

Queensland



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[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 19 APRIL 1979

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Mr. ACTING SPEAKER (Mr. W. D. Hewitt, Greenslopes) read prayers and took the chair at 11 a.m.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Hon. T. G. NEWBERY (Mirani—Leader of the House) (11.2 a.m.), by leave: Yesterday and again this morning some sections of the media, in reporting a certain incident said to have occurred in this Chamber on Tuesday night, gave the impression that I, as Leader of the House, had sought to gag debate on the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation Bill. I made no such move.

During the introductory stage of the Bill I asked the responsible Minister to report progress to allow the passage of other business which, if not dealt with, would have lapsed under Standing Orders. It seems that some sections of the media are not aware that reporting progress on a Bill does not in any way gag or reduce the debate; it merely adjourns the debate to a later hour or the next day of sitting.

I am sure that all honourable members are aware of the onerous nature of the duties of the Leader of the House. I take these duties most seriously and consider at all times that I strive to maintain the most efficient flow of business before the House, without favour.

I regret that some people in the tourist industry may have been led to believe that there was an attempt to shorten the debate on what is a most important Bill for the future of the industry in this State. I repeat that there was no such attempt and that I acted at all times in a responsible manner in order to fulfil the requirements of Standing Orders.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ROAD CONSTRUCTION

Hon. R. J. HINZE (South Coast—Minister for Local Government and Main Roads) (11.4 a.m.): Recent media reports on the condition of the Bruce Highway and other roads, especially in northern Queensland, have presented a grossly distorted picture of the condition of these roads and the efforts being made to minimise wet-weather traffic dislocation in the North. It is true that, following this year's record rainfall in January, February and early March, the Bruce Highway has been cut by flooding on some 33 days already this year.

It is not true to suggest, however, as some reports have done, that nothing has been or is being done to correct the situation. I would be the first to admit that additional funds are needed to accelerate upgrading of the Bruce Highway and other roads throughout

Queensland and I am constantly urging this in submissions to both the Commonwealth Government and State authorities.

Reports on the general roads situation in the North recently have made little, if any, mention of the very substantial efforts being made to improve flood immunity on northern roads. For example, a \$26,000,000 programme (involving the construction of some 26 bridges) currently is under way on the coastal route between Rockhampton and Mackay to provide a relatively flood-free route between these important northern centres. Over the past few years, new major bridges have been either completed or started at Rockhampton (\$7,000,000), Mackay (\$10,000,000 overall, including approaches), Cairns (one \$3,000,000 bridge project over the Barron River completed, and work under way on a second crossing, worth \$1,500,000, at Kamerunga), and in the Townsville area.

The Main Roads Department's last annual report shows that 40 new bridges were completed in the past year—and many of these were in North Queensland. A review of that same annual report also shows that more than 30 per cent of the total funds available to the State Government for road-works throughout Queensland were spent in North Queensland—from Mackay north. And if we include the Rockhampton area in that, too, the figure is much higher again.

Mr. Burns: If all your promises were laid end to end, we would have bitumen all the way.

Mr. HINZE: I know this upsets the honourable member. He cannot take it. I suggest he sit back and cop it.

So suggestions that the northern areas of the State have not been getting (or are not getting) a "fair share" of available State road funds simply are not borne out by the facts.

Over the past few weeks, when much of the ill-informed media reports on northern roads have been featured, senior officers of the Main Roads Department have made regular car trips to and from the North and they report that restoration work in the wake of recent flooding is proceeding smoothly. The roads are in a much better condition, considering these flood effects only a short while ago, than they had expected, and than has been reported. Over the past few days, I have also received unsolicited comments, from several quarters and authorities in the North, to the effect that recent media reports on the situation have been grossly exaggerated, with the assistance of the Leader of the Opposition.

PETITION

PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS TRANSPORTED BY QUEENSLAND RAILWAYS AND ROAD TRANSPORT

Mr. BURNS (Lytton) presented a petition from 550 electors of Queensland praying that the Parliament of Queensland will take

the necessary steps to amend the relevant legislation to ensure that animals transported by Queensland Railways and by road transport are not forced to suffer intolerable pain and suffering due to neglect, lack of water and lack of concern.

Petition read and received.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION

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

“That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider introducing a Bill to amend the Local Government Act 1936–1978 in certain particulars and for another purpose.”

Motion agreed to.

FAUNA CONSERVATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION

Hon. T. G. NEWBERY (Mirani—Minister for Culture, National Parks and Recreation): 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 Fauna Conservation Act 1974–1976 in a certain particular.”

Motion agreed to.

QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY ACT AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION

Hon. T. G. NEWBERY (Mirani—Minister for Culture, National Parks and Recreation): 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 Queensland Art Gallery Act of 1959, the Queensland Museum Act 1970–1974 and the Queensland Performing Arts Trust Act 1977 each in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

LIBRARIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION

Hon. T. G. NEWBERY (Mirani—Minister for Culture, National Parks and Recreation): I move—

“That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of

the Whole to consider introducing a Bill to amend the Libraries Act 1943–1977 in certain particulars and for other purposes.”

Motion agreed to.

CANALS ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION

Hon. T. G. NEWBERY (Mirani—Leader of the House) for **Hon. A. M. HODGES** (Gympie—Minister for Maritime Services and Tourism): 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 Canals Acts, 1958 to 1960 in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

1. SEMI-TRAILER ACCIDENTS

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

(1) How many motor vehicle accidents involving semi-trailers were recorded in the years 1976, 1977 and 1978?

(2) How many of these accidents were attributed directly to the negligence of the truck drivers and how many of the drivers were convicted in each of the years?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) This information is not contained in official statistics available to me.

2. CONTROL OF TRAFFIC ON RAINBOW BEACH

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

(1) Is he aware that at Rainbow Beach during the Easter week-end a child was knocked down on the beach by a beach buggy and that approximately 30 motorcyclists rode up and down the beach terrorising people?

(2) Is he also aware that the Widgee Shire Council stated that the council will not control beach buggies and motor cycles on the beach, and that police have stated that they have no jurisdiction in this matter?

(3) In the interests of tourism, will he arrange for police to be present at Rainbow Beach during holiday week-ends and also request the Widgee Shire Council to carry out its responsibilities and control traffic on the beach?

Answer:—

I suggest that the honourable member might redirect this question to my colleague the Honourable the Minister for Mines, Energy and Police.

Mr. ACTING SPEAKER: Is it the wish of the honourable member to do so?

Mr. FRAWLEY: This is a run-around. Yesterday the Minister—

Mr. ACTING SPEAKER: Order! If the honourable member has any conflict with Ministers, he will sort that out privately. Does he wish to redirect the question?

