objective of unions and workers to lower the accident rate, and consequently the number of claims for compensation.

Figures I saw indicated a substantial increase in claims about 1972. At the same time I looked very quickly at the staffing position. It would seem that staffing has not moved up. I believe that staffing in the new concept will be at least a minor problem. As public servants, those working in the department are subject to movement by way

of transfer. They have a right of appeal against promotion. I am left with a grey area in my mind as to the respective rights of persons who will continue to work for the Workers' Compensation Board as against those who are employed by the Treasury Department. All of these matters are very important because they affect workers—not workers who are claiming workers' compensation but workers administering this particular facet of government.

To my mind the board could have been constituted and could have controlled workers' compensation in the present situation. In other words, workers' compensation could still be housed where it is and controlled by a board. I believe that in that situation there would be better administration and service for those requiring workers' compensation. It would have avoided moving into the problem areas I have cited.

I looked at figures in regard to income. I will not quote them; the Minister referred to them in his speech. The figure I took out for last year was roughly \$190,000,000. The total figure is broken down into claims, premiums, bonuses, etc.

I am told that the new procedure will probably come under review in six months' time. Whether that is true or not, I do not know. I am very sceptical about new systems and new procedures that will be reviewed within six months. I become suspicious when I hear terms such as that. I make it quite clear that the Minister has not said this, but I have been informed that the situation could be reviewed in six months' time. After the inception of this procedure on 1 July, I will be very interested in six months' time to see whether or not a review is conducted.

I want to move now to some general comments on workers' compensation. My experience with the Workers' Compensation Section dates back about 30 years, of which 25 years was as a union official. I had a close contact with the staff of the S.G.I.O. in Rockhampton. They were always courteous to me and assisted in any inquiry made on behalf of a member of my union or any unionist generally.

Certain problems do arise in connection with workers' compensation claims. Some of the problems seem to be perpetual ones. The late finalisation of claims is quite often a bugbear. This is brought about sometimes by the late tendering of doctors' reports and employers' reports. Many injured workers rely on workers' compensation as their sole source of income. They are therefore desperately waiting for the money to keep them going from day to day.

It seems to me that a close look should be taken at the delays that occur in the furnishing of doctors' reports and employers' reports. I am not denying that some employers and some doctors are busy; nevertheless they should appreciate the necessity for giving speedy service.

I know of workers waiting for doctors' reports for as long as five or six weeks and as both a trade union official and a member of Parliament I have tried to have that situation rectified.

Quite often there is a delay in sending out cheques after claims have been processed. I do not know how this problem can be overcome. I fully support the regular mailing of cheques to recipients. It is much better than the former system under which recipients were required to call at the S.G.I.O. and wait in long queues for their cheques. Quite often they became frustrated and argued with the attendants at the counter. That whole system became abortive. When delays occurred there seemed to be confrontation virtually between worker and worker. I believe that there is a breakdown in the system of mailing compensation cheques.

Another bugbear is the reopening of claims. Quite often a worker is injured, lodges an initial claim, returns to work and subsequently wants to reopen his claim. Sometimes a lengthy period elapses between the initial injury and the reopening of the claim, and in that time the file is removed from Rockhampton to Brisbane. I do not believe the current system is the correct one. Under it, the officer in Rockhampton has to ask the S.G.I.O. in Brisbane to return the file to him so that the claim can be considered.

The lack of co-operation between employers and injured workers is unfortunate. One area in which this lack of co-operation occurs is the confirmation of a worker's claim that his injury was sustained while he was at work. Furthermore, all too frequently employers dispose of employees while they are in receipt of workers' compensation, for no other reason than that they are in receipt of compensation. That does not happen in what I might term the doubtful areas of workers' compensation. It occurs quite regularly in relation to workers who have sustained broken arms or broken legs. They are clearly seen to be a major disability.

The bad feature of that is that the employer disposes of that injured worker, whether he is single or married, and thus puts him on the dole when he comes off workers' compensation. In such a situation an employer should call for a labourer or tradesman to fill the gap on a temporary or part-time basis. I see nothing wrong with that if the injured worker is able to return to his place of employment. I have known men with five or six years' experience in the building industry to be dispensed with within a few days of their going on compensation. They are simply told, "There is no job for you." That is a drastic approach. The Minister could do much worse than talk to employers about this practice.

I shall leave any further comments on the measure until the second-reading stage.

Dr. LOCKWOOD (Toowoomba North) (2.46 p.m.): In speaking to the Workers' Compensation Act Amendment Bill, I do not intend to expand on the comments I made on a similar Bill introduced by the Treasurer on 27 April 1978. The Bills are complementary, one giving and one receiving.

At the outset I pay tribute to the efficiency of the S.G.I.O. staff in the various offices I had dealings with when I was a full-time medical practitioner handling various compensation matters, particularly in the Toowoomba office. To the best of my knowledge the S.G.I.O. has always handled claims sympathetically, quickly and with a great deal of understanding and compassion for the people who are sick or injured. Efficiency is displayed not only by the local officers handling compensation cases, but by the S.G.I.O. management throughout the State. It could be said that over the years the handling of compensation in the State has approached the ideal or definitive role of a semi-Government instrumentality in that it is extremely efficient and incredibly competitive in its rates.

We are a free-enterprise Government, but nevertheless at times the collective forces of the State can do a better job than can free enterprise. This can be seen no better than in the areas of the Police Force, education, water reticulation and road-building. The same can be said about workers' compensation. The S.G.I.O. is a very effective instrumentality in handling workers' compensation. Some of the Queensland rates are a-third or even a-quarter of those charged by private companies in other States. The S.G.I.O. has an advantage over the private companies that have attempted to outbid each other and have rushed into areas where angels fear to tread. After quoting rates for large sections of industry, they do not properly offset their dealings with other underwriters and then crash. It is to be hoped that Queensland workers' compensation policy-holders never suffer the same fate as that suffered by many people with private insurance, and motor-vehicle insurance particularly.

None the less, I should like to see the activities of this office changed slightly. I should also like to see more activity in the prevention of industrial accidents. Such accidents are nearly always foreseeable if someone takes the trouble to stand beside a worker, study what he is doing, watch his actions and where he gets his materials from, what he does to them and where they go to. Most intelligent people can see how accidents will occur and can work to prevent them. No-one is better at designing something to prevent accidents than the fellow at the work face. He often has good ideas. I should like to see more of them incorporated in the safety standards and safety devices of Queensland.

When a particular compensation problem arises, the officers could look at interstate and overseas systems. This will be an ever-enlarging challenge as we go through to plastics. As we go through to more heavily mechanised industries, we cannot solve the problems for ever. They will always be in front of us. A new machine will be invented—a new process—and for the workmen learning to do the job well and safely, new risks will be attendant with that process.

We cannot tolerate some of the past attitudes, where a workman, his successor and then the successor after him have been injured at the same industrial process in exactly the same set of circumstances. We cannot afford to have our workmen thrown away. That was one of the things that war showed us. Planes ended up being cheaper than pilots. In the end, the British Spitfires, with armour plating protecting the pilots, won out against machines like the Japanese Zero, which did not protect their pilots. In the end the Japanese had planes but no pilots to fly them. So design and safety are very important.

Not only are there the readily apparent accidents, there are also a great many industrial poisonings. They are steadily increasing as industrial processes become more complex. In recent times there has been a series of heavy metal fume poisonings, which cause fevers that may not be diagnosed. I believe that the workers' compensation office has a role to inform people working with heavy metals—welding inside plated metals or alloy metals; welding seams inside tanks and welding in enclosed spaces—to see that they are protected. To guard against the event of failure in their protection (which is usually adequate ventilation, exhausting of the fumes and the positive breathing of fresh air) we should see that the workmen know all the symptoms, the signs and the dangers of the process.

Over the years I have seen workmen poisoned with the same poisons that we use in agriculture and on our animals. If they have effects on flies and parasites, they will do things to men. They attack the very life support systems in men just as they attack the life support systems in parasites. The people who handle them must know. It is no good putting the warnings on labels of bottles of poisons, for example, saying, "If poisoned, contact a doctor." There must be full and explicit instructions about the protective clothing to be worn and the need for ventilators or respirators with filters in them. There needs to be explicit advice on what to do after the completion of spraying or exposure to the noxious substances, a great many of which last for a long time in the body. Some of the organic phosphates last for an extremely long time. Certainly, a person will think he is well, but he will find that he is prone to recurrent symptoms and illnesses. There is a great need to carry a message about the risk of these, not just

from the manufacturer to the distributor, but right out to the man on the job who is working with them. It needs to be in simple English so that anyone reading the instructions can understand them. Let's not say that it has got L.D. 50. Say "It kills". Tell the people how and why.

Because of the toxicity of these substances, in certain cases there must also be specified what needs to be carried at hand for immediate first-aid, because a great many of these poisonings happen a long, long way from medical care. If a person is using phosphate poisons 50 or 60 miles out in the country, it is no good his heading off that distance to a doctor. He will be in extreme trouble before he gets to help.

I would like to see investigations into some of the infective illnesses which affect our workers. Perhaps this is nowhere more highlighted than it is for those associated with the meatworking industries—particularly workers on the killing floors and those associated with the early processes after the kill. There are, I believe, as yet unidentified diseases that attack meatworkers. I have had some of these meatworkers come in with illnesses indistinguishable from what we call the P.U.O.s—pyrexias of unknown origin—such as brucellosis, leptospirosis and Q fever. These are very severe illnesses to a workman.

They have one further effect. They may be recurrent; there are recurrent attacks from some of these illnesses. They include leptospirosis and Q fever. They are all of concern to anybody who has anything to do with meat workers and a great many people in the country who can contract them following exposure to the diseases during lambing and calving. We need to know a great deal more about this matter. We have to encourage research into these diseases and particularly the recurrent nature of some of them.

As I said, some of them are clinically indistinguishable. We can go through the complete range of blood tests without getting a positive test. I have had weak positive tests of two leptospirosis strains done by our Queensland Institute of Medical Research. Its tests are accurate and reliable. Nevertheless, they do not match any of the known kinds. I think there are unknown kinds. We have to find them.

If there is an indication that there may be an illness of that type in our worker, we have to give him the benefit of the doubt. The fact that we cannot track them down yet with medical science does not mean that he is a bludger. Nobody can bludge fevers. People do not feign them or invent them. They are real. The illnesses are real and they are observed. We have to take note of them and give the worker the benefit of the doubt until medical science, with a little prompting from this Government, discovers what these diseases are and exactly how they are best treated.

There is a need also to investigate the acceleration of degenerative processes in our workers. We all know that certain diseases will take a fit and healthy young man, capable of playing A grade Rugby League and make him a semi-invalid by the time he is 50 or 60 years of age. But if we put him in certain jobs, he will be a semi-invalid by the time he is 40. I shall run through some of them. The first is industrial deafness, which we are slowly coming to prevent. Still not enough notice is being taken of this problem. It needs more research and a great deal more encouragement in its prevention. Then there are all of the diseases of the joints which are accelerated by machinery. Kienbock disease of the wrists of men who use hydraulic, pneumatic or other tools which jump up and down in the hands is well known. New kinds of drills have been invented recently, such as the hammer drills, and they will cause this disease. There needs to be an awareness that if one man handles one tool all of the time he will become a wreck. It is better to farm these tools out among many workmen so that one man is not using the damaging tool all of the time.

The same applies to tennis elbow and frozen shoulder. These conditions are aggravated when men are used sometimes as machines and not as operators of machines. That is a subtle distinction. I have seen people who have done a repetitive action, be it no more than lifting an index finger and pushing a button at shoulder height every time the button needs to be pushed day in and day out suffering from frozen shoulder. They can be in trouble for two years. Investigation into these situations and the elimination of them can do a great deal of good.

Rolling and unrolling material at stock-taking time can put a woman off work for a month with an acute kind of tennis elbow. Men and women were not meant to be machines doing one action 10,000 times a day.

There is a need to investigate degenerative processes in the spine, particularly the lumbar spine, which is the region of the spine about the level of the waist. This can also be said of the neck. Many of our workers have spines that are growing old gracefully. Suddenly they are put to a severe test and they are taken from being a useful person, through some sudden and unexpected demand, such as lifting a tremendous weight, to chronic invalidism. If the spine or the neck is put through an unnatural limit of movement, the person is in trouble from that time. I do not believe that compensation has been kind enough to these people. As I say, these joints were growing old gracefully and would have served them right through their life, but suddenly in their middle age we have made them invalids. Too often there has been a tendency to say that the X-ray doctor could see degenerative changes and that was the cause of all the trouble and we cut the person out of his claim for compensation. I believe this is wrong.

We need to have another look at these problems. We need to identify the people who are at risk and keep them away from areas of risk. Also, we need to be more kind in our handling of people who have, unknown to them, a slowly developing heart condition, whether that condition is caused by the narrowing of the coronary arteries, a slowly enlarging heart or a sudden increase in blood pressure. These people are at a disadvantage, although I think their problem is more easily recognised and they are more sympathetically handled than the people with the steadily ageing joints. We need to know more about these people. We need to keep our middle-aged-plus workers away from situations where they can suffer a heart attack or a severe injury to the spine.

We need to know more about the skills of our workers.

I have been a Government Medical Officer and I know what I am talking about when I say that every Government Medical Officer, when he performs an autopsy on a fatally injured workman, should have with him a full set of details of the history surrounding the death. I think there is also a need for him to complete a pro forma, yet to be designed, but I will be only too pleased to make suggestions as to how it might be designed, setting out a whole host of questions that should be answered, whether they are strictly applicable or not. The circumstances surrounding the death should be fully investigated. This information would be most helpful if I were trying to establish whether a man died from a pulmonary embolism or a coronary that occurred some eight years ago. It is just impossible for me to get access to all the details. The cardiac board, or the compensation office, has already met and deliberated and reached a final conclusion. Probably it was the best one it could make at the time, but I believe that it should have had more expert information available to it.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The honourable member is making a valuable contribution to this debate.