Mr. FRAWLEY: Yes.

Mr. ACTING SPEAKER: The question is redirected.

3. TESTING OF APPLICANTS FOR GOVERNMENT POSITIONS

Mr. Milliner for Mr. Kruger, pursuant to notice, asked the Premier—

(1) How many Government departments or statutory bodies including local government associations carry out I.Q. and behavioural tests on applicants for positions?

(2) Is there any requirement for an applicant to be given a copy of the report based on the tests, and for the applicant to hand the report to a prospective employer?

(3) If an applicant is unsuccessful, is there any requirement for all records of an applicant to be destroyed and, if not, will the Government consider legislating for such requirements?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) On behalf of Public Service departments, the Department of the Public Service Board conducts a limited range of ability tests for certain types of specialist positions. The tests involve the assessment of reasoning, creativity and related abilities required in fields such as computer programming and management services.

Within the Public Service, these tests are conducted by staff with professional training and accreditation in this field. The code of ethics governing the conduct of such tests requires that actual test results are not revealed to the applicants themselves or to any other person including the prospective employing organisation. The information revealed relates only to the order of merit of the applicants who performed at or above the satisfactory standard.

Computed test results only are recorded. The test papers themselves are destroyed. Test results are stored in strict security.

Statutory bodies and local government associations are responsible for their own recruitment practices.

4. QUEENSLAND CEMENT & LIME CO. LTD.

Mrs. Kyburz, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Industry and Administrative Services—

(1) With reference to his answers to my questions concerning The Queensland Cement & Lime Co. Ltd., why has the

Queensland Government allowed a company, which is not a wholly Queensland-owned company, to develop a monopoly on cement production?

(2) With reference to his answer that the company was receiving “backing of several million dollars”, in what form was the backing given and by whom was it given?

(3) Will he make public the terms of the franchise agreement?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) I repeat again for the information of the honourable member, who apparently finds great difficulty in understanding the situation, that the Government has encouraged The Queensland Cement & Lime Co. Ltd. to proceed with construction of the Gladstone clinker project, as this is one in which a Queensland company established in this State for over 60 years will utilise Queensland resources to manufacture in Queensland a product essential to Queensland's continuing development and to provide increased employment opportunities for Queenslanders. I assume that this accords with the honourable member's basic philosophy as a supporter of our free enterprise objectives.

The funding programme for this approximately \$98,000,000 project is somewhat complex covering equity and loan financing involving a number of sources. The basic details are set out in a notice issued to shareholders recently by the chairman of the company. I am arranging to obtain a copy of this notice and will forward it to the honourable member in due course.

With regard to the honourable member's reference to the franchise agreement, I would suggest that there could be no more public document than the Queensland Cement & Lime Company Limited Agreement Act of 1977.

5. MT. SURPRISE STATE SCHOOL

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

(1) Has a decision been made by his departmental officers on the priority of work that is overdue at the Mt. Surprise State School?

(2) When is the existing building to be replaced and what is the size of the replacement unit in terms of the number of rooms it will contain?

(3) With reference to the existing building (a) what work is to be effected in the meantime, (b) are floor coverings to be laid in the existing schoolroom, (c) are the verandas to be enclosed to provide additional rooms and (d) when will this work be carried out?

(4) Will consideration be given to the installation of a larger alternator and associated wiring to enable the single teacher's quarters to be connected to mains power?

(5) Is he aware that there is a high degree of dissatisfaction amongst parents in the Mt. Surprise area with the condition of the school, and are the complaints well founded?

Answers:—

(1 & 2) The needs of the Mt. Surprise State School have received very careful consideration. In its forward planning, my department has noted the provision of a replacement building of two teaching spaces in modular construction on very high priority. The provision of this building falls within the province of my colleague the Honourable the Minister for Works and Housing, and is dependent on the funds available to my department for such work.

(3) The maintenance works referred to in the honourable member's question are matters for consideration of my colleague the Honourable the Minister for Works and Housing.

(4) The matter of a larger capacity alternator for the school and the possible connection to the single teacher's quarters is receiving consideration at present.

(5) I am aware of concerns expressed to me and to officers of my department. The honourable member is assured that all the matters raised are receiving close and careful attention.

6. RAILWAY RUNNING STAFF
ACCOMMODATION, FORSAYTH

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

(1) Have any arrangements been made to improve the Railway Department's running staff accommodation at Forsayth?

(2) Will he authorise the replacement with a new modular unit of the aging, prefabricated building that forms part of this accommodation, having in mind in particular the increased usage of the accommodation with the greater cattle throughput at the railhead and the quite rigorous winter experienced in the area?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) The provision of new trainmen's quarters at centres throughout the State is being progressively undertaken on the basis of priorities determined in consultation with the relevant unions, and there is no proposal under consideration at present for the replacement of the quarters at Forsayth. Arrangements are being made, however, for the assistant maintenance engineer, Cairns, who will be

visiting Forsayth this week, to inspect the quarters with a view to determining the need for the carrying out of repairs to the existing facilities.

7. UNLOADING RAMP, MT. SURPRISE
CATTLE-HOLDING YARDS

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

(1) Has his attention or the attention of his departmental officers been drawn to the condition of the cattle-unloading ramp at the Mt. Surprise departmental holding yards?

(2) Will he have the height of the ramp increased to bring it closer to the floor heights of modern cattle road transports?

(3) Will the proposed ramp incorporate an improved design that will prevent beasts from losing their footing during the unloading process, thus causing serious injury to cattle to the extent, on occasions, of cattle having to be destroyed?

(4) If a new ramp cannot be provided as a matter of urgency, will the existing ramp be modified to eliminate the hazard to beasts being unloaded?

Answers:—

(1) No.

(2 to 4) The assistant maintenance engineer, Cairns, will inspect the ramp on the occasion of his visit to Mt. Surprise this week, and the matters raised by the honourable member will receive further consideration in the light of that officer's report.

FORM OF QUESTIONS

Mr. GLASSON (Gregory) proceeding to give notice of a question—

Mr. ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is now giving advice. I think he has asked the question.

Mr. INNES (Sherwood) proceeding to give notice of a question—

Mr. ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is now giving information. He will confine himself to the question.

ORDER IN CHAMBER

Mr. M. D. HOOPER (Townsville West) having given notice of a question—

Mr. Jones: Thanks, mate.

Mr. M. D. HOOPER: Well, the honourable member is not doing much for Green Island.

Mr. ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Jones: You want to look back a few years. On that, they have been going only since 1975. Get back to your electorate.

Mr. ACTING SPEAKER: Order! If the honourable member for Cairns does not behave himself, he will be returning to his electorate, and prematurely.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

PARLIAMENTARY PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Mr. CASEY: In directing a question to the Deputy Premier and Treasurer, I refer to his sudden support, as reported in "The Courier-Mail" of 18 April, for Opposition recommendations for a joint parliamentary public accounts committee and the Premier's subsequent outright rejection of the proposal, and now ask: What differences exist in the old parliamentary system that would make this committee inoperable in comparison with other Parliaments, for example, the Federal Parliament, where such a committee has been operating since 1913? In view of his statement in provincial media this morning that he has the numbers against him, and on his own admission of the desirability of a parliamentary public accounts committee and that he believes it is a desirable measure, will he undertake to rectify this situation through his own support and that of at least 18 of his Liberal colleagues for a resolution in this Parliament, which I am prepared to move, to establish such a committee?

Dr EDWARDS: In reply to the last part of the honourable member's question, the answer is bluntly "no". On no occasion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would the Liberal Party support such a proposal made by the Labor Party.

I wish to make my position quite clear in regard to this matter. As I indicated yesterday, and as I have stated on a number of other occasions, the Leader of the Opposition has been sleeping on many occasions and has been unaware of what is going on. On this occasion he has been dreaming some of the situations that he has mentioned this morning. The position is that, as part of my responsibility as a member of Parliament, I have put forward, as discussed with the Premier on a number of occasions, some suggestions for consideration by Government members and by Cabinet relative to aspects of proposals for this Parliament that could be of benefit in some form or other. It is inevitable in such situations that some of the proposals will not be accepted by all, or some, members of the Cabinet or the Government, and this is one such proposal.

For the Leader of the Opposition to say that it is his idea is typical of his arrogance and his irresponsibility. Members of this Assembly—for example, Mr. Acting Speaker and the honourable member for Landsborough—have been promoting this view for years. This is the first occasion on which I have ever heard the Leader of the Opposition

promote such a view. For him to claim credit for it is indicative of his dishonesty in this House.

PROPOSED BRISBANE AREA WATER BOARD

Mr. GUNN: I preface my question to the Minister for Local Government and Main Roads by pointing out that recently, at a Brisbane City Council meeting, Mr. Thorley, the town clerk, made what could be described as a political statement on the proposed area water board, and that at the same meeting the Lord Mayor estimated that the Brisbane City Council could lose \$7,000,000 a year in revenue when the water board is formed. I now ask: Is it usual for town or shire clerks to become involved in political issues, and does the Lord Mayor's statement mean that residents of Brisbane and surrounding areas have been ripped off by the city council in water charges?

Mr. HINZE: The honourable member represents one of the regions in which there are local authorities that would be interested in this proposal, and I say to him that it is irregular for the town clerk to become involved as Mr. Thorley did at the inaugural meeting. As I said publicly yesterday, he would be well advised to leave politics to the politicians; let us scrap it out. However, as he has seen fit to come forward with erroneous suggestions to the ratepayers of Brisbane, he can be taken to task over the figures that he used. He gives the people of Brisbane the impression that some manipulation of the figures has been going on and that there is cause for concern. If that is so, possibly the quicker the water board is set up, the better. I do not intend now to take up the time of the House by replying to Mr. Thorley other than to say that most of the statements that he made about the proposed water board are incorrect.

The Government of Queensland has no intention of taking over the control of water reticulation in the city of Brisbane, but it does intend to give some protection to the local authorities that are contiguous to the city of Brisbane and that apparently do have some justification, because of these erroneous statements, for believing that they may be ripped off.

ELECTORAL REDISTRIBUTION

Mr. LESTER: I ask the Premier: Has he heard of moves by the A.L.P. to have an electoral redistribution in this great State of ours? Does he see such a move as a sell-out of country areas to the city areas? Will he ensure that country areas continue to get fair representation based on area and distance, as is the case at present?

Mr. ACTING SPEAKER: Order! I intend to allow the Premier to answer the question. Because the last part of the question involves Government action, I shall not intrude on his right. However, I should remind the

House that the Premier is not answerable for statements or actions by the Australian Labor Party or any party extraneous to this State Parliament.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: It would be a very retrograde step if the suggested or publicised policy of the Labor Party on redistribution were allowed to take effect. The Labor Party has always refused to acknowledge the important role that the Inland plays in the whole economy of this State and, indeed, this nation. That failure has been demonstrated on many occasions—for instance, by opposition to the abolition of death duties and gift duties, by the way in which the Federal A.L.P. treated the Inland on air service subsidies, and by the wiping off of tax concessions and benefits that had previously been granted.

I do not think any Inland people would for one moment have any confidence in a suggested electoral distribution by the Labor Party. Those people know the attitude of the Labor Party towards them and the action that party has taken over a long period of time to disregard and indeed harm the people of the Inland area of this State, who play such a vital role. However, I can assure the honourable member that the A.L.P. will be the Opposition for a long time, so he does not need to worry.

ESCAPE OF FERAL PIGS FROM TOOWOOMBA RAILWAY YARDS

Mr. WARNER: I ask the Minister for Primary Industries: As he is aware that 110 feral pigs escaped from railway yards at Harristown, Toowoomba, would he advise me why the pigs were consigned to the Toowoomba abattoir and for what market they were to be slaughtered? What action has been taken to see that this type of incident does not happen again?

Mr. SULLIVAN: The reason for the pigs being consigned to the Toowoomba Public Abattoir is that a private company has been successful in getting a permit from the Commonwealth for the export of feral pigs as game. They are not regarded as stock under the Stock Act. There is a market for game, including feral pigs, in West Germany. This has been tested and has proved to be very satisfactory. The company has been given another permit for the export of more feral pigs. They are very severely inspected both by Commonwealth Inspectors and by my own departmental inspectors. If there is any sign of any disease, the pigs are put straight into the digester and used for the manufacture of fertiliser.

I should say that farmers and graziers would welcome the development of this market because it gives an incentive to people to go out and catch wild pigs and, in that way, get rid of them. This is what the graziers and farmers want.

The problem is transport. Handling domestic pigs is pretty difficult at the best of times because they are peculiar animals. I have done some of it myself and, from my experience, the only way to handle the wild pig is to grab him by the tail and get his back legs off the ground. Anything can then be done with him.

I do not condemn the railway workers for what happens. As I said, domestic pigs are tough to handle but wild, feral pigs have no brains at all. When 110 of them are being moved from one pen to another, they run blindly, head over heels and charge at the fellows who are trying to handle them.

I am quite sure that the Minister for Transport has handled a pig or two in his day and I imagine that he would agree with my suggestion that if there is not a yard with a race to unload them, they should be loaded direct from the railway trucks to the transport trucks and taken direct to the meatworks where they can be put into pens and, from there, be put straight in for slaughter.