Dr. LOCKWOOD: There needs to be this form which fully investigates the recent history to decide at a later stage if there was an aggravating factor or if there is an alternative factor. It is impossible to go back eight or 10 years and try to find out, for example, if a man had a bruised leg and a clot slid up to his heart or if he just had a coronary and died. There is just no way of telling. No photographs are taken. In the case of a compensation claim, under form 5C, I think a photograph of the relevant material from a fatally injured workman needs to be kept so that there can be some reference back when one is reconsidering for compensation purposes the circumstances surrounding the death. It is no good approaching a widow who is in a shocked

state and grieving for her lost husband and saying, "Tell us what happened to poor Fred?" All she knows is that poor Fred is dead, and she cannot then go back and differentiate all those many things which may have indicated an injury at work as against a steadily developing and unsuspected medical condition. This needs to be established. I think the form needs to be redesigned to bring it into line with our modern bookkeeping methods. It is very easy to put the wrong date on a compensation form because there are three or four places on the form where the doctor has to put a date down. There is the date that he first saw the patient, the date of the consultation, and the date of signing the form. I think redesigning of the form could be of great benefit.

I would like to see the bulk of the pay-out for workers' compensation changed from the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6-day injury to the major injury which is either fatal or very severe, causing long-term or permanent incapacitation, whether it be complete or partial. I believe the work-force would approve of these changes to workers' compensation. The self-employed person does not want cover for seven days. He is better able to withstand loss of earnings for seven days. I think we could look at this, Mr. Row, and do a deal with employers to subsidise, for example, a meatworker with a cut finger working somewhere else in the work-force, even if he is below his full capacity. He might be an expert boner-out; but if he could be employed somewhere else in the work-force, we would not only be doing him a service; we would also be doing the industry a service and doing his mates a service. If one of his mates is injured severely, he will then know that he is not going to get only 80 per cent or be cut off at six months but that he will get the full value of his former wages. If a man is killed, his widow will not then be receiving only the widow's pittance, and if maimed be thrown onto the junk heap of discarded humans who are still alive or on the invalid pension. She will be supported by the industry in which he has suffered his severe disability or in which he has died.

I support the motion before the Committee.

Mr. BURNS (Lytton—Leader of the Opposition) (3.6 p.m.): In introducing the Bill, the Minister said that it marks the separation of workers' compensation insurance from the State Government Insurance Office and the establishment of an office to be named the Workers' Compensation Board of Queensland. In my opinion, it is a historic day, and it is a day with which I do not like to be associated.

I believe that the Labor Government of T. J. Ryan that set up workers' compensation and the S.G.I.O. set up what is probably one of the most successful State enterprises of its time. I obtained a copy of Bernays' report, "Queensland—Our Seventh Political Decade,

1920 to 1930," and I should like to refer briefly to this passage from what he said about the Workers' Compensation Act—

"Memory takes one back to the days of the Employers Liability Act; the days when the feelings of stupid jurors were played upon by plausible and special pleading barristers; when the hideously unjust doctrine of 'contributory negligence' was pleaded again and again by unfair employers; when weeping widows deprived of their natural protectors struggled against hopeless odds in the Law Courts to gain a miserable fifty or one hundred pounds as compensation for the loss of a husband and father. It was a vile, wicked, unequal struggle of the weak against the strong; a struggle in which the weak went to the wall, and the strong gloated over the defeat of orphans and heart-broken mothers.'

Honourable members will recall that Bernays was an independent author who recorded the history of this Assembly over many years. His statement there rings true in my heart, and it worries me that today we are setting out to destroy or weaken the S.G.I.O. structure that has been built up. This Parliament is very clearly putting itself in a position where members have not been advanced any reasons for separating workers' compensation from the S.G.I.O. The union went along and asked the Treasurer for the reasons and he said, "Well, compensation is a social welfare benefit, and there have been too many complaints."

Workers' compensation payments have been administered by the S.G.I.O. since 1916. My view is that most of the complaints have been about delays, and in nine cases out of 10 they arise from incomplete forms, the boss not sending the form back in time, or some problem associated with the filling in of the form. In most instances the workers in the office have done the job. Although I have some concern about the way in which some of the inspectors operate, and so on, I cannot fault the system in the office itself. Complaints might be made about some of the payments and some of the problems relating to them, but I do not think there is any evident benefit to anyone in the change or any substantial reason for it. It appears that the real reason is merely political, with the long-term purpose of restricting the State Government Insurance Office in favour of private insurance.

I make this point to the Committee: that on a number of occasions since I entered this Chamber the S.G.I.O. has been used to save building societies; it has also been used by the motor vehicle industry. Other insurance companies have got right out of third-party motor vehicle insurance and left it to the S.G.I.O. A person can hardly get third-party cover today outside the S.G.I.O. In North Queensland the situation is similar in the field of storm and tempest insurance. It's the same in Brisbane with floods. In

the next day or two we will probably be taking some action relative to V.I.P. insurance.

Governments have been able to turn to the S.G.I.O. and use it to the advantage of the people of the State when problems have occurred. It has been a great strength to this National-Liberal Government, just as it has been to other Governments in earlier years. I am worried about its future because last year I read a story in the July 1977 issue of "Rydge's" headed "Premiums tumble in insurance rate war". It is worthwhile reading for members of this Assembly. It says—

"The Australian insurance industry, once noted for its cautious and uncompetitive nature, is in a state of upheaval—with companies cutting rates and others accepting risks that are not viable . . ."

It makes special mention of Queensland and the overseas-based attacks on the S.G.I.O. For example, it points out that the business of Mt. Isa Mines has gone to an American insurer, Factory Mutual. Going on a little further, we become aware that the Brisbane City Council and the Queensland University insurance business, both big industrial risks, may have passed into the hands of overseas insurers. It indicates that the Factory Mutual group and the other HPR insurers now cover Alcoa, Comalco, Nabisco, Mt. Isa, Robe River and G.M.H.—the big businesses.

The net surplus for the Workers' Compensation Section of the S.G.I.O. in 1975-76 was \$46,000,000. If we take that sort of money out of the investment portfolio, we will weaken the S.G.I.O.'s investment possibilities. We will weaken its opportunity as a body to be involved in major investments in Queensland.

I am really worried about that particular matter but I rose today to talk about the problems of some of the people who really depend on workers' compensation when they are injured whilst working in their industries. I talk about meatworkers particularly. In most cases they are incentive workers. There are two types of meatworkers—the time worker who works 40 hours a week and the tally worker who is on an incentive scheme. The maximum for the tally worker is about \$230 a week, and the minimum is about \$170 a week. That covers a 40-hour week. The payment is not for overtime worked, but if a person is prepared to step up his rate he can earn extra money as a tally worker.

I was down at Borthwicks last Friday morning. It was freezing cold as we would all recall, but the men were working on the chain, in the boning rooms, on the slaughter floors. The chances of injury are very high. Many meatworkers work their way around the country. They may move from meatworks in Victoria to Bowen. Bowen meatworks close for 4 months a year. A person should not really be classed as a permanent meatworker in Bowen because those works close down every year. Meatworkers travel

to Toowoomba, Lakes Creek and Cairns. Most of them do not bring with them complete details of their previous employment.

A meatworker could start today at the M.P.A.B., the Government abattoirs in Brisbane, and by 1 p.m. cut his hand. He could give it a very serious gash and then have to depend on workers' compensation. With the method of calculating make-up pay, someone says, "We have to look back over the past 12 months to see what you earned." That may be impossible to determine. The worker may have been fruit-picking for some time, or he may have been on the dole for some time. How does one get an average for that person? If the letter of the law were really adhered to, it would be months before such a worker could be paid any compensation.

The workers' compensation people have been very good in this regard and have agreed to adopt this basis of one-fifth of the five previous days or a minimum, whichever is the greater. The Meat and Allied Trades Federation people put on the forms they send into the S.G.I.O. only the minimum. It is a deliberate rip-off of their workers, and it makes for great difficulty.

I have many of these hard-working meatworkers in my area. They really work hard to produce a top tally so that they can get good money. A meatworker may be on \$230 a week before he cuts his hand, and then under the Meat and Allied Trades proposal he goes back to the minimum of \$170 a week. He loses \$60 a week that he may be paying off a car or a house. These workers do not deliberately cut themselves. \$230 a week is good money. They are not trying to bludge on the system, but they run into this problem of the difficulty of the system itself. It has to be looked at. Thousands of people are in this predicament. It is an area that causes them concern.

Borthwicks have been fairly good. I hear no complaints about them. They were paying on a compensation basis what the man earned the previous week. They went all the way they possibly could. As I see it, it will all depend on who is on the new board as the representative of the industry. If someone from Borthwicks was on the board there would be a far better attitude than if there was someone from the Meat and Allied Trades Federation. The men concerned are going to be affected by the decisions or recommendations that the board will be making.

Provision should be made to cover itinerant workers so that they can get compensation at the rate of pay being received on the day they are hurt. Many piece-workers in the meat industry get only three days a week. If anyone went down there tomorrow, he would see a team of them sitting outside the gate at Borthwicks waiting for the pick-up. They work that way. They accept it. It is their way of life. They work in a part-time or piece-work situation. The idea of T. J.

Ryan years ago was to try to provide some security for the decent worker who hurt himself on the job.

This brings me to the question of workers who contract industrial diseases or who suffer secondary effects or conditions but are unable to be compensated because medical proof either cannot be obtained or can only be obtained after considerable delays.

I believe there is a need for continuing research into this type of compensation cover. The honourable member for Toowoomba North referred to this. One of the good things that have happened as far as meatworkers are concerned is that Dr. Rogers and Dr. Bourke, of the Health Department, in co-operation with the management of Borthwicks and the unions, visited Borthwicks and carried out a number of tests in relation to brucellosis, leptospirosis and Q fever. One of the big problems that arise is that a worker might contract a chill, he goes along to a doctor who tells him that he has a cold or something like bronchoasthma and should spend a couple of days at home. That man could in fact be suffering from leptospirosis, Q fever or brucellosis, all of which mimic other fevers. It is hard for a doctor who is not used to treating meatworkers and those diseases to recognise them. In that type of situation the worker does not have a blood test, he goes back to work and after a few weeks continues to feel sick. He starts to lose some of his drive and his will to work. If he suffers from the disease on a number of occasions, he is badly affected both mentally and physically. He then goes back to the doctor, and if on this occasion the doctor happens to be one who recognises the disease he is sent off for a blood test.

It is important that blood tests be carried out, because the S.G.I.O. pays only on the seriological tests. The tests are compared. If a man has contracted the disease at the meatworks, he is entitled to some compensation. How is he to be helped?

Mr. Kaus: Why aren't the tests compulsory every 12 months?

Mr. BURNS: As the honourable member knows, I drink with and knock around with a lot of the meatworkers. It is difficult to make them understand the need to have a blood test. When the doctors from the Health Department went down to Borthwicks to carry out the tests, only half of the meatworkers there went along for them.

A Government Member: They have to have continuing tests. Sometimes it doesn't show up till three or four tests.

Mr. BURNS: At least we have in the area a number of people who have been tested and whose readings are known. The Metropolitan Public Abattoir Board is having tests carried out on the same basis, in co-operation with the union and the Health Department. We are therefore starting to build up some knowledge and we should be able to get somewhere with it.

As people in the cattle industry would know, bovine brucellosis constitutes a major problem in the industry. The Commonwealth Government is spending millions of dollars on an eradication scheme. People who own herds that show positive brucellosis tests are paid to have their cattle tail-tagged and taken away and slaughtered. They are paid a certain rate for a beef cow, a steer and a dairy cow. If that is not done Australia will be faced with the problem of not being able to export beef to America and Japan, which have said that they will not import beef from countries in which brucellosis is detected after a certain date. I think it is 1985.

Mr. McKechnie: We have already lost some dairy markets.

Mr. BURNS: That is right. I must say that the Government is playing around with the dairy market as far as milk in Brisbane is concerned. It has not been testing large numbers of these cows. I think the honourable member for Somerset would recall questions asked by Opposition members on this matter.

Mr. Gunn: They did beef cattle first.

Mr. BURNS: They did the beef cattle because of the export market and they forgot about the dairy cattle. And as the honourable member for Carnarvon has said, this has affected the dairy market.

Brucellosis can be a severe disease. Professor Parnis, in a report published by Oxford University Press in 1970, said that brucellosis had been incorrectly diagnosed as influenza, typhoid fever, T.B., Para Typhoid fever, malaria, rheumatic fever, pneumonia, pyelitis, sinusitis, appendicitis, endocarditis, tonsillitis, bronchitis, infective hepatitis, gastritis, glandular fever and so on. Doctors have said that different men and women had these diseases, but they were all wrongly diagnosed brucellosis cases. People who have those diseases wrongly diagnosed qualify only for sickness benefits. They do not get compensation. However, they were really suffering from a compensable disease in respect of which compensation should have been paid. They failed to get compensation because of the doctor's faulty diagnosis.

Dr. Lockwood interjected.

Mr. BURNS: I cannot argue with the honourable member on whether it should be or not.

Meatworkers are demanding protective compensation coverage similar to that which is available under the Commonwealth scheme to meat inspection employees of the Commonwealth Department of Primary Industry covered by Commonwealth insurance. There is a document headed "Procedural Statement for the Examination of Meat Inspection Staff for Brucellosis and other possible Industrial Diseases." Section 4 (I) states—

"When the tests are received in the case of suspected brucellosis, if the tests

confirm the presence of the disease or if it is the opinion of the doctor with special experience of the disease even in the absence of positive laboratory tests that the individual probably has brucellosis and clinically it is the doctor's opinion that the claimant is probably suffering from brucellosis, this shall be evidence enough for determination of the claim to this effect."

In the Commonwealth field a Commonwealth meat inspector who is said by a doctor to probably have brucellosis can be paid compensation. But our fellows must have serology tests—the blood tests—to show that they are entitled to compensation. Two meatworkers working on the same beast, on the same floor, in the same shed, in Queensland should be entitled to the same compensation when they get the same disease from the same animal. It is passing strange that we seem to treat our men worse than the other men.

I make the point that S.G.I.O. premiums are the lowest in Australia, but many of the existing levels of benefits are lower than in other States. We are no longer the highest. We have dropped back a bit in some instances. I also make the point that we should be asking meatworkers to report ideally only to a meatworks' doctor who has past records and to ask for blood to be drawn and sent to a laboratory for Q fever, brucellosis and leptospirosis tests. Afterwards, whether they are well or not they should always have second blood samples taken 21 days later.

We must look at compensation as it affects holiday pay and long service leave, and we have to continually review our attitude to heart conditions, deafness, asbestosis and back injuries, so that workers do not suffer financially as a result of job-caused illnesses.

We must do something to help these strong, willing men and women who are prepared to work—men and women who work under difficult conditions and work hard. Their livelihood and their chances of future employment are affected. They are thrown on the industrial scrap-heap and come to us shivering, with loss of weight, loss of sex drive and loss of the urge to live. They have all the problems associated with the disease, but we can do nothing for them other than say, "Get on an invalid pension.", or, "We will try to get you a light job picking up a few scraps."

We cannot do that to these men and women who deserve better. We should not do that when we know they have caught the disease or the injury in one of our biggest industries which we are again trying to promote or put on its feet. If the beef industry is to get to its feet, the beef industry, the graziers, the people in the saleyards and all the others in the industry have to get a quid out of it and have some security.

Mr. BERTONI (Mt. Isa) (3.24 p.m.): In rising to support the Minister, I congratulate him on the introduction of the amendments to the Workers' Compensation Act. Anything that can streamline our workers' compensation system must be beneficial to all workers in Queensland. I have no gripe with the S.G.I.O. staff in my area who are handling workers' compensation. They are very efficient and understanding, but they are extremely hamstrung by red tape and certain other difficulties that seem to be prevalent in country areas.

Numerous people approach me about workers' compensation matters. I must agree with the statements by the honourable member for Rockhampton North about medical claims for workers' compensation. I have listened attentively to the debate this afternoon and it seems that everyone is concentrating on the meat and allied industries.

We have particular problems in country areas. A major one is in obtaining workers' compensation certificates from doctors and employers. There does not seem to be much problem about doctors' certificates. We seem to be able to get those attended to speedily. However, we do have problems with employers. A man who came into my office had been off work for something like six months waiting for a form to be signed by an employer. On checking with the property on which he had his accident, I found that the manager was on holidays and the form was lying there waiting for him to return. I contacted the company that owned the property, but they would have nothing to do with it at all until the manager came back to verify the accident. As a result, this poor claimant, who had a wife and family, had to sit around waiting for someone to come back from holidays.

If workers' compensation is to be transferred into a completely new area, the procedures for obtaining certificates in country areas should be streamlined. In our area there is a problem for people who have to attend the medical board. One case I am aware of has been continuing for two years. The gentleman in question had an accident at Mount Isa Mines in July 1976. He is a family man with three children and has been off work for about 16 months. Suddenly he was told by Workers' Compensation, "We will not pay you any more. You are finished." He asked to go before a medical board, but he has been dilly-dallied around for so long that nearly a year has passed and he has still not gone before the medical board. He is in dire financial straits. He has had to cash his insurance policies. He has had to borrow money to live. All that can be done is to get him onto sickness benefits with the Department of Social Security.

Of course, he geared himself to a wage structure of about \$250 a week from Mount Isa Mines, and a little less on workers' compensation. All of a sudden he goes onto Social Security payments of \$150 or \$160 for

himself and his family. He is finding it extremely difficult. Eventually he will have to sell his house, because he is so far in debt. However, as yet we have still not been able to get him before the medical board. On numerous occasions he has been promised by the workers' compensation people in my area that they will make an appointment for him down at the board, but he is still waiting.

Every doctor in Mt. Isa agrees about his condition. A visiting specialist agreed about his problem of rehabilitation and treatment. However, a doctor from workers' compensation who examined him disagreed with all of those doctors and made his own assessment. As a result of that single assessment, it was decided to cut off his workers' compensation. It is just like bashing your head against a brick wall. Nobody will offer a satisfactory answer to the problem. The only solution, of course, is to get him down here to the medical board. However, we receive varying replies and fob-offs. The last remark I had from the S.G.I.O.—and this is typical—was, "With a bit of luck he can get down to Brisbane by the end of March or the beginning of April." We are now in May, coming to June—and that was given to us last February.

The average family man is being expected to accept tremendous burdens because there is no streamlining within the workers' compensation organisation. I clearly understand the comments of the honourable member for Rockhampton North about this being one of the major problems. Anything done to streamline procedures in country areas, where there appears to be a world of difference, to get medical attention for claimants must be beneficial to all. I sincerely hope that, in forming a new board to take over the operations of workers' compensation, the Minister will see that these procedures are streamlined. Apart from those comments, I fully support what the Minister is doing.

Mr. R. J. GIBBS (Wolston) (3.30 p.m.): It is gratifying to be able to speak on this Bill this afternoon, even though I shall speak for only a short time, particularly in the light of the comments of Government members. It is obvious that they share our concern about problems of constituents who have had to go onto workers' compensation. Many aspects of this problem and its associated problems will come to light this afternoon. Towards the end of my brief speech I will be mentioning a few specific cases in my own electorate.

Probably the primary reason for workers' compensation is industrial accidents. I can speak with some authority on this matter because I worked as a tradesman in the shipbuilding industry and the heavy engineering industry for a number of years. As a union official I had the privilege of visiting many industrial establishments throughout Queensland, but mainly in Brisbane. I appreciate that, to some degree, industrial accidents are caused by the carelessness of

the employees. However, I do not think it would be unfair of me to say that in the majority of instances I have experienced they have been brought about directly by the employers' carelessness or the lack of safety provisions at some industrial workshops. Surely one of the most important objectives we should be looking at is cutting down the rate of industrial accidents by giving some incentive to the employers to reduce the number of accidents at their establishments.

It was interesting to read an article from an overseas country about a scheme that has been adopted recently in the United Kingdom. I believe it will be introduced into Scotland in the near future. I understand it is already in operation in the Scandinavian countries. The onus is put on the employer to provide decent industrial and safety amenities to reduce the number of compensation claims. Under the system in operation, the cost of the products manufactured by an employer with a high rate of industrial accidents is loaded. Ultimately that means that the consumer pays more for his goods and services. The system is having the effect it was hoped it would have.

If an employer has a large number of industrial accidents and consequently a large number of compensation claims, the cost of his products is increased and, in the free-enterprise system, which is something that Government members should understand, he is not able to compete on the market with other companies that are producing similar goods. Therefore he would have trouble staying in business. It would not do us any harm in Queensland to look at a similar scheme in an effort to try to cut down the number of industrial accidents.

One of the major objectives of a satisfactory compensation scheme is giving some incentive to the employer. We should have a look at the safety record of a number of the larger business establishments throughout Queensland. I have spoken to many people from the union point of view and I have spoken to people at the job level in different business establishments, such as paint factories and engineering shops and even a women's corset factory at West End. Many of these places have what they call a very good industrial record.

When we go to some of these places and make investigations, we see not only those in the workshop but probably also a person who is hobbling around on a pair of crutches and working in the office. He might have been there for some period of time because the employer, in his haste to try to build up an industrial safety record, has said to the fellow, "I know you have had an industrial accident here, but to do the right thing by you, if you will stay on the job, we will provide you with an easy job down in the office or some other form of light duties." Therefore, that fellow does not go off on compensation at all.

That is one of the reasons why today in Queensland we are finding that some of these major industrial firms, which talk and idly boast about their proud industrial record as far as accidents go, have not such a good record. When we delve into it very carefully, we find they have a record that is not deserved. Many of the people who should be justifiably entitled to compensation are staying at work under this false incentive, this lure, from the employer.

I have found in my electorate that people have a fear about going off on workers' compensation. The main reason for this was covered quite ably by the Leader of the Opposition. The member for Mt. Isa mentioned, as did the honourable member for Toowoomba North, the time involved in getting down to the compensation office, making a claim, and having it paid out. I have had two recent instances in my electorate, one affecting a meatworker through no fault of his own. I would point out that this meatworker had never been off on compensation during his working life and for the first time he developed severe influenza from an over-extended stay in the coldroom. When he went down to the Workers' Compensation Office to put in his claim, he was told, "We are going to have to investigate this." Ultimately he had to go before the medical board to have an examination. After some time he was paid his compensation.

But he was a family man, with three kiddies. He couldn't afford to go without a month's pay while waiting for the decision so he had to go back to work in order to earn an income, and some four months later he suffered a severe bout of acute pneumonia. That is one of the horrendous things, I believe, about the workings of the office at the present time. Surely there is some way in which the Government can look into this sort of situation and expedite the claims going before the compensation department on a very regular basis.

I would also like to mention the case of a particular woman. Her case is a shining example of why all people in the community who are employed on industrial sites or elsewhere should belong to the particular trade union that covers their calling. I had dealings with this woman personally when I was an organiser for the Miscellaneous Workers' Union. She was doing a cleaning job at the Brassall State School. She was not a member of the union. She resigned from that job on the basis that she did not wish to become a member of a union. Some time later she went to work in a cake shop.

Mr. Bishop: Because you heaved her?

Mr. R. J. GIBBS: No, I did not heavy her at all. I merely gave her the opportunity to join the union. I pointed out the preference clause under the award and told her that she should belong to the union. However, she left and went to a cake shop and she suffered quite a severe industrial accident in that establishment. She came

to see me five weeks ago because she realised that she couldn't afford the exorbitant fees of a solicitor to handle her case and she asked me what possibility was there of the union handling her claim for her. Unfortunately, I had to say to the woman, "Because you are not a member of the union, it cannot help you in any way at all." If she had been a member of the union, she would have qualified for the free legal service that is available from that particular organisation.

Mr. McKechnie: Was it legal aid?

Mr. R. J. GIBBS: No, it was not legal aid. It was one of the services that my organisation makes available to its members.

A Government Member: Why can't you do something for her?

Mr. R. J. GIBBS: I am doing something for her. I am taking up her case. What I am saying is that she could be saving herself a lot of money. She initially went to a private solicitor, and we know that solicitors charge through the nose for the initial consultation.

Mr. McKechnie: Does she get legal aid?

Mr. R. J. GIBBS: No, she does not qualify for legal aid in this particular case, and that is one of the tragedies about it.

I believe that under this particular Bill a number of things need to be examined very closely. Not the least is the amount of trauma and drama that is involved in making compensation claims. Again I urge on the Government that any investigation of workers' compensation must go hand in hand with a very thorough investigation of industrial accidents and industrial procedures that should be followed under the various Acts in this State, but which many employers are now flouting daily, thus probably contributing to the very high workers' compensation claims.

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (3.41 p.m.): I am very interested in the proposed amendment to the Workers' Compensation Act. I have listened with a great deal of interest to the comments of the other honourable members, and the length of those comments has indicated to me that members of this Assembly have some measure of concern about the proposed amendment.

Honourable members realise, of course, that workers' compensation is fairly big business. The Minister indicated in his introductory remarks that in Queensland there was a pay-out in excess of \$90,000,000, and I heard on a recent radio news broadcast that the Australian figure is \$1,400 million. However, as members of this Assembly, we must concern ourselves only with compensation payments made in this State.

When I look closely at the situation, I am concerned. There is an obligation on all of us to ensure that both the employee and the employer are adequately covered should the need for compensation arise. It has been indicated clearly that last year the workers' compensation section showed a profit of about \$40,000,000 on the premiums paid. I think that is reasonable because, as I said earlier, we are dealing with very big business. As the honourable member for Toowoomba North indicated earlier, there may be serious outbreaks of a virus disease that could result in enormous claims in any one year.

Although I intend to be brief, I must point out that for some time I have been concerned about where we are going with the proposed amendment, and during the past few weeks I have attempted to re-search the subject of workers' compensation. As a result, I have been able to discover some rather interesting and, I think, alarming figures.

For quite a long while I have been one of the people who have thought that the S.G.I.O. was performing admirably and in the best interests of the people of Queensland. I am aware, too, that a number of people feel that the S.G.I.O. has gone beyond the purpose for which it was established. That may be so, but I do not wish to debate the merits and demerits of that now.

I contend that we must have a very good look at the figures that are available because it appears to me that, under the present administration, in the majority of instances Queensland is much better off than the people who contribute for workers' compensation in other States.