BIKEWAYS

Mr. M. D. HOOPER: I direct a question to the Minister for Local Government and Main Roads. As he has made statements in previous months that he is going to introduce legislation providing for cyclists to have right of way on bikeways on Queensland roads, can he advise this House what progress has been made towards the introduction of such legislation?

Mr. HINZE: I know that the honourable member has a particular problem with this matter at some of the secondary schools in his area, because of the number of pupils attending the schools. I have inspected the sites in the Townsville area and also on the Gold Coast, as the member for Southport has referred the same matter to me. The subject is under investigation by departmental officers. It is Government policy that, as a safety measure, we should provide bikeways throughout the State for children attending high schools. It is the intention of the department and the Government to make funds available for bikeways in this State as quickly as possible.

SURPLUS RAILWAY LAND, MAREEBA

Mr. TENNI: I ask the Minister for Transport: Would he please advise what action his department is taking in making surplus railway land available, at a reasonable rent, to the Mareeba Shire Council for off-street parking, keeping in mind that no revenue will be gained from this land by the Mareeba Shire Council?

Mr. TOMKINS: I advise the honourable member that we are having a good look at this project. I know very well that over the years a lot of railway land in Mareeba has been used for business purposes, but I also know that there is a lot of land available there. A representation has been made and we will look into it and advise the honourable member in due course.

GERMAN TRADE DELEGATION

Mr. INNES: I direct a question to the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. Recently a large and very influential German trade group composed of Government officers and diverse industrial and finance interests came to Queensland as part of a co-ordinated drive to increase that country's overseas investments from \$25 billion to \$50 billion. As I understand that delegation was not interested in purchasing Queensland ores, what was that trade delegation interested in, and are any major projects likely to eventuate?

Dr. EDWARDS: It is true that the top-level German delegation that came to Australia consisted of members of banking institutions, industrial development people and people associated with industry generally in that country. The Minister for Industry and Administrative Services and I, on behalf of the Premier, spent a great deal of time with the delegation and we were able to indicate to them the development potential of Queensland and the way in which we believed that Queensland is progressing. As a result of our discussions, the members of the delegation expressed their great confidence in Queensland's future, and I believe that the visit is the start of a great relationship with that country that will benefit this State.

OVERSEAS TRIP BY DEPUTY PREMIER AND TREASURER

Mr. INNES: I ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer: Was any interest manifested during his overseas trip in any industrial or secondary industry development in the State of Queensland?

Dr. EDWARDS: It is true that during our overseas visits, particularly in New York and London, tremendous interest in Queensland and Australia was expressed by many organisations. I indicated in an answer to a question in this House a few days ago that the credit rating of this nation is extremely high because of the developmental, fiscal and economic policies of the Federal Government. Our itinerary was an extremely busy one, but we did manage to have discussions with various financial and insurance groups, who indicated their interest in setting up industries in this nation. We received similar requests on many occasions from many different companies.

We believe that Australia, particularly Queensland, is a country with great potential to supply world markets. We believe that the

policies of this Government as well as those of the Federal Government have played a great part in creating great interest among overseas companies in investing here. I look forward to further development in our State. Our policies do everything to encourage the development of natural resources as well as secondary industries. One of the matters that was mentioned to us was the export drive promoted by the Federal Government and endorsed by the Queensland Government. This is a most important campaign because, if we can get moving in this nation the manufacturing industries that are labour-intensive, the benefits to the economy of the nation will be tremendous.

I thank the honourable member for his interest in the results of this overseas trip. I can assure him that our efforts will result in benefits to this State.

RETIREMENT OF CARTOONIST McCRAE

Mr. ROW: I ask the Premier: Did he read in today's "Courier-Mail" the announcement of the retirement of cartoonist Mr. McCrae, wherein it was implied that Mr. McCrae may no longer be able to enjoy the privilege of Queensland citizens? Will he clarify the position concerning Mr. McCrae's future if he remains in Queensland as against living in southern States, the future prospects of his successor in Queensland, indeed, the freedom of the Press in Queensland? Will he also tell the House how much he has appreciated the valuable publicity given to him by the media in general?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I saw the cartoon and the reference, as I understand it, to Mr. McCrae's retirement to New South Wales. That is Mr. McCrae's business. As the honourable member suggested, I would like to thank him very much for all the publicity he has given me and the Government over the years. He did that very well indeed. I am sure that many people will miss his cartoons. He had a way of caricaturing people and, at the same time, giving them some quite good publicity.

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

FORESTRY ACT AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. N. T. E. HEWITT (Auburn—Minister for Lands, Forestry and Water Resources) (12.9 p.m.): I move—

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

When I introduced this Bill, I particularly made the point that the amendments proposed dealt only with two minor principles of the Forestry Act. These concern the composition and operation of the two timber research and development advisory councils

in Queensland and the placement of demands for recovery of stumpage, damage to the forest and costs of investigation in cases where forest products or quarry material have been interfered with on Crown areas without authority.

While many of the points raised by honourable members at the introductory stage were not relevant to the actual provisions of the Bill, it was nevertheless most pleasing to me to note the interest and general support for the operations of the Department of Forestry in this State. As the member for Maryborough pointed out, the department has to ensure that sound long-term planning and management practices are adopted for our forests if we are to be able to meet the timber needs of future generations. The very fact that State forest areas, which in some cases have been managed and harvested for up to 100 years, are still being sought by environmentalists for reservation as national parks clearly indicates just how effectively and responsibly our forest management has been handled by the department to maintain them in such a desirable condition.

While the present operation of the Department of Forestry is largely oriented towards the establishment of new softwood plantations, it does not overlook the need also to maintain and protect the already existing native forests. In many of these areas, non-timber uses are becoming increasingly important and, in some of them, these other uses may in time equal or even exceed the timber values. The member for Cooroora focused attention on this aspect and mentioned that, in his area, there are some excellent examples of how, under wise multiple-use forest management, recreational and other uses of forests can be successfully integrated with normal, regulated timber production to meet both community needs.

In this way, wise forest management not only produces timber but also can very effectively complement the national park concept by also providing nature-oriented recreation. It certainly should not be portrayed as a form of land use totally opposed to national parks, as is suggested by some radical conservationist groups in the community. State forests can, and do in fact, help to reduce the great public pressures on our national parks, while still fulfilling their major role of supporting our vital timber industry. I think that a greater public awareness of the important multiple-use role that our forests can play in this regard would reduce much of the agitation for large forested areas to be removed entirely from timber production for recreational purposes. In short, recreation and production forestry are entirely compatible on State forests.