Let us look at the comparison of premium rates per \$100 paid in salary and take first public abattoirs. In Queensland the premium is \$16.61, in New South Wales \$14.608, in Victoria \$18.56, in Western Australia \$38.06, and in South Australia \$19.40. For brewery workers the premiums are \$3.65 in Queensland, \$4.928 in New South Wales, \$20.06 in Victoria, \$62.29 in Western Australia, and \$10.76 in South Australia. There are many figures available, but I do not think it is necessary for me to reveal all of them at the moment. Anyone who is interested can see them. Heavy engineering is of vital importance, and in that field the workers' compensation premium in Queensland is \$5.99. In New South Wales the contribution by heavy industry is \$15.224 and by light industry \$5.324. In Victoria the figure is \$11.96, whereas in Western Australia it is \$64.49, and in South Australia \$11.24. South Australia has the second lowest figure. The Queensland figure is approximately \$6.

Turning now to agricultural farmers, the contributions are—

	\$
Queensland	2.84
New South Wales .. .	10.318
Victoria	11.47
Western Australia .. .	15.47
South Australia .. .	9.66

In respect of people working in hospitals the contributions are—

	\$
Queensland	0.81
New South Wales .. .	3.960
Victoria	4.84
Western Australia .. .	5.97
South Australia .. .	2.93

These are figures we have to look at seriously. The contributions in respect of motor garages and workshops are—

	\$
Queensland	1.58
New South Wales .. .	4.675
Victoria	6.75
Western Australia .. .	13.77
South Australia .. .	4.82

I have another document before me referring to demolition workers. In Queensland the contribution for both brick and wood is \$25.52. In Victoria the contribution is \$64.85. I haven't the figure for New South Wales.

I am concerned about where we are going. I hope I have been confused about these figures. I am one who believes that at all times we must examine the things that we are doing. At all times we must be prepared to accept change, but if we are going to inflict these additional costs at a time when people are suffering mercilessly under the load of inflation and so many other things we are handing employers and employees a somewhat backhanded compliment. We know what happens in all cases in industry. If costs rise, the costs of goods increase. This is a time when we are fighting inflation desperately. I am sure we are all doing this irrespective of which side of the Chamber we sit on. We must consider this very seriously.

I wonder just how effective the new administration is going to be. At the moment the State Government Insurance Office handles S.G.I.O. and workers' compensation business through local police stations in rural centres. I am not sure of my facts here. I am searching for information, and I have found parts of it. The parts I have found concern me. I want to know what is likely to happen when this breakdown occurs and police are not readily available to handle the claims that flow to them from the rural centres.

I know that in the provincial cities there are agents who readily accommodate people in insurance business. In the country centres, however, where it is vital that an adequate service be provided, such a service seems to be excluded from the provisions of the Bill.

As I indicated earlier, it is not my intention to take up the time of the Committee on this matter. The figures should be examined very carefully. If they are substantiated I will be deeply concerned at where we are going, at the direction in which the Minister is leading Parliament with the introduction of this Bill. I have every confidence in him. I hope that he can convince me that my figures are wrong. If they are, I apologise now for my comments. However, if it is found that they are correct, I will be most alarmed.

Mr. WARBURTON (Sandgate) (3.51 p.m.): This Bill comes before Parliament at a time when grave doubts have been expressed about the motives behind the separation of the Workers' Compensation Section from the S.G.I.O. The credibility of the Government which sees fit to sanction this is to be questioned.

At the introductory stage of the State Government Insurance Office (Queensland) Act Amendment Bill I clearly indicated my concern on a number of issues. One of those issues concerned the employees, and I intend to dwell on that at some length. However, first let me reiterate that I sincerely believe that the changes that are taking place under this separation of the Workers' Compensation Section from the S.G.I.O. are being implemented in haste. I am not saying that from any particular philosophical viewpoint. Insufficient thought has been given to this matter. I believe this separation is being brought about as the result of pressure exerted by certain people. I do not intend to go further into that; all of us are aware of the articles that have appeared from time to time in the Press as a result of certain financial action taken by the S.G.I.O. I made a prediction, and I hope very sincerely that the future proves me to be wrong. My prediction was that we are about to see the demise of the S.G.I.O.

As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, the Workers' Compensation Section originated way back in about 1915. Not one valid reason has been put forward by the Government for the separation of that section from the S.G.I.O.

As to my concern for the employees, a concern that I expressed during the debate on the S.G.I.O. Bill—I know that the State Service Union has properly been very active on behalf of its members. It conducted a survey that revealed that approximately 80 to 85 per cent of the employees indicated their willingness to accept the Government's proposals. I do not know whether those employees were in a position to understand fully what was going to happen and what their future would be. I am also aware that the State Service Union very properly entered into discussions with the Deputy Premier and that to date a number of industrial matters concerning the employees are unresolved. I should have thought that the Deputy Premier and the Minister who presented this Bill would have taken the opportunity to attempt to resolve in more detail the problems that

the union believes affect its members in the Workers' Compensation Section before bringing this and the other measure before the Committee.

When discussing this measure the rationalisation of the electricity industry in Queensland comes to mind. I am merely drawing an analogy and I will ask you, Mr. Row, to bear with me.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Yes, but I warn the honourable member not to stray too far from the Bill.

Mr. WARBURTON: While it could be said that the rationalisation programme was responsible for bringing together various sections of the industry, it can be said that because there was no proper discussion between the Government and the employees in the industry at the time—even when the rationalisation programme came into being—industrial disputation is taking place in the industry. I predict that there will be further disputation in the future unless the Government thrashes matters out with all the unions involved before it introduces legislation to Parliament. As my colleague the honourable member for Rockhampton North said, there was no discussion with unions covering employees outside the Public Service although those unions and their members are vitally concerned about industrial safety.

Mr. Campbell: You are not suggesting that industrial disputation in the electricity industry is a new phenomenon?

Mr. WARBURTON: I am not suggesting that at all, but I do suggest very definitely that the industrial disputation in the electricity industry was caused by the Government's inaction. My point is that if the Government were prepared to discuss matters more freely with the unions and the employees that would probably go a long way towards solving industrial problems. I am sure that the Government will regret what has happened.

I have spoken to quite a number of people. I have moved among them trying to get their opinion on the alterations that are taking place. Those in the Workers' Compensation Section do not see any real problems. There can be no doubt that the employees who remain with the State Government Insurance Office are concerned, and quite properly concerned, firstly because their union has been unable to get final decisions from the Deputy Premier on the matters that were raised with him; the matters are still unresolved. Secondly, when changes are forced upon employees after years and years of compatible relations between departments, quite naturally there will be concern. I suggest that there was no need for this Bill or for the S.G.I.O. legislation to come before Parliament. It would have been much better if the position had been left as it was. It would have been better for the employees. It would have been better for the Government. It would have been better for the people of this State.

In my early days as an electrician I was unfortunate enough to be injured, and I had to receive workers' compensation. I was very glad of it. The premises at that time were on the corner of Edward and Adelaide Streets. Those who were fortunate enough—perhaps I might say unfortunate enough—to visit those premises would be aware that, whilst the staff did all they could under the existing conditions, the facilities certainly left a lot to be desired. Then with the construction of the S.G.I.O. building, of course, conditions improved.

We knew well before this Bill came before us that floors had been reserved at Comalco House in anticipation of this legislation. I understand that a couple of lower floors have been set aside for certain operations of the new department and a much higher floor will be used, I understand, for applicants who appear before the various boards. Those arrangements, as I say, were made before the introduction of this Bill. So this is another example of this Government being prepared to take steps without first having the matter debated in and decided by this Parliament.

I would hope that, in the development of the facilities at Comalco House, the Minister will ensure that adequate provision is made for a number of different categories of people. As I indicated before, the staff do a wonderful job. They do their best—and I have found this from experience—to help people who are injured and to help those who accompany them. It is important that the facilities provided in the new premises are an improvement on those presently at the S.G.I.O., and adequate to cope not only with applicants seeking advice but also with families, mothers with children or any friends who accompany the injured person. I am sure the Minister appreciates the type of facilities that could be expected.

In my experience prior to entering the Parliament I had the opportunity to appear before a number of boards with applicants seeking workers' compensation benefits. I feel that I am in a position to understand many of the problems of the department as well as the anguish and distress involved in industrial accidents. I spent many years associated with industrial safety, as the Minister would be well aware. This, of course, is a matter associated with workers' compensation. They go hand in hand.

In one particular year it was my sad duty to attend the funerals of eight members of the Electrical Trades Union. That goes back to the days when a former Labor member of this Parliament, Mr. Doug Sherrington, made much of industrial accidents, particularly those associated with the electrical industry. There was much debate and much Government action following what Mr. Sherrington put forward.

Legislation and seminars conducted by Governments, their instrumentalities and various organisations are certainly important to the overall result in industrial safety.

They are important to workers' compensation. But they are not enough. After Mr. Sherrington raised certain matters in this Parliament, there was an upsurge of enthusiasm for the holding of seminars and for certain forms of education. However, in recent years I have seen a general drop-off in that enthusiasm. It is a great pity that this has happened. Not enough attention is being paid to industrial safety in our schools, our colleges and our work places.

Certainly, a genuine effort is being made by a number of people and organisations. To some extent a genuine effort is being made by some Government departments. But industrial safety goes hand in hand with workers' compensation. It is proper to suggest that prevention is better than cure. The cure could be said to be workers' compensation. The Government should be looking more closely at prevention than it has done in recent years.

I should like to refer to a matter raised by the Leader of the Opposition. He said some difficulty was being experienced in determining matters in relation to industrial diseases. This is true. I agree that the medical profession and the employees have faced up to this problem of recent years. The matter must be considered very carefully.

Not very long ago certain substances that were regarded as being harmless in industry were found to be very dangerous. We know now that the illnesses and even the deaths of employees who worked in certain workshop environments were caused by the existence of those substances and gases. In those days we had no appreciation of their full effect. I refer particularly to carbon tetrachloride and the fumes from certain plastics such as polychloryl biphenyls. We knew little about them. In fact, the medical profession knew very little about them years ago.

Dr. Lockwood: Metallic chromium vapour is extremely poisonous.

Mr. Warburton: Of course. The honourable member is supporting me in the comments I have made that the medical profession has to apply itself to this matter, and that various other organisations and departments have a responsibility in this matter, to ensure that employees who are ill and claim that they became ill in certain workshop environments are studied carefully. More of these products are coming onto the market every day and industry and, particularly, the unions are finding in the files of companies and in documents that do not seem to be put before the public in a very proper way in this State or country, strong evidence to suggest that some of the products that are being used by the workers are in fact dangerous to their health. It is a matter of great concern to industry, to the unions and to their members, who are the employees of this State.

I do conclude by saying that I continue to express grave doubts about what is happening through the separation of the

S.G.I.O. and the Workers' Compensation Board. I reiterate that the Government has yet to prove, certainly to me, that what it is doing will create a better service to the public. This is what it is all about. This is why it is supposedly carrying out these functions. Can the Minister show us today or in the further stages of this Bill that what is proposed is going to give a better service to the public in both the Workers' Compensation Section and the general insurance of the S.G.I.O., and can he establish quite convincingly in this Assembly that it is not going to cost the public purse any more than it is costing now?

(Time expired.)

Mr. KAUS (Mansfield) (4.12 p.m.): I rise to support the introduction of this Bill and the remarks of the Minister. He said that this Bill provides for the separation of the Workers' Compensation Section from the State Government Insurance Office and establishes an office to be named the Workers' Compensation Board of Queensland. I wholly agree with the proposed separation. I disagree with what the honourable member for Sandgate has said. As previous members have mentioned, this is big business that we are dealing with and I should think that the board or the S.G.I.O. would be very pleased to have these shackles taken away.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! I would suggest that the honourable members on my left either leave the Chamber or resume their seats. The honourable member for Mansfield.

Mr. KAUS: The S.G.I.O. should be very pleased to separate these two operations. It will be of benefit to the S.G.I.O. and to the people who are receiving workers' compensation. I am not alleging that the S.G.I.O. did not give very good service to the public, but I think that with the separation of the two operations there will be a better service to the public.

Mr. Moore: Can you prove that?

Mr. KAUS: I can't prove it at this stage, but I am sure that it will operate in this way.

Mr. Moore: It is only logical.

Mr. KAUS: It is only logical, of course, that this will happen. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned some problems which he has faced in his electorate. I, too, have had a few problems similar to his, particularly when I was the member for Hawthorne.

What I want to do now is mention some aspects of the Bill that have not been covered by previous speakers. Many things and aspects have been suggested and debated, so I am not going to take up a lot of time in dealing with them. The particular problem I faced recently, and which I also faced when I was the member for Hawthorne, involved a worker who suffered an injury. I bring this matter to the attention of the Minister.

A problem arises for some injured workers who need to have surgery performed. Under the Act as it now stands, surgery must be performed in a public hospital. If it is done in a private hospital, the S.G.I.O. pays the doctor's fee but the patient has to pay the hospital fees. If there is a waiting list at the public hospital—and there often is for non-urgent cases—the patient is paid workers' compensation while waiting for the operation. As the Minister is aware, he may have to wait for months. The compensation paid is often greater than the hospital fee if the operation had been performed in a private hospital. In addition, if the time involved extends beyond 26 weeks, then through no fault of his own the worker has his payments reduced.

That is the main problem that I ask the Minister to consider in the very near future. If a person is on \$200 or \$250 a week, or even \$180 a week, and he cannot get a bed in a public hospital and has to wait 13 or 14 weeks, the Workers' Compensation Section is paying for that. In most instances the worker is interested in doing his job. He does not want to sit at home and get in his wife's hair or in the children's hair; he wants to get on with his job. My suggestion would save the S.G.I.O. quite a considerable amount of money and the worker would be satisfied if he could get back on the job quicker.

That is the point I wish to make, and I now commend the motion to the Committee.