Both the honourable member for Lytton and the honourable member for Maryborough expressed considerable concern at the decision of the Commonwealth Government to cease providing financial assistance to the States for expanded softwood planting programmes.

However, I can assure honourable members that, as a Government we, and all the other States, did all that we could to press for a continuation of this aid, and there is still a hope that some modified form of assistance may perhaps be provided for purchase of unused farm land for plantation purposes. Meanwhile I am sure that honourable members will have noted that State funds, coupled with some streamlining of its activities, have allowed the Department of Forestry to maintain a commendably high rate of planting towards meeting our future timber needs.

Turning now to the provisions of the Bill, let me say again that the proposals included for the future operation of the timber advisory councils are fully supported by the timber industry throughout the State. They will allow these councils to continue to effectively represent the joint views of the industry and the Department of Forestry in the areas of council concern. By providing for industry nomination of persons for consideration for appointment as chairmen and members of the councils, and by also providing opportunity for industry consultation with the Conservator of Forests in regard to the level of funding of the councils, the Bill ensures continued close industry participation in their operation.

As I mentioned in the earlier debate, the Bill also corrects an earlier weakness in the Forestry Act in relation to the placing of demands on people who have interfered with forest products, without authority, on Crown areas.

There is already provision in the Act to institute legal proceedings against either the person who himself interferes with forest products or against any other person who causes that interference. If for any reason it is decided not to proceed legally against an offender, action by way of a demand for payment may be taken to recover the stumpage value of the forest products interfered with, and to seek recompense for any damage to the forest and the costs of investigation.

As the Act now stands, such a demand can be placed only on the person who actually did the interfering, whereas it often transpires that such person was working on instructions or information given by another person.

Mr. Burns: So the boss will be sued now?

Mr. N. T. E. HEWITT: That is right.

Thus, at the moment, the department is sometimes placed in a position where it cannot proceed against the real instigator of the misdemeanour. The Bill will make it possible to place a demand for payment of lost stumpage, etc., on either the person who it has been established actually did the interfering or, if more appropriate, upon some other person who is indirectly responsible for the interference. I am sure that members will agree that this is a much more satisfactory arrangement.

I commend the provisions of the Bill to the House.

Mr. BURNS (Lytton) (12.14 p.m.): It is true, as the Minister said, that there does not appear to be any opposition from the timber industry to the legislation before the House today. In 1970 the Timber Research and Development Advisory Council of South and Central Queensland and the Timber Research and Development Advisory Council of North Queensland were established by the Government as two separate councils. At that time the composition of their membership was laid down and the appropriate section of the Act is being altered today.

The councils are required to advise the Minister for Lands, Forestry and Water Resources on activities associated with timber promotion, merchandising, product development, industry education and training, safety and working conditions, quality control, production costs and general research on matters affecting the timber manufacturing industry. I appreciate receiving the material sent out by the councils. I think most members would receive the material sent out by them and other people in the timber industry to keep us informed of the improvements that have been made and the research that has been carried out.

I was interested to read of these bodies and I started to look through the records to see exactly what advice they had given to the Minister.

I went back to 1975 and read an article that referred to Mr. Trist, the chairman of the Timber Research and Development Advisory Council, presenting a submission on behalf of the Queensland Timber Board to the Fraser Island Environmental Inquiry. He put forward the proposal that sand-mining was virtually incompatible with logging on Fraser Island. He said he would be reluctant to see any mining in forestry areas on the island, and he was strongly opposed to the establishment of mining sites in the middle of the island.

I am not raising the question of Fraser Island; the point I am making relates to the value to the industry of the Act and the establishment of the councils, which are able, on behalf of the industry, to make submissions to an inquiry of that type in an effort to protect the hardwood industry, in which Fraser Island plays a major role.

I then had a look at the Bill itself. It also provides for two bodies, one in south and central Queensland, the other in north Queensland. I have discovered that the Timber Research and Development Advisory Council of North Queensland officers have done quite a considerable amount of work in relation to veneers and the rain forests in the North. They make the point that tropical timbers, for which the Far North is justly famous, are, for the most part, extracted from only half of the 1,500,000 acres of State rain forest and that the remaining timber is either unsuitable for economic production or must be retained to prevent erosion of steep slopes, etc.

So those officers can be helpful not only to their own industry, but also to those of us who are interested in the preservation of rain forests.

It is interesting to read of the proposals they put forward in relation to veneers, in which they were trying to maximise the use of timber. Research is also going ahead on the use of lesser-known and smaller-sized species. Veneers could be a means of obtaining the maximum use from a tree, including the branches. The council and the industry want to use a higher percentage of the log than is presently obtained through sawmilling.

We find that the export demand for fine veneers comes from Japan, England and Germany. Even Australia consumption now exceeds 300,000,000 sq. ft. a year. So the active timber research carried out by this body and the Commonwealth Government at Atherton as well as by other people interested in the industry has helped our export earnings, and on it they are to be congratulated.

I am pleased to see the involvement of the Timber Research and Development Advisory Council in the promotion of Timber Week. As someone who is interested in the preservation of the heritage of this State, I am pleased to read in the last edition of the document published by the Tourist Bureau about this promotion and, in addition, the fact that even a steam-driven sawmill will be on display amongst other pioneer relics at Dunmore Park outside Dalby on 5 and 6 May.

Timber Week will be held from 4 to 10 June. I think most of us would have received an invitation to the displays of new furniture that must also play a part in the drive to promote the use of timber. I must congratulate the Minister and the Department of Forestry on the department's recreational activities, such as "Drives through the Forest", which have been promoted for some time now.

The Minister mentioned the recreation use of our forests, and that brings me to the Bill before us today. The Bill states that the Conservator of Forests may demand payment of "the value of such products or quarry material; the value of the damage to the forest and any property vested in the Conservator of Forests occasioned by the contravention of the Act; and the cost and expense of the investigation by or on behalf of the Conservator of Forests of the contravention."

In other words, the amendment says that a person can be prosecuted if he goes into a forest and damages it, or if he goes into a forest without permission and takes quarry material, tree ferns, staghorns, elkhorns and other flora of our State that should be protected.

It is time we had a very close look at the way in which the marketing of some of the ferns from our forests is allowed. I

refer to tree ferns, staghorns and elkhorns. We see people at the side of the road selling these plants, which have been taken by them out of a forest. In country areas we see large quantities of these plants being sold from trucks on the side of the road. There needs to be some regulation covering the marketing of these plants.

I am a keen gardener, and I know that, when I go to buy a fern in New South Wales, I find on the top of the fern itself or on the piece of material on which the fern is growing a tag with a number. It is easy for an inspector to check to see whether that fern has been taken from a forest by a responsible person in accordance with the ordinances. This matter is important because of the number of tree ferns and native plants that are being sold and the interest that is being shown in gardening today. Just about every second suburb of Brisbane has a nursery, and large quantities of pot plants and native ferns and bushes are on sale at the side of roads and at every trash and treasure market, fete, or second-hand stall.

I do not know whether honourable members are aware that most of the flora that is sold in this way is protected under the Native Plants Protection Act, which was originally introduced in 1930. I suppose that it has been amended on a number of occasions since then.

If one looks at that Act one sees that just about every form of maiden hair fern is protected. It states—

“The plants listed may not be picked on any Crown land, State Forest, National Park, public park, road or on land dedicated or reserved for public purposes.”

It then deals with private land. It also refers to bird's nest fern, or crow's nest fern as we used to call it. Dozens and dozens of these plants are on display or for sale at any fernery or nursery in the community. If one wants to see native ferns being properly propagated and looked after, one only need go to the husband and wife team at Bardon, who grow them from seeds that are collected in the area. They also collect them from our forests. They are responsible, sensible protectors of our native plants.

The particular amendment that I have mentioned refers to the position where someone does not apply for permission to take any goods from a forest. It really covers anything, because it states—

“Where any forest products are or any quarry material is got, ringbarked, destroyed, damaged, used, marked or in any way interfered with in contravention of this Act the Conservator of Forests may demand payment of—”

Then it goes on to spell out the specific payments that he can demand, to which I referred earlier. I shall read it again—

“(a) the value of such forest products or quarry material;

(b) the value of the damage to the forest and any property vested in the Conservator of Forests occasioned by the contravention; and

(c) the cost and expense of the investigation by or on behalf of the Conservator of Forests of the contravention,

in such amount or amounts as the Conservator of Forests determines, from the person who actually committed the contravention of this Act or, where the contravention has occurred by reason of any instruction or information given by any other person, from that other person.”

As the Minister said, in future the boss also will be able to be prosecuted.

The next provision is the one to which I wish to draw attention. It states—

“Upon payment to the Conservator of Forests by the person upon whom such demand is made of the amount or amounts so demanded the Conservator of Forests may, in his discretion, allow such person to gather and remove the whole or any part of the forest products or quarry material in relation to which the contravention of this Act occurred and to retain the same.”

Say I went to Mt. Nebo or into some of our forest parks and took out every staghorn, every elkhorn and every tree fern. If I were caught as I came out, the officer could say to me, “I determine that the levy will be X amount of dollars, and now you can take the ferns.” What is the use of applying for a permit? That officer could say to me, “I can levy you for the amount or amounts that the Conservator of Forests determines.” He could say that to the person who actually commits the crime. He could say, “This is how much they are worth. You pay me the money and then you can have the goods.” That is crazy and stupid.

The same applies to quarrying. In fact, the argument that I put forward recently relative to the Water Act also applies in this case. Too many Acts have conflicting provisions that confuse people. If a person is quarrying from a stream, he should be governed by the Water Act. Of course, in a forest, a person may be quarrying from land sources. He may go in there, take a load of gravel and be on his way out. The representative of the Conservator of Forests in that area can make up his mind to let the person concerned take the material in contravention of the Act as long as he pays the money. In my opinion, that is not right. That is the way in which I read the clause. If the Minister can show me that it means something different, I will stand corrected.

The clause as it stands worries me. I will read it again—

“Upon payment to the Conservator of Forests by the person upon whom such demand is made . . .”

that is, the person who has illegally gone into the forest and taken the goods—

“. . . of the amount or amounts so demanded the Conservator of Forests may, in his discretion, allow such person to gather and remove the whole or any part of the forest products or quarry material in relation to which the contravention of this Act occurred and to retain the same.”

So there I am without a permit, and I go into the forest and take all the stag-horns, all the elkhorns, and all the tree ferns. Because I am interested in ferns, probably I would be taking those; but someone in the quarrying industry may be taking quarry material, or someone in the timber industry may be taking trees. You can imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what someone could take in contravention of the Act. Having done that and loaded them, I am caught. The representative of the Conservator of Forests says to me. “That is the value of the damage that you have done by taking them. You pay that, then you can take them.” That does not seem to me to be the way in which the Act should be implemented.

Mr. N. T. E. Hewitt: Sometimes we try to use a little bit of common sense. Apparently your attitude is that we should charge them even if it is only a small amount.

Mr. BURNS: I am not saying that you should charge them. In effect, what the Minister is saying is that if I go down the street and steal a dozen apples and a policeman comes along and I pay him for the apples, he should say, “That is all right. Off you go with your apples.”

Mr. N. T. E. Hewitt: I think the honourable member will agree that that is a little different from a State forest, which may consist of 30,000 or 40,000 acres. A person might not even realise that it is a State forest.

Mr. BURNS: That is a particular form of defence. I do not think that the Minister’s argument stands up. What he is saying is that if I do not know that it is a State forest and I go in and take the ferns, I should be let off. Under those circumstances, I should imagine that I would be let off because I did not know that it was a State forest, but I do not believe that I should keep the ferns.

Mr. Moore: It may be only one.

Mr. BURNS: If it is only one, that is a simple case. I say to the honourable member for Windsor that we do not introduce Acts of Parliament to cover one fern. We introduce amending Bills to cover problems that have been experienced. In this instance, there must have been some problems, otherwise the Minister would not be altering this section. We have not been told what the problems are, and the case I am putting forward is that it seems to be an unreasonable way of going about it.

Of course, it could be argued that it is reasonable to say to a fellow, “You have done the wrong thing. We will smack you on the hand and you can go home.” That is all right. But in this instance we are writing in a provision that says, “As long as the Conservator of Forests says that it is O.K. and you have paid the money, you can take the lot.” The clause does not provide that it applies only to small cases or misdemeanours or where a person does not know that it is a State forest. The Conservator of Forests is given a discretion to make the determination. I should like a better explanation of that than the one the Minister has given.

Mr. Moore: It is sensible that it is there.

Mr. BURNS: If the honourable member thinks it is sensible that it is there, he can vote for it; but I do not intend to vote for it.

Hon. N. T. E. HEWITT (Auburn—Minister for Lands, Forestry and Water Resources) (12.29 p.m.), in reply: First, I thank the honourable member for Lytton for most parts of his contribution.

He mentioned the marking of plants. Consideration will be given to that, and if another State has a better system than the one operating in Queensland, I hope that the department will be big enough to do something about it.

He referred also to the powers under the Act. All I can say to him is that the powers remain as they were under the Act. My advice is that they have not been changed. All in all, I think that the amendments to the Act are desirable. If T.R.A.D.A.C. now wants one chairman for the whole of Queensland instead of one for South and Central Queensland and one for North Queensland, that is the way it should be.