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (4.17 p.m.): In introducing the Bill, the Minister made a number of remarks about the competency of the S.G.I.O. over the many decades in which it has administered workers' compensation insurance, and I do not think there is really any argument about that. It was a socialist project, one that was endorsed, and will continue to be endorsed, by members of the Opposition because it is in the interests of all workers that some type of compensatory payment is available to those who are injured in earning profits for employers. If a man who uses his skills and takes risks in using those skills, it is only right that he should be compensated in some way for his injury.

I do not think there is any argument that many thousands of Queenslanders—in fact, many hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders—have not benefited from workers' compensation in this State. Like the honourable member for Rockhampton North and other honourable members, I welcome the additional benefits that the Minister has proposed here. I especially welcome the additional benefits that will be available to the dependent children of an employee involved in a fatal accident. At present the maximum is \$710; but because of the provisions under which there can be a \$500 a year payment between the date of the death and the date on which the child reaches 16 years of age, plus a special allowance of

\$500 for student children, it is quite obvious that the dependent child would gain considerable additional benefit.

I note also that the Minister said it will be to a maximum of \$2,000. That is still almost three times as much as the present benefit.

I am also pleased to see that medical claims are no longer limited and that there is no longer a restriction to \$1,200. I did get in touch with the S.G.I.O. in my own area recently and I was told that there was no longer any restriction, so perhaps that office is working under the proposed provision although the amending Bill had not actually been introduced in this Chamber.

I am pleased to see, too, the new provisions catering for non-award workers for the first 26 weeks of injury. They will receive 80 per cent of weekly salary.

However, I question the correctness of the removal of the right of the owner-driver to receive workers' compensation. The point has been made by other members of the Opposition that many owner-drivers are trade unionists and see themselves as workers. Because of that, one would think that they ought to receive workers' compensation if injured.

Like the honourable members for Lytton, Rockhampton North and Sandgate, I am not convinced about the long-term advantages of the separation of workers' compensation from the State Government Insurance Office. There are always two concepts when one starts to separate. There is the concept of divide and multiply in that on separation things tend to strengthen, streamline and grow. But I am sure all honourable members will agree that there is the other concept—divide and conquer. That certainly could be the case with the S.G.I.O. in the future. I can say that with good reason.

I am very much aware of the provocative statements made by certain Ministers and certain Government back-benchers in this Assembly and by leaders of the National Party in this State that something ought to be done to curb the S.G.I.O. We know that if they had their way there would be no such thing as a Government insurance office. I will be watching what happens very closely. I certainly hope that this is not stage 1 of a rather snowed plan to scuttle the S.G.I.O.

I make the point that the S.G.I.O. has given service not only to the public, more specifically to the workers, but also to those who have sought assistance by way of inquiry. I must praise the officers of the S.G.I.O. in Rockhampton for the personal assistance they have given me. They certainly do their human best. Of course they will always make mistakes. That is the problem with human error. Unfortunately they are often criticised unfairly. Very often when we seek out the basis of any problem, we find that it is not the fault of the S.G.I.O. or some officer in that office. Instead, the blame for a worker suffering

because of a delay in receiving workers' compensation lies squarely with other persons involved in the application. I refer immediately to medical practitioners and employers. Very often the problem certainly lies very much in their court.

When a worker is injured he is required to see a doctor. To make application for workers' compensation he has to lodge form 4. There is an obligation on the doctor to send in the medical certificate known as form 5. There is a responsibility on the employer to forward in form 3. Unfortunately, much to the financial distress of so many workers, those persons do not carry out that obligation with due haste. They forget that workers depend from week to week on ordinary wages. If those wages are not forthcoming, they have to depend on a financial return from some other area. In the main the only other area they have is workers' compensation.

Dr. Lockwood: I feel that the whole process could be revised to the advantage of all concerned.

Mr. WRIGHT: I am glad the honourable member mentioned that. As a practising doctor and a member of the Assembly, he would be well aware of the problem because he sees it from both sides. There is a responsibility on both the employer and doctor to ensure that those forms are returned with due haste. Injured workers depend on weekly remuneration. If they do not get it, they cannot maintain their standard of living and meet other financial commitments. If a man has been out of work for six weeks because of an injury and has not received workers' compensation, the A.G.C. or some other hire-purchase company—I do not pick out the A.G.C. especially; indeed I find that it is always reasonable when people get behind if the persons themselves are reasonable—is quickly hammering on the door or sending some sort of notice indicating that another payment on the car is due, or that he is behind in his payments for some other article that he bought. The many firms that carry out credit transactions are very quickly on the hammer of the man who can't pay and they will smartly repossess.

As the honourable member for Toowoomba North said, we need to clean this up. We should have some type of system so that, if the S.G.I.O. believes that there is nothing untoward about an application, payment can be started immediately. If we kept statistics over a period, I wonder how many times we would find that compensation payments are not made or have had to be discontinued. I do not believe it would be very many. In most cases, regardless of the delay and the need to check things out, the S.G.I.O. will find that the worker should have received the compensation for which he applied. It may be that we put Government money or Crown funds at risk for a short period. However, I do not think the loss would be great. The benefits, on the other

hand, would be truly great in that the difficult situations that result when a person is faced with delay would be relieved.

The problems are compounded when the S.G.I.O. requires further evidence or statements from witnesses, from the person injured, from the employer or from the doctor. I find that in the main the doctor is prepared to send in the medical certificate and the employer is prepared to send in Form 3, but when it comes to getting that extra statement he seems to become bogged down. He does not have time to meet that requirement. He just doesn't have time to answer the questions put to him. The employer just doesn't have time, it seems, to get the letter dictated, typed, put into an envelope and sent back to the S.G.I.O. So there is, to start with, the delay caused by the application period; there is the delay caused by Form 3 and Form 5 coming back; and there is the extended delay caused because the statements have not been furnished. It is because of situations like this that there ought to be an extension of the already existing power that the S.G.I.O. has to make payments at the discretion of the officer in charge.

I know that this does in fact happen; there is this power for the office to pay. However, it does not happen without good reason. It seems that officers are a little bit concerned that, if they make these payments, they may feel the heavy hand of the central office upon them. Questions may be asked. The result is that they are reticent and they say to themselves that they had better get in all the statements and forms. They apologise for the delay by saying, "We are sorry. It is not our fault; it is the fault of the doctor or the employer. We know you are suffering, and we are sorry about it." It is all very well to be sorry, and I know that the officers are sincere; but that does not help the injured employee. So we need to consider ways of overcoming this delay, and I think that the granting of a discretionary power to the officer in the head office of the Workers' Compensation Section would help meet the situation.

The other aspect that needs to be raised is that of appeals. As members are aware, an injured employee has the right of appeal to an industrial magistrate if the S.G.I.O. ceases payment. There is no right of appeal, however, from the Orthopaedic Board, the General Medical Board or the Cardiac Board. Their decisions are final and conclusive, and many people have suffered as a result. Because of the experience I have had with many cases, I suggest that there should be a higher instrumentality to which appeals can be made.

I cite one case which, thanks to the intervention of the then Treasurer, Sir Gordon Chalk, was finally resolved. It involved a man who was injured in the meatworks when a meat hook was put into his shoulder. He suffered for a lengthy period and received compensation. Because of a doctor's recommendation, he then decided to apply for the

permanent partial disability settlement. The S.G.I.O. offered to settle the matter on the basis of 40 per cent permanent partial disability. The doctor, however, told this man, "No, your disability is far higher than that. It is more like 70 per cent. It will mean a considerable amount of money to you."

So an appeal was made to the Orthopaedic Board, which decided that that man's condition at the time when the investigation was carried out was not related to the original injury. Regardless of the fact that he had received compensation for all that time and that the doctors believed his condition was related quite clearly to the original injury, the Orthopaedic Board said no. His application was lost and he also lost total compensation. However, because of the fact that he had another claim arising from an injury to an eye some 16 or 17 years beforehand, and because the S.G.I.O. could not find the documentation that related to that injury, I was able to go to Sir Gordon Chalk and he was able to make an *ex gratia* payment. The man lost virtually everything. It was only through the good graces of Sir Gordon Chalk that he received a few thousand dollars. It certainly did not make up for the loss he sustained, but it was something.

Many complaints about the Orthopaedic Board should be looked into. There is no right of appeal from its decision. I raised this matter with the then Treasurer in writing. One man who went down to see the board came back disgusted. He told me that he went before three doctors who told him to raise his arms, turn around, sit down, and walk around. He was then told that that would do. He was probably limiting the full extent of the examination which was carried out, but it was his opinion of what happened. He said that no in-depth medical examination was performed. The Board's opinion was that he should not receive a final settlement, and there was no appeal. When I wrote to the Treasurer about it, he said, "I am sorry. I understand the situation but, as you know, from a statutory point of view there is no appeal. The Board's decision is conclusive; it is final."

We must review the situation very carefully. I again suggest that there should be a further right of appeal or review when the circumstances clearly warrant a further opinion. The local medical practitioner or the Government Medical Officer who first looked at the injured person could say, "I do not agree with the Orthopaedic Board. I admit that there are specialists with expertise I cannot match but in my opinion they are not right. This case warrants further discussion and review." That would overcome a number of problems.

We certainly need to review problems related to back injuries. An injured person cannot get a partial, or permanent partial disability settlement. Payment is based on the degree of working capacity a man still has. The percentage finally received is a percentage of the maximum compensation

available to one person, which is now \$26,750. I realise that many stories have been told about persons getting compensation for back injuries. They have been seen digging strenuously in their gardens, out playing bowls and so on. But it is wrong that a few people who try to get away with deceit should make so many suffer. I do not know the answer but we must devise some other system to assess the disability of people with back injuries. Legally and medically it presents problems, but some other way of assessing disability must be provided. Judging by the cases I am familiar with, the final payment assessed on the degree of working capacity that a person has is totally inadequate.

When we think of compensation being based on the maximum benefit, we realise very quickly that \$26,750 is inadequate. It is not even equal to the yearly salary of a Minister of the Crown, yet some people seem to believe that it is sufficient compensation for workers.

We should look closely at the compensation payable for the loss of limbs. The loss of an eye attracts \$6,800; the loss of a leg, \$11,600; and the loss of an arm, \$12,600. Those amounts are not properly related to the court awards in civil actions.

A worker has a right to take civil action. But if an award is made he does not receive the total benefit. By law all the payments received by way of medical expenses, benefits from the S.G.I.O., and payments by the Social Security Department in the form of sickness benefits are deducted. A person who receives a court award of \$30,000 could be left with only half that sum after deduction of legal fees, medical reimbursements and S.G.I.O. payments. That is certainly not fair. The way to overcome this, I believe, is to look at the total quantum and to ensure that, if people are unable to take civil action, they are still compensated in a real degree.

I have covered most of the points that I intended to raise. I did intend to search out the relationship between how long the maximum compensation lasts at present and in years gone by. It has been put to me that the period is gradually decreasing to the detriment of the worker. In 1975 a worker received some \$54 plus \$13.60 for his wife and \$5.40 for each child. The maximum compensation at that time was \$19,050. However, because of the rapid increases in wages and the not-so-steep increase in maximum compensation, today that compensation does not last as long. I am not sure about this because I have not had the chance to statistically work it out, but it is something that I will consider before the second reading.

I am willing to support the measure at this stage because I feel that the workers' compensation section will be able to operate a lot more efficiently if it is a separate enterprise. However, I do raise the point about what the final outcome will be if this Government intends to use this Bill to set up some type of attack on the S.G.I.O.

Mr. FRAWLEY (Caboolture) (4.36 p.m.): I certainly hope that this proposal to remove workers' compensation from the administration of the State Government Insurance Office provides for an increase in efficiency. Recently I have had a number of complaints about workers' compensation. Quite frankly, I am getting sick of them, and I am going to read one out right now.

A Mr. R. D. Johnson of 7 Patricia Street, Burpengary, seems to be experiencing long delays in receiving his cheques. Whether he has fallen foul of somebody in the office and the cheques are purposely delayed, I do not know. He came in to see me a couple of times. I wrote to the Minister on 8 May about it. I have not had a final reply—and I am not complaining about that—but last Friday, 12 May, this fellow came to see me again. He still had not got his cheque. Quite frankly, he is in dire financial circumstances. The least the workers' compensation office can do is to send out cheques on time. They should not be delayed or held back at all. The office should give these people a fair go.

The person I am speaking about hurt his back. I know that a lot of back injuries are suspect, but he was lifting concrete tubs weighing 225 lb. I advised him to get onto the Transport Workers' Union and get something done about it, because I do not think any person—and he only weighs about 11 stone—should have to lift concrete tubs weighing 225 lb. Is it any wonder he injured his back?

There are some aspects in this Bill with which I agree. The first is that paid sportsmen should be excluded. That is fair enough. They should pay an insurance themselves, just as anyone who is self-employed has to do. I also agree that owner-drivers should be excluded. When I had a business, I paid my own insurance to the Sun Alliance Insurance Ltd. Any owner-driver with his own business should be prepared to do the same thing. It is all right saying that owner-drivers are members of the Transport Workers' Union. Some of them are because they are blackmailed into it. Any owner-driver who goes down to A.C.F. & Shirleys Fertilizers Ltd will meet with a refusal to load his truck unless he pays his membership cheque to the Transport Workers' Union. Membership of the union certainly should not entitle him to be covered by workers' compensation. He should pay his own.