The honourable member for Lytton said that he thinks the idea of making information available to the people of Queensland by T.R.A.D.A.C. is a good one. I agree with him. Much of the credit for this idea must go to Mr. Alan Trist, the former Conservator of Forests, who departs from the scene on 30 June this year. As I mentioned earlier, although both area councils were quite happy to have Alan Trist as their chairman, they now want the latitude that this Bill provides. I believe it is a move in the right direction.

Finally, I would like to pay a tribute to Alan Trist for his contribution as both Conservator of Forests and chairman of T.R.A.D.A.C. of South and Central Queensland and North Queensland.

Motion (Mr. Hewitt) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

(Mr Miller, Ithaca, in the chair)

Clauses 1 to 8, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

Bill, on motion of Mr. Hewitt, by leave, read a third time.

WATER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. N. T. E. HEWITT (Auburn—Minister for Lands, Forestry and Water Resources) (12.32 p.m.): I move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

My introductory speech sought to explain the purposes of the Bill and in broad outline how the amendments were proposed to be made.

As then stated, the Bill deals with three matters: Defining responsibility for control of water conservation and certain other works in tidal sections of rivers, creeks and streams; clarifying the existing section 11 of the Act to ensure the licensing provisions apply to works within a watercourse, lake or spring; updating the penalty provisions of the Act.

I thank the honourable members for their contributions to the debate at the introductory stage. I was pleased to note that the proposals as outlined were generally agreed to be necessary and acceptable.

In opening this second-reading stage, I will respond to matters raised by members.

The member for Lytton spoke of the increasing complexity of legislation. I would point out that the Government in recent years has taken a number of steps to place responsibility for the management and development of our water resources under one authority.

The main purpose of this Bill is to define more clearly the point of control under the Harbours Act and the Water Act and to place responsibility for the control of works of water conservation in tidal streams under the one Act. That is the Water Act.

The member further referred to a problem affecting a group of landholders arising from the construction of a levee bank. The particular work referred to was required to be licensed under the Water Act and it is understood the matter has been satisfactorily resolved.

Similarly, this Bill introduces control over the construction or use of barrages. This, among other purposes, will prevent the actions of one landholder adversely affecting neighbouring land.

I thank the member for Maryborough for his support in the recognition of our water resources as one of our most valuable assets. He raised a query as to the situation following the construction of a dam, weir or barrage where the section upstream of the structure is capable of use by boats, particularly recreation vessels.

I would assure the member that for the control and allocation of supplies the stream above the structure is subject to the provisions of the Water Act and would not be deemed navigable in terms of the Harbours Act. The Marine Board, however, does continue to control matters such as allocation of areas for water-skiing and the control of power boats.

The member for Hinchinbrook drew attention to the Government's progress in respect of drainage and river improvement. In the past three years, four new drainage areas have been constituted, three are presently advertised for objection and some 20 schemes are under investigation. The member drew attention to the need for consultation between departments and by departments with local residents. He may be assured the Commissioner of Water Resources will co-operate fully with other departments both in the planning of works and in assisting in resolving problems.

The commissioner has established 17 district offices with a view to ensuring his staff become familiar with local problems and are available to obtain the benefit of local experience. In July 1977, because of the considerable demand for drainage schemes in the area, an office was opened in Innisfail.

The member for Isis drew attention to the progress made on the Bundaberg irrigation scheme. With the additional allocation of \$600,000 recently announced and Commonwealth assistance of \$950,000, we are again spending in excess of \$8,000,000 on the scheme this financial year and the end of 1979 will see the completion of the Phase 1 works.

The member also referred to the water supply for urban purposes in the city of Bundaberg and the adjoining local authority areas which will be drawn from the Burnett barrage. The arrangements for supply are being worked out with all three authorities and I am sure the agreement when finalised will be acceptable to all.

The problems faced by local authorities, river trusts and landholders, referred to by the member for Cairns, were indeed major influences in the preparation of the Bill. The Bill provides control in that section of tidal watercourses where neither the Harbours Act nor the Water Act have jurisdiction. It also introduces controls for the construction of barrages in the non-navigable section of tidal streams. I believe it will satisfactorily resolve the problems which have been of major concern.

The member for Cunningham raised the need for an overall assessment of the Condamine River area. Much work has, of course, been done and a further report on the area downstream to Cecil Plains is in the final stages. The commissioner has also recently advised the mayor of Dalby that a preliminary review of future water requirements and likely sources of supply for both

irrigation and urban purposes from the Condamine River between Cecil Plains and Chin-chilla will be undertaken in 1979-80.

I would assure the member that the Queensland Water Resources Commission is abreast of technology in respect of monitoring of streams. A number of telemarks (automatic stream height recorders) are installed along the Condamine. In terms of conjunctive use of surface and ground-water and in the recharge of ground-water supplies, the commission could well be the leading authority in Australia.

The member for Cook raised a number of matters of concern to his constituents. The provision of a water supply for Karumba is not really a matter which should come under my control. The Irrigation and Water Supply Commission did, however, construct two bores which have been of immeasurable benefit to the town. Further action in this matter is being examined by a committee responsible to the Co-ordinator-General.

I have had correspondence with the member on other matters raised concerning the Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation area. However, in respect of Price Creek, I would advise that the Queensland Water Resources Commission is continuing to examine possible work to improve the flow in the creek.

In supporting the Bill, the member for Lockyer drew attention to the fact that it provides control over certain existing works which, at the time of their construction, were not subject to approval by any law. He may be assured that this situation will receive very careful consideration should it be necessary to enforce action in respect of such a work. The powers are discretionary and will be exercised as a last resort. I do consider, and I feel members agree, that the powers are necessary to ensure that any existing and continuing problems can be definitely resolved in a manner fair and reasonable to all parties.

He further drew attention to the need for Government action in the allocation of water resources. As I stated in reply to the member for Lytton, the Government has taken a number of initiatives in respect of the co-ordination of responsibility for the assessment of our water resources and their development in the best interests of the State. One such action was the Water Resources Administration Act passed by the House in December last. The Commissioner of Water Resources is most conscious of his responsibilities for the planning, development and equitable distribution of the resources. I thank the member for his recognition of the assistance provided to the Lockyer Valley by the construction of four recharge weirs in the past seven years.

The member for Brisbane Central spoke of the progress made and the continuing effort by the Government in co-operation with the Commonwealth and Brisbane city in respect of Enoggera Creek and Kedron Brook problems. Some of the difficulties on

which the member spoke would relate to the filling of the flood plain rather than within a watercourse.