I agree with the Minister's remarks that members of a family living with an employer should be entitled to workers' compensation. I experienced this difficulty myself when I had a business. My three sons were working for me. I paid workers' compensation for the other employee, but when I wanted to insure my sons the S.G.I.O. refused to do it. They said, "You can't do it because you are living with them." However, I had no difficulty doing it with the Sun Alliance group. I agree with the Minister's intention. It is a good move. Any member of a man's family who is working with him and living with

him is being employed the same as any other person and his premiums are being paid—so why shouldn't he be included in it?

Another thing I would like to talk about is the payment of ambulance expenses incurred when a person is hurt at work. They should be paid by workers' compensation. At present the rule is that, if the ambulance journey is not more than 24 or 25 kilometres one way, the person is not paid. I think that is entirely incorrect. If a man is hurt at work and is not a member of the ambulance fund, his ambulance expenses should be paid by workers' compensation.

Another case involves Mr. G. Wilson of Caboolture. Listen to this for incompetence not only by one part of the S.G.I.O. but by the Ipswich ambulance. The Ipswich ambulance centre is a mercenary centre. I do not care who comes from Ipswich. The Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade is fast becoming mercenary. It is hitting and sum-monsing people right and left for money that they cannot afford to pay. I am getting fed up with it. I have supported the ambulance for years and I will withdraw my support if it keeps this sort of thing up.

Mr. Scott interjected.

Mr. FRAWLEY: Let me get this over and I will answer the honourable member later. He can tell me how he happened to work a swifty just after the election.

Mr. G. Wilson of Caboolture was injured at Mt. Crosby pumping station on 5 May 1977. He had a back injury. He is still off work. He was taken by ambulance to the Ipswich General Hospital. He got a bill from the Ipswich ambulance for \$36. He applied to the S.G.I.O. to pay this bill because the distance was less than 25 kilometres. It could be 24 kilometres, but he told me 25. He was told the ambulance bill would not be paid. His compensation commenced on 6 May 1977. I know for a fact that the S.G.I.O. makes a block payment every year to the Q.A.T.B. for workers who are carried less than 25 kilometres in Brisbane.

On 30 August 1977 I got a letter back. I wrote a letter to the Minister about it and the Ipswich ambulance centre was supposed to be contacted by someone in the S.G.I.O. The person in charge stated that Wilson would not have to pay the \$36 and that the Ipswich centre would claim it as part of the block payment. I got a letter from the S.G.I.O. stating this.

Later on Wilson got a letter of demand from Munro and Munro to say that if he did not pay, he would be summonsed. So he paid the money. The Ipswich centre, when contacted, denied ever being contacted by the S.G.I.O. and said that it never agreed to refund the \$36 to this man. On 6 January another letter was sent to me by the S.G.I.O. stating that a letter of application for refund had been sent to the

Ipswich centre. On 13 April a letter was sent to Mr. Wilson from the Ipswich centre saying that it refused to repay his fee.

The A.W.U. wrote to me. It knows that I was a unionist. I was a member of the E.T.U. for 19 years. I understand the problems of unionists. I am in favour of trade unions. I am not against them. I am only against some of the crooks who get in charge, misappropriate some of the money, spend it on drunken binges, wreck union cars and expect the members to pay out of their donations.

Mr. Milliner interjected.

Mr. FRAWLEY: No, I am not. I resigned when I got my own business. I do not think that a man who owns his own business should be a member of a union.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Gunn): Order! I cannot see what that has to do with the Bill.

Mr. FRAWLEY: The honourable member for Everton is a new member and I like to help new members.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I suggest that the honourable member address the Chair.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I like to help new members. You would recall, Mr. Gunn, the help I gave you when you were first elected.

Mr. Scott: You are a nice chap.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I am. My wife has told me that.

The A.W.U. wrote to me on 2 May saying that Wilson still had not got any money. The Ipswich centre denied again ever having been contacted by the S.G.I.O. When it was contacted by the A.W.U. it denied that it was contacted by the S.G.I.O. Yet I have a letter saying it was. Someone is telling an untruth. This man still has not received any money. Something has got to be done. Some efficiency should be brought into this. I trust that following this move there will be some efficiency.

On the credit side of the Workers' Compensation Section I will say that a worker came to see me a few years ago with a couple of fingers missing. He said he lost them in a sawmill accident. He said, "All of a sudden they stopped my workers' compensation. I don't know why." I said, "You must have some other means of income or your wife is working." He said, "No, nothing has happened. I want you to help me get a lump sum." I decided to do some checking. I rang someone I know in the Workers' Compensation Department. I found out that this bloke had been charged with false pretences, convicted, and ordered to repay the money that he had received as workers' compensation because, when he was off work injured, he sent his wife out to work as a waitress in a cafe. With her wages and his compensation, he was on a better wicket than when he was working.

Mr. Moore: Why shouldn't his wife work? What the hell are you talking about?

Mr. FRAWLEY: He was definitely trying to defraud the S.G.I.O. and he was telling me a pack of lies. He said he did not know why he did not get compensation. I do not care about his wife working, but he did not declare his wife's wages.

Mr. Moore: He shouldn't have to.

Mr. FRAWLEY: Of course he should when he is on workers' compensation. He was defrauding the S.G.I.O. I am pointing out that not everything concerning the Workers' Compensation Department is on the black side. I have to give the S.G.I.O. some credit for this. They do get some fictitious claims, but then again I still believe that the main problem with them is that they are paying out the cheques for workers' compensation too late. This fellow told me that sometimes he does not get a cheque for a month and by the time he gets it he has borrowed so much money from his mates to help pay his bills that he has got to pay most of what he receives to his mates.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: Didn't you give him a loan?

Mr. FRAWLEY: No, I didn't give him anything.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: By gee you're cheap.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I've got Chinese ancestors.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: The last time you shouted was when you were lost in the bush.

Mr. FRAWLEY: I am not going to be diverted by any inane interjections by the member for Archerfield, who has just proved once again that a person does not need feathers to be a galah.

I sincerely hope that this Bill will improve the efficiency of the Workers' Compensation Department.

Mr. HANSEN (Maryborough) (4.46 p.m.): First of all, I refute the statement by the Treasurer that the payment of workers' compensation is a welfare payment. I have read the speech of the Minister for Industry and Administrative Services, but I failed to find a reason in his speech for the separation of compensation from the general insurance. He has not really said that it is because of the growth of these two sections. However, I can see that there is a relationship between the Department of Labour Relations and the proposed Workers' Compensation Board.

Points were raised about industrial safety. The Minister administers the Shops and Factories Act, which ensures that certain standards of safety are maintained within industry. He also covers the administration of awards. I am not saying that there is no relationship between them, but I, like other speakers on our side, am very suspicious

about the reasons for the withdrawal of compensation from the State Government Insurance Office.

When we study the history of the State Government Insurance Office, we find that it was formed initially to ensure that workers were adequately covered by compensation against risk of injury. I am one of those who have had reason to be pleased that workers' compensation was available to cover loss of wages. I gained the benefit of it on two occasions, one being particularly serious.

The honourable member for Sandgate mentioned the new headquarters of the compensation department and said that he hoped that the staff would be able to cope with the demand on their services here in Brisbane. I am concerned about how they will operate outside the capital city. I am told that in the State Government Insurance Office in Maryborough, whenever there is the demand, people are transferred from one category to the other. They can be transferred from insurance matters to workers' compensation matters, if the demand is in that direction, or the reverse could be the case when the demand is in the opposite direction. If the two departments are separated, what happens in relation to those duties that are done on a collective basis, such as the collecting of payments, the acknowledgment of payments, the sending out of notices for premiums, the general correspondence and so on handled by the insurance office? Will all that now be duplicated by the Compensation Board?

I know that the innovation of computer filing and processing has speeded up the handling of inquiries, etc. This is happening in the country branches at the moment. They have easy access to files and are able to point to what is happening there and then. I wonder whether a similar computer service will be available after the Bill becomes law. If it is not, the separation of the Workers' Compensation Section from the ordinary insurance office of the S.G.I.O. will be a retrograde step for people living outside the Brisbane metropolitan area. I hope that the facilities that have operated so successfully over the years will also be available to the board.

I was particularly interested in the comments of the honourable member for Toowoomba North, a practising physician, about the problems that a doctor faces when he is making an assessment of complaints, particularly internal complaints, and also when he is investigating a fatal accident.

As this proposal is to some extent tied in with industrial relations, I might mention that a matter that has always concerned me is why a person who is on compensation is deprived of leave, particularly annual leave, to which he would have been entitled if he had remained in the industry and drawn his pay. If he is receiving workers' compensation payments for a long period, when he receives his holiday pay at the end of the year he does not receive payment for the period

during which he was on compensation. It is not through any fault of his own that he has been deprived of the opportunity of working, but holiday pay is paid by the employer only on a pro rata basis. The period during which he was on compensation is not included.

More investigation should be undertaken into the retraining of people who have been injured or who have heart complaints. There should be greater co-operation with the Department of Social Security, particularly in rural centres, because people are not always able to travel to the rehabilitation and retraining centres in Brisbane where they could receive training that would enable them to return to the work-force. If they are unable to return to their previous occupation, they should be retrained for some other occupation. I am aware that there are serious problems associated with this suggestion in times of high unemployment, but I hope that the present situation will not be allowed to continue. We should take advantage of the expertise that people have gained and of the experience they have acquired before their injury. Too often the easy way out is taken and people are simply relegated to being pensioners, and that is where they stay for the rest of their lives.

I think that we should be looking a little bit harder at rehabilitation. I am aware that provision is made under the Act for rehabilitation treatment, but the total amount payable for such treatment must not exceed the amount prescribed. I think that the honourable member for Rockhampton made a good point when he said that in 1975 the total payment that could be made under the Workers' Compensation Act equalled 5.1 years' accumulation of wages or salary. In 1978 the figure had dropped back to 4.9. The honourable member was making the point that in that period there has been a decrease in the total amount of compensation payable for injury.

I am concerned about the position of the present employees of the State Government Insurance Office who will be transferred to the new workers' compensation body. Other members on this side have raised the point. I understand there has been some discussion but there does not seem to have been any clear indication of what will happen. It is important to them. Many of them have given many years of service. What will happen to their seniority? Will they lose by being transferred to the new corporation?

Other speakers wish to take part in the debate so I will conclude my remarks by echoing my doubts about the reasons for the separation.

Mr. McKECHNIE (Carnarvon) (4.56 p.m.): The main reason the Bill is before the Committee is that it was an election pledge. When it was discussed at the joint-party meeting I supported it for that reason, but I have some very serious reservations about the legislation. Who wanted it? Where did the pressure come from? I know that

there was a feeling amongst some employers that the S.G.I.O. was not playing fair with the Workers' Compensation Fund. I think that was a false notion. I know there was a feeling by some workers that they were not getting just benefits. It is probably fair enough to say that in some areas we have been a little bit worse off than other States, but in other areas we were a lot better off. I think that is something that could have been tidied up without taking workers' compensation from the S.G.I.O. No doubt there was pressure on the Government. I have just mentioned two fields that I have come in contact with. This Government is sensitive to public opinion, and that is probably why that election pledge was made. We try to do what the public wants us to do. What other reasons are there that I do not know of? What other reasons are there for the Government to think it necessary to take workers' compensation away from the S.G.I.O.?

Like the honourable member for Fassifern I thought that the S.G.I.O. was doing a reasonably good job. At the same time, along with some honourable members on both sides, I acknowledge that a few things have needed tidying up. We should look at them. Generally speaking I believe that the S.G.I.O. has done a good job in providing worthwhile payments to people who have suffered injury. It has also done a good job in keeping down workers' compensation premiums. Some time ago I wrote to the Treasurer giving him my own personal papers. I have a Queensland policy for the Pastoral Award, and my wife has a New South Wales one. My premium was exactly one-third of hers. The benefits were not much different. I do not want to see that destroyed.

The reasons why workers' compensation premiums have been cheaper through the S.G.I.O. than in New South Wales are quite obvious. First of all, the State Government Insurance Office has had a monopoly on workers' compensation. In New South Wales workers' compensation is handled by a series of registered private enterprise firms, which gives scope for dodging payments.

It is said that the S.G.I.O. is socialistic. The S.G.I.O. is owned by the policy-holders and the board is largely made up of very effective private enterprise people. That is one reason why the S.G.I.O. has been successful. The officers of the S.G.I.O. are efficient in many fields, and so is the board.

It has problems, and I am not convinced that we could not have fixed them up without taking workers' compensation premiums away from the S.G.I.O. Again I want to know, and people outside want to know, where the pressure came from, apart from the areas I have already mentioned.

The member for Fassifern gave a very good reason why we should look carefully at the Bill. I have here the rates that he has had incorporated in "Hansard". They speak for themselves. I know that this legislation

was an election pledge and that this Government usually honours its election pledges. However, the people of Queensland won't thank us if we end up giving them dearer workers' compensation premiums when we could have provided additional benefits under the S.G.I.O.

If the Bill is passed we must ensure that revenue collected by way of payments made by policy-holders goes largely to people who sustain injury at work. In New South Wales compensation is a lawyers' bonanza. I do not like to see a lot of money going unnecessarily to lawyers.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: What about private enterprise?

Mr. McKECHNIE: The percentage of claims in Queensland that end up in litigation is very low.

The honourable member for Archerfield mentioned private enterprise. I have tried to point out that the S.G.I.O. is owned by the policy-holders. The thing is it enjoys a monopoly. It would not matter whether it was the M.L.C.; if it had a monopoly in Queensland it would have the same advantages as the S.G.I.O.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: You have said that the system in New South Wales is a lawyers' bonanza. You are having a dollar each way.

Mr. McKECHNIE: New South Wales has a Labor Government, but it would not matter whether it was a Labor or a National-Liberal Government. That State just does not get away from that policy, whether it has a socialist or a non-socialist Government.

What I am saying is that in Queensland we have a jolly good system that could be improved a little. There are problems, such as the slow payment of claims. The Leader of the Opposition referred to meatworkers. Similar problems arise in my electorate.

Because this Bill is brought forward to honour an election pledge, and only for that reason, I will go along with it. But I want it recorded in "Hansard" that I have some very grave doubts about it. I hope that the Minister in reply can give the Committee and the people of Queensland some background information as to why this matter became a Government election pledge. Was it just that employers did not really understand that the Workers' Compensation Fund was kept separate from other S.G.I.O. money? Was it just that the employees felt they were at a disadvantage when compared with those in other States? Or were there other reasons? If there were, I want to know what they were.

Mr. FOURAS (South Brisbane) (5.4 p.m.): I realise that time is getting on, so I will be very brief. The Minister has tried to justify the introduction of this Bill by stating, for example, that the Workers' Compensation Board ought to be aligned with the Department of Industrial Development. I am not sure whether by that he means we ought to

more provisions covering industrial safety. I am not at all satisfied that separation is justified.

If the Minister were to propose the setting up of an accident compensation board whereby people were covered for 24 hours against accidents, whether they involved third-party insurance or workers' compensation, we would have a system that would be workable. I would suggest a system, say, for third-party insurance under which throughout the nation a charge could be made on petrol at so many cents a gallon. People who drove the most and took the most risks on the road, by being longest on the road, would pay more. The rate could be set so that people would pay no more than they pay now for third-party insurance. With regard to workers' compensation, we could have the system that we have now. People would pay rates according to the risk involved in the industry in which they are engaged.

Under such a system we would get rid of the fault liability and all of the litigation. If we got rid of the dozens and dozens of third-party insurers and private workers' compensation insurers in Australia and had one national workers' compensation insurer, we could effect many improvements. As the honourable member for Fassifern said, Queensland's workers' compensation premiums are very low because we have only the one insurer and we have economy of scale.

Many people with vested interests would oppose a national accident insurance scheme. In such a scheme there would have to be a disincentive. It could not afford to pay all people 100 per cent of what they were getting before an accident. With a 24-hour cover some disincentive would be required. It could well be that some unionists would oppose it. Going to work involves a cost. If a person received 85 per cent of his wage, the 15 per cent difference could be equal to the cost of going to work.

I suppose that the Labor Party has associated with it as many people with a legal background as any other party. They would oppose such a scheme, but the real problem would be abolition of common law right. That would require a national policy and acceptance by all State Parliaments.

A person would have to be compensated according to what he lost. A brickie who hurt his hands or lost an arm or fingers would be compensated according to his age and what it cost him to live. The compensation would be set without any expensive court trials. There would be no need for the legal fraternity or the many insurers to milk 30 to 40 per cent from the system. An accountant who hurt his little toe would receive less in compensation than the brickie who lost an arm or a hand. Such a system would provide a wonderful social service. It would ensure that people injured at work, in the house, or travelling in their cars were paid, say, 85 per cent of their income for the rest of their

working lives. People earning \$30,000 or \$40,000 could not be paid 85 per cent of their salaries. There would have to be an upper limit of perhaps \$400 or \$500 per week. At some time in the future there will be a lot of sense in State and Commonwealth Governments devising a national accident scheme.

I was not at all impressed by what the Minister said in justifying the need to establish the Workers' Compensation Board. I hope that later he advances more reasons for taking this action other than saying it was an election promise. We would like to hear the reasons. I also hope that this is not simply an attempt to hive off functions of the S.G.I.O. as the Government is doing to the Brisbane City Council. I hope we get more information as we go further into the measure.

When we are considering national policies I ask Government members not to be concerned about socialist dogma and so on. The system I have suggested would benefit everyone but the legal fraternity. Some people would be upset but everyone would benefit with cover for 24 hours a day.

Hon. F. A. CAMPBELL (Aspley—Minister for Labour Relations) (5.9 p.m.), in reply: This Assembly must surely be the most democratic in the nation. Contrary to what has been said, it is the top sifter of all State Parliaments. I make those comments because we have had a free-wheeling and at times cart-wheeling debate on a very interesting and important social matter. In common with some of the later speakers, I will be as brief as I can, because with the tolerance of honourable members and for machinery reasons I hope to take this measure through the second and third readings tomorrow. I hope that that can be done expeditiously.

However, I do wish to refer to points made by honourable members. First, I give the Committee the assurance that it is not the intention of the present Queensland Government to emasculate the S.G.I.O. in its fire, accident, marine, general and life insurance. It is the intention of the Government, through this initiative, to ally workers' compensation insurance with the Department of Labour Relations and, as a consequence, with the industry safety concept. We have the most competent officers in the nation to continue the fine record that the workers' compensation section has attained, and about which I have appreciated the comments made by honourable members.

Much of what the honourable member for Rockhampton North said has already been canvassed in the legislation relating to the S.G.I.O. He expressed concern that the officers of the department, through this transfer, might be disadvantaged. I can assure him personally that there has been close and frequent consultation with the Queensland State Service Union, which covers the majority of the employees of the proposed

board. The Workers' Compensation Board will, for the first time, be provided with employee representation in the administration of the Act.

Mr. Davis: That's a step in the right direction.

Mr. CAMPBELL: We always endeavour to move in the right direction.

The honourable member for Rockhampton North also queried whether there would be adequate union representation on the board. In regard to the representative of employees on the board, I will make a careful selection from among leading trade union officials, and it will not be a representative of the Public Service unions. I hope that they appreciate that point.

The third matter raised by the honourable member concerned owner-drivers. I went to some pains in my introductory speech to attempt to indicate what the position would be. I advise the honourable member that many owner-drivers are now excluded because many employers require a driver to become a private company before accepting work. He then becomes a principal and is thus an independent contractor, not a worker.

The honourable member for Rockhampton North also referred to staffing. I tell the Committee that the staffing for the Workers' Compensation Board has been closely investigated by the Public Service Board before recommendations were made to the Governor in Council. Furthermore, there will be a review of staffing and not a review of the operation, because the operation will be permanent. However, after six months' operation there will be a review of staffing, and that is a prudent measure. The appeal provisions in the Bill allow the right of cross-appeal against promotions as between the two separate organisations for a period of three years.

The honourable member also referred to what he claimed was a delay in payment to claimants. In general, cheques are dispatched to reach a worker the day prior to the due date of the cheque. A recent survey showed that 45 per cent of claims are paid within one week of the date of claiming, 75 per cent in less than two weeks from the date of claiming and 86 per cent in less than three weeks. It can be readily imagined that the other 15 per cent posed difficulties. I know that the officers do their utmost. Very often there are conflicting aspects from the injured worker himself in some cases and from the employers in other cases.

The other matter that the honourable member raised was the problems that he saw in the re-opening of cases. In some cases, investigations have to be carried out and medical reports obtained. Every effort is made by the department to process the claims quickly.

The honourable member for Toowoomba North made a very worthwhile contribution. I say in relation to the points he made that

prevention of occupational accidents is a function of the Division of Occupational Safety. For the first time both the Division of Occupational Safety and the Workers' Compensation Board will be under the one ministerial control, which I believe will be extremely beneficial.

He also raised the question of industrial poisoning. There is close co-operation between the Division of Industrial Medicine and the Department of Labour Relations. The welding rule under the Factories and Shops Act has strict requirements for ventilation where necessary.

The Leader of the Opposition, as I expected, lauded the introduction of the State Government Insurance Office as a wonderful initiative. It was a wonderful initiative. He pointed to it as being an example of the excellence of A.L.P. policy. But I ask him: what of all the other State enterprises that were introduced in that great socialist era? If ever there was an example of the negativeness of A.L.P. thinking, we always have that to point to.

Some 15 years ago the then Treasurer (Sir Thomas Hiley) had to write off several millions of pounds—I think it might have been about £14,000,000—

Mr. Burns: What about all the bankruptcies?

Mr. CAMPBELL: Every one that Labor introduced went broke.

Mr. Burns interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: (Mr. Miller): Order!

Mr. Burns interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: I am calling the Leader of the Opposition to order.

Mr. CAMPBELL: Now that the Leader of the Opposition has started to do his lolly, I remind him that it was Theodore who handed over the State savings bank to the Commonwealth Bank and thus deprived the Queensland Government of its own banking system. He is not interested in that. We will jealously guard the S.G.I.O. because we appreciate the tremendous benefits that accrue from it to the State and the great instrument it is to the Government for investment.

Mr. Burns interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! Persistent interjections will not be tolerated.

Mr. CAMPBELL: I would prefer to deal at the second-reading stage with the various medical aspects which the honourable member for Toowoomba North introduced. I accept the validity of much of that part of his contribution.

The honourable member for Mt. Isa referred to the medical boards. The number of medical boards is being increased under the Bill from seven to 12 and this will speed up the hearing of claims by the boards. I ask the honourable member for Mt. Isa to advise me of the name of the worker and I will see that the manager of the Workers' Compensation Board investigates the matter.

The honourable member for Wolston raised the matter of rebates. I inform him that the employer is able to obtain up to 60 per cent rebate of premiums if his claims' experience is under 5 per cent. This gives him a great incentive to promote industrial safety. I do not think the honourable member for Wolston had an appreciation of what is being done in the field of industrial safety and the great co-operation which the employers are giving us in this field.

The honourable member for Fassifern expressed doubts about whether the service would deteriorate. I say to him that the same services that exist at the present time will be continued by the new board—in fact, they will be increased. In regard to his query about the lodging of claims at police stations in country areas, I can assure him that the police will continue to receive these claims and forward them on.

The honourable member for Sandgate had a bit of a side-swipe at employers and the Government. I suppose that is O.K. However, I want to say that the facilities for staff and clients in Comalco House will be in many respects better than those at the present location in the S.G.I.O. building. The only disadvantage is that there is no cafeteria in Comalco House. Facilities for medical boards and for applicants appearing before them will be far superior in Comalco House than the present ones in the S.G.I.O. location.

In regard to seminars, I acknowledge that the honourable member for Sandgate was on the organising committee for the last Safety Convention in 1972. Whilst in the past large safety conventions were held every few years, the tendency now is to concentrate—and it is policy—on industrial safety committees which meet more frequently. They are smaller in number, but they are extremely effective. I recall the tremendous industrial problems that were experienced in the Roma Street goods yards because of shunting problems and the possibility of accidents, but, with the establishment of the Land Transport Safety Board, that problem disappeared overnight.

The honourable member for Rockhampton referred to delays by employers and medical practitioners. The department has initiated over the past 2½ to 3 years an education programme for employers and medical students in their final year to teach them the need to report or furnish medical certificates urgently. I would also say to the honourable

member for Rockhampton, in reply to his reference to medical boards, that the claims to medical boards are considered on a medical basis only. I say further that all lay aspects are considered prior to claims being referred to the medical boards.

I ask the honourable member: to whom does a claimant appeal on a medical question after having been to two or three specialists? Does he appeal to three further specialists? Furthermore, prior to his appearance, all medical reports, including hospital records, X-rays and other items are obtained and are reviewed and are noted by board members and, if further evidence comes forward after the hearing, the claim will be reviewed. A number of cases have been referred back to the medical boards already.

The honourable member for Caboolture cited quite a few cases of discontent. My officers have taken a note of the cases he raised and I will comment on them during the second reading.

The honourable member for Maryborough mentioned his concern about staff shortages in provincial areas at certain times. Relief staff will be available in Brisbane to work in country areas where the need arises because of holidays, leave, sickness at branches, and so on.

As to the honourable member's question regarding the computer—the board will continue to use the services of the S.G.I.O. computer.

I think that the new member for South Brisbane (Mr. Fouras) regurgitated the Whitlam Government's proposal for a national compensation scheme.

I appreciate the manner in which honourable members have conducted themselves in this debate. As Minister, I am very proud to be taking aboard the compensation aspect of activities of the State Government Insurance Office. At ministerial conferences I find that the Queensland concept of compensation is the envy of all other States, and I make no apology for being complimentary of what some people thought was a socialistic enterprise. Apart from the vast differences in premiums, the problems that occur in other States are quite considerable. The failure of some insurance companies through careless underwriting in the workers' compensation field causes tremendous problems.

Time prevents me from making further comment.

Motion (Mr. Campbell) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

TRADE COUPONS ACT REPEAL BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

(Mr. Miller, Ithaca, in the chair)

Hon. F. A. CAMPBELL (Aspley—Minister for Labour Relations) (5.29 p.m.): I move—

“That a Bill be introduced to repeal certain Acts passed by the Legislature of Queensland.”

The legislation to be removed from the statutes has little bearing on modern trading practices and, in fact, could be oppressive to traders and consumers if enforced.

The present Trade Coupons Acts, 1933 and 1947, restrict benefits to consumers which were not envisaged at the time of their framing. The social evil aimed at was the offer to the consumer of free gifts provided he made enough purchases. Proof of these purchases was generally attested by the affixing in books of trading coupons. The more coupons a customer gathered, the better the gift.

I would be the first to admit that many undesirable practices exist. There are on record instances years ago, for example, of a firm offering a standard model electric razor if a customer saved 24 books of stamps. This meant the customer had to spend £752 on goods to obtain a gift then worth £9.10.0, and the trader had to pay £22.12.0 to the supplying company for the stamps.

However, times have changed. The public is much better informed as consumers and, on the whole, retailers regard such schemes as completely undesirable. They know, from past experience or from history, that retailers were caught on a treadmill. Once having issued stamps they could not stop for fear customers saving them would withdraw their custom.