The member suggests that the form of control exercised in Victoria might have application in this State.

I would assure him that the Water Act vests the right to the use and control of water in the Crown. Dams constructed on a watercourse, irrespective of their purpose, are subject to the Act. The Bill in fact further consolidates the control of works for water conservation in the Water Act by extending its ambit for such purposes into tidal water.

It is opportune that the member for Toowoomba North has raised issues in respect of the effect a barrage might have on conservation and environmental aspects. The Bill will have advantages in this regard, as the construction of a barrage, presently not subject to any law, will require licensing under the Water Act.

The Act requires the commissioner in respect of an application for a licence to make inquiry into particular aspects and such other matters as he thinks fit. Also, the Act provides a means for objection by landholders upstream and downstream of the structure. I feel that these provisions will ensure that the matters referred to do receive adequate consideration.

The honourable member, along with others, raised the need for commencement of Leslie Dam Stage II, and alternative methods of financing water conservation and irrigation works. I assure him that Leslie Dam Stage II is not low on the Government priorities. The Government is continually examining ways and means for the provision of additional funds for the financing of works.

Finally, I refer to the comments of the honourable member for Windsor, and his support for the Bill. As he states, the legislation is necessary to ensure clarity of existing provisions and to provide equitable control in the tidal reaches. I support the honourable member in his concern for improvement of flow in Kedron Brook. These works are high on the Government's priorities for Commonwealth assistance, and in fact it is hoped that some funds may be available to commence the works this financial year.

In my response to members, I have again referred to the purposes of the Bill. The amendments to section 11 of the Act and the review and increase of penalties are virtually procedural matters, and do not alter the intent of the Act or any existing practice or procedure.

Members have evidenced their understanding of and the need for the defining of responsibility in tidal sections of rivers, creeks and streams. Our examination of this matter indicated the most appropriate action was to amend the Water Act.

One purely procedural matter to which I have not previously referred is the provision in clause 2 of the Bill to redefine the word "Commissioner" to refer to the "Commissioner of Water Resources", in keeping with the Water Resources Administration Act 1978 approved by this House in December last. That Act was proclaimed to commence on 12 March and I was very pleased to note right throughout the State the understanding of the purpose and acceptance of the concept of overall responsibility for our water resources. I trust these comments have adequately covered the purpose and intent of the Bill. I have much pleasure in commending the Bill to the House.

Mr. BURNS (Lytton) (12.43 p.m.): In the light of the failure of anyone interested to raise complaints about this Bill, which has now been before the House for some days, we have no objection to it. As long as provision is made in any legislation relating to dams, barrages, or anything else on a water-course, for objection by landholders, either upstream or downstream of the works, who could be adversely affected in any way by the works in the stream, river, creek or lake, as the case may be, it is acceptable. Obviously there is little or no objection from the public to this measure.

At the introductory stage I referred to the problems that people have in reading this Act and a large number of other laws passed by this Parliament. I looked today at the number of amendments to the Water Act that have been passed in the last few years. I have the Parliamentary Library's copy with me. When it is read along with the amendments that we are putting through today, it becomes very difficult to follow. I cannot understand how a farmer who spends his time milking his cows or cultivating his crops can understand exactly what the provisions mean. I wonder whether it is time that the National Party interests, in particular, in this House did something on behalf of people in the rural community by making Acts easier to obtain, and simpler in language and meaning.

Mr. N. T. E. Hewitt: You have my support on that.

Mr. BURNS: The point I make is that the farmer today has to hire an accountant or have a university degree to handle half of the paperwork that Governments demand of him.

I see that section 12, which we are amending today, was amended in 1972, 1973, 1975 and 1976. If somebody bought a copy of the Act a few years ago, he would have a bit of trouble today in understanding the law today.

Mr. N. T. E. Hewitt: At least it proves that I am an active Minister.

Mr. BURNS: I do not know whether that proves that the Minister is active. I suppose I could be difficult and say that

it shows he is incompetent, in that he has had to make so many amendments and has not yet solved the problems. However, I will be charitable and will not suggest that he is incompetent. We know the difficulties. We can go to the Parliamentary Library and use all of the available research facilities to try to follow all that has happened over the very short period of seven years. But the farmer has little or no assistance available or at his beck and call.

Mr. N. T. E. Hewitt: You would agree that a full consolidation of an Act is a major job? If you had been involved with the Land Act as I have been, you would realise that.

Mr. BURNS: That is right, so the Minister must realise how difficult it is for the fellow at the other end of the scale. And he is the person really affected by these Acts, rather than honourable members who make decisions on legislation. It is the man on the land, the person building the barrage or the dam, or the person whose land is affected adversely by those decisions who has the greatest difficulty. Then, as I say, we put him into the hands of the lawyers and that costs him a lot of money.

One of the problems I have in reading this legislation concerns the penalties. Section 7 of the Decimal Currency Act changed all references to money from sterling to dollars and cents, yet the First Schedule of the Bill omits amounts of "two pounds" and "ten pounds". Yet they do not appear in the existing Act, which shows dollars and cents. If a farmer had a copy of the amendments and tried to work them out, he would wonder why we are changing a £10 penalty to a \$200 penalty when, in essence, the Act does not now use the term "ten pounds". It was altered quite some time ago.

I also wonder how effective some of the penalties are. I can remember an incident in the Brisbane City Council area of responsibility. A sand-blasting plant was set up opposite a school. I rang the council and asked if these people had permission to do that. The officer from the council said, "No. The firm will be subject to a fine of \$100 for the first day and \$20 a day thereafter." I admit that those amounts could be wrong.

The point I am making is that once the inspector went out on the first day and decided that the operator had broken the law, the operator was subject to a \$100 fine. When the council was asked to send an inspector out on the second day, I was told, "The penalty will only be \$20 the second time. An inspector would have to go out and catch him each day and then we would have to take him to court or, if we did not take him to court, at least we would have to send the officer out each day. It is not worthwhile to do that when the penalty is only \$20".

Under this legislation, it would be the Water Resources Commission that would have to send an officer out to investigate and check each day and lodge a complaint that the man was continuing to breach the law. So it does not mean much to provide a \$100 fine for the first day and \$20 a day thereafter; it would be difficult to implement. The person involved would simply thumb his nose at the inspector.

A large number of penalties are being changed. Under the Water Act, reference is made to travelling stock. Today we are changing the penalties for the obstruction of travelling stock in getting to water and the power to ensure that stock travelling on the road are properly watered and cared for. That brings me to what is happening on our trains. I know that this is not really relevant to the Water Act, but it is relevant to the extent that the Water Act clearly provides penalties of hundreds of dollars if people obstruct cattle