Nowadays, there are many and novel forms of advertising, promotion and gimmickry through which traders fight to capture a larger share of the market. By and large the consumer is the beneficiary, yet many of these forms could constitute a breach of the Act.

As this is oppressive to trader and client, and to enable the benefits of competing market forces to flow on to the people, the Government has decided to repeal what is now virtually an anachronistic Act—with one proviso.

I am well aware that there are in existence in a relatively minor way variations of trade coupons such as the issuing with purchases of cards which, if matched according to a combination, earn the buyer a reward. The Committee may rest assured that if it is found that trading stamps or other schemes disadvantageous to the consumer are introduced on a major scale, the Government will seriously consider new legislation of prohibition.

Another reason is that the 1933 Act and the 1947 amendments have, in the light of modern trading practices, made the legislation complex and often difficult to interpret. I will give five examples. Even though no purchase is involved, a firm would be in breach if it offered free a camera film on return of a coupon cut from an advertisement. It is also illegal to give a consumer a coupon for a cut-price car wash if he buys a stipulated quantity of petrol. On the other hand it would not be a breach if the customer had his car washed and was given a coupon entitling him to a cut price if he buys a given quantity of petrol.

Lucky number competitions conducted by traders and offering prizes on the completion and return of a lucky draw card sent to the consumer's home are technically illegal. So, too, are advertisements offering cash rebates on specified articles bought between certain dates, on production of a special discount envelope.

And finally the Gold Coast City Council combined with an oil company in a proposal to offer cut-price accommodation, entertainment and services to people obtaining from the oil company's outlets holiday savings kits in voucher booklet form. The kits contained an eight-page brochure about the Gold Coast, games for children and 300 vouchers entitling the holder to genuine savings on purchases and services on the Gold Coast and at the oil company's service stations from Cairns to Melbourne. It was a scheme of considerable assistance to Gold Coast traders and tourists, but it was in breach of the Trade Coupons Acts.

Honourable members will agree that the absurdity of the present Acts is patent. There have never been any prosecutions under the Acts, and they have ceased to serve any useful purpose. Other States still have trading stamps Acts but most are having difficulty with interpretations and prosecutions are rare.

In the past many honest and worthwhile marketing promotions may have been inhibited by the existence of the Trade Coupons Acts. Where intent to defraud is involved in marketing promotions, the consumer would be better protected under the Criminal Code. Irrespective of how extensive and sophisticated an education programme is available to consumers, there will always be the gullible consumer who is prepared to place his money at risk.

The Queensland Government will continue to monitor the market-place to ensure that consumers are not disadvantaged. If specific problems do arise, then these will be examined to ascertain whether legislation is required to remedy these situations.

The Trade Coupons Acts do not fit the realities of the 1978 marketing situation and serve no useful purpose. There is a trend in the United States towards what is known as “twilight” legislation—legislation which

fades out of existence after a set period of time. I believe this could well apply to the Acts being repealed and I commend the measure to the Committee.

Mr. YEWDAL (Rockhampton North) (5.35 p.m.): The Minister referred to the Trade Coupons Act and the amendments that followed the initial Bill. He also cited instances of particular companies and firms exploiting people at the time those coupons, tickets and labels, along with all types of gimmicks, were used to dupe clients.

It is accepted by the Opposition that from time to time it is necessary to review certain Acts to determine whether or not they are redundant. Redundant legislation should be removed from the statute-book and out-of-date legislation should be updated to control the modern scientific sales gimmicks that are in vogue.

The Minister referred to the sophisticated methods used by unscrupulous companies and firms. Quite a number of them come to mind. I can think of door-to-door salesmen and encyclopaedia salesmen who talked about trips to America on scholarships. I think also of the American Dare to be Great people who flaunted themselves around the State. After many months of argument they and others who engaged in pyramid selling were outlawed.

I accept the fact that in our modern society Parliament will have to continue as the watch-dog of the community. I do not adhere to the business principle, "Let the buyer beware". We as legislators should accept the responsibility of protecting the buyer, because generally speaking the seller has at his disposal wider expertise than that possessed by the buyer.

One matter that I particularly want to raise concerns the repeal of legislation. Have the Minister's departmental officers examined the possibility of the incorporation of saving protection in a Bill of this nature for the purpose of protecting someone who suffers from the repeal of an Act? I cannot be specific, but it would seem to me that that could happen. I am wondering whether that aspect was considered.

Finally—and this is not particularly relevant—I read that in America the Government was concerned about a number of statutes that were either redundant or lying dormant over a number of years. The American Government introduced sunset or sundown legislation, I think it was termed, whereby many of the old statutes were eliminated from the books because people were holding certain positions in the community and large sums of money. I know that we have the machinery that covers that, but it would seem to me that we could have a broken-down version of what was used in America to look at that situation and to remove unwanted or useless legislation from the statute-books.

Naturally the Opposition supports this machinery measure.

Hon. F. A. CAMPBELL (Aspley—Minister for Labour Relations) (5.39 p.m.), in reply: I thank the honourable member for Rockhampton North for his comments. As to his query on saving protection—that certainly will not apply in this legislation; it is obliterated. In its place, however, and since the introduction of these Acts, there is fairly comprehensive consumer legislation. I feel that there is no longer any need for any saving protection. Nevertheless, the point raised by the honourable member is an interesting one and I am sure that it will be noted by honourable members.

In the Press I noticed reports on this trend in America towards twilight legislation. On what I have read it appears that unless some action is taken to activate the legislation, it fades out automatically. We will hear more about that when we get details concerning it. I thank the honourable member for his co-operation.

Motion (Mr. Campbell) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

POLICE ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

(Mr. Miller, Ithaca, in the chair)

Hon. R. E. CAMM (Whitsunday—Minister for Mines, Energy and Police) (5.42 p.m.): I move—

"That a Bill be introduced to amend the Police Act 1937-1977 in certain particulars and for other purposes."

There are several amendments to the Act which, while they mostly cover the operational efficiency of the Queensland Police Force and apply to members of the force, do, in certain instances, extend to cover members of the general public.

Generally speaking the Bill provides for the updating of the Act where it has been deemed necessary. For example, one of the proposals in the Bill provides for a substantial increase in penalties. It is proposed that the penalty for offences against the Act be increased generally from a maximum of \$40 to a maximum of \$200. Obviously a \$40 maximum penalty is completely inappropriate to the current wages, salaries and cost of living.

Let me outline some aspects of other amendments. Another amendment to the Act is where the Police Reward Fund is mentioned. The word "reward" has now been deleted.

The Police Force, like other Government departments, has to keep up with

modern technology. This involves the employment of highly trained officers in various fields. A technical structure has now been included in the Police Force and provision has been made throughout the Act to cover these persons. This includes definitions and provisions to cover appointments, assignments and appeals. Also, appeal provisions have been simplified.

So far as senior appointments are concerned, it is proposed to increase the number of assistant commissioners from three to five, although it is envisaged that only one additional assistant commissioner will be appointed in the near future.

The positions of superintendent, crime advisor and superintendent traffic advisor have become redundant. There is no longer a rank of commissioner's inspector.

The administration structure of the force will be operated on a functional basis rather than a geographic basis, which will bring the Queensland Police Force into line with its counterparts in other States.

A deficiency in the Act has been covered to give the commissioner power to appoint probationaries, and also, provision is made to have police rules apply to probationaries where necessary.

The age of recruits has been extended from 35 years to 40 years. This will provide for the recruitment of ex-servicemen who would previously have been precluded owing to age.

A member of the force is not permitted to engage in employment other than with the Police Force without prior approval.

As there was some question as to whether the former Commissioner of Police had taken the necessary oath as a justice of the peace and his appointment of police officers was queried, a validating provision has been included in the Act.

The length of notice now required on resignation is being reduced from three months to one month.

There have been occasions when confidential police documents have been leaked and provision has been made to increase penalties to deter this behaviour.

The sections relating to assaulting police and special police acting in the execution of their duties have been extended to cover persons who may also be obstructing and hindering such officers.

It has also been made an offence to assume to be a police officer, other than for members of the Queensland Police Force.

As alcoholism is now regarded by the medical profession as an ailment and not a self-inflicted injury, this Act is being amended to provide for such members to go before a medical board and be boarded out if found to be medically unfit to continue.

Police officers acting in performance of their duty are at times subjected to vicious assaults while able-bodied persons stand by without taking any action. There is already provision in the Criminal Code for police to call on such persons for assistance and it is an offence to refuse without a good cause. Under the Criminal Code such an offence is punishable by trial before a judge and jury. It is now proposed to include this as a simple offence, punishable before a magistrate.

There is provision in the Vagrants Act for fingerprinting persons for offences such as obscene language, but it does not extend to offences under the Police Act. However, there is presently power to fingerprint persons guilty of the much more serious offence of assaulting a police officer or assuming the designation of a police officer. It is now proposed to make provision in the Act to fingerprint and photograph such persons. However, these records will be destroyed if a person accused of such an offence is not convicted.

There is one provision in this Act which I think members will agree is long overdue. That is in making the Crown vicariously liable for the actions of police officers in the execution of their duties, and not the officers concerned. The British Police Forces are covered in this manner for any such acts and the Law Reform Commission and the recently constituted Queensland committee also commended its adoption. I believe such an amendment is certainly long overdue.

Let me stress that this proposed legislation does not extend to any costs incurred by police officers in criminal charges. Any such costs and their responsibility will be considered by a separate committee.

In commending these amendments to the Police Act, I consider that it will update and improve the efficiency of our Police Force without in any way eroding the rights and freedoms of members of the force and the general public. I therefore recommend their acceptance.

Mr. VAUGHAN (Nudgee) (5.48 p.m.): I have listened to the amendments outlined by the Minister. The number of assistant commissioners has been increased from three to five. From a perusal of the amendments made to the Police Act over the years, I see that the positions of assistant commissioners were placed in the Act in December 1970. Those classifications were inserted on the basis of providing the commissioner with sufficient scope to delegate responsibility and authority. The structure of the Police Force as outlined on page 41 of the annual report for 1977 reveals that there have been three assistant commissioners since 1972 and that over that period the number of inspectors has increased from 90 to 114. The total number of recruits in the Police Force has risen from 3,251 to 3,758.

The Minister referred to a substantial increase in penalties. According to the references in the Press, the penalties will be increased tenfold. One wonders whether such an increase is in keeping with the penalties prescribed by other Acts.

The age of recruitment specified in section 12 of the Act is 35 years. I wonder what the Minister has in mind under this provision. Is it to allow particular persons to enter the Police Force or is it to provide for better recruitment facilities within the Police Force?

The Minister referred to alcoholism. Is it proposed to establish a medical board within the Police Force to cover this situation? "The Sunday Mail" of 30 April 1978 reports the Chairman of the Public Service Board, Sir David Muir, as saying that there is a move concerning alcoholism within the Public Service. I understand that it is the basis of the proposal outlined by the Minister in respect of alcoholism in the Police Force.

One wonders how police officers in the performance of their duties can be in a position different from that of other persons in employment. Because of the nature of their duties and the long hours they are required to serve in isolated areas, they could probably be in a worse position than other employees. However, I wonder why the Police Department has been selected in regard to this special provision. I hope that the Government will apply it to other departments and, if possible, to all sections of industry.

Mr. Lane: Which provision is that?

Mr. VAUGHAN: The provision relating to alcoholism. I know that the honourable member for Merthyr is a very astute proponent of that provision.

The Minister outlined a proposal to increase penalties for the leaking of information. "The Sunday Mail" of 23 April 1978 contained an article on this matter. It was proposed in that article that the fine be increased to \$500.

It stated—

"It is aimed at the theory that you can buy any policeman with a couple of beers," a senior police officer said yesterday."

I know that statements have been made that in some instances policemen have been bought for a couple of beers. In fact, it has been reported to me that certain police officers are spending considerable time at a depot of a certain tow-truck operator. I will not name the particular depot, but that has been reported to me. I certainly agree that any provision which is designed to overcome that sort of circumstance is certainly a wise one. As far as I am concerned, and I am sure every member of the Committee will agree with me, I want to see a Police Depart-

ment in this State which is above reproach, one which the people of our society can look up to. I certainly concur with any provision that will assist in eliminating this particular problem.

My attention has been drawn to a report by Sir Robert Mark, a Scotland Yard detective, who came out here to investigate the matter of terrorism, and I was particularly interested in some of the comments that he had to make on the role of the police. I quote from "The Courier-Mail" of 20 April 1978, where he said—

"Administratively, a police force should be seen to be accountable to government, either State or Federal.

"Operationally, it should be seen to be as free as possible from political influence, excepting in respect of those comparatively few crimes for which most States reserve the right to prosecute, viz. treason, sedition, and so on."

On police operations he said—

"Any operational decision by a police force unduly subject to political influence will never be generally acceptable, with consequent impairment of the reputation and status of the force.

"This is particularly true in relation to offences arising from industrial disputes or political demonstrations."

In respect of political demonstrations, I refer to the current problem involving street marches.

My attention has also been drawn to a statement in the Press by Mr. Vern MacDonald, one of the assistant police commissioners, in which he said that he is concerned at the deterioration in the relationship between the Police Department and the general public. To this end my attention was attracted to a statement in the annual report of 1977.

Mr. Lane: That is the right Police Force. You finally got to it.

Mr. VAUGHAN: I will get to the Special Branch, too, and I will get around to the honourable member one of these days.

I refer now to the introduction to the Queensland Police Department Annual Report 1977, in which the Commissioner of Police said—

"It is universally recognised by members that the development of a more personal relationship between police and the public is vital to the operations of any police force."

I fully agree with that statement.

Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 6 p.m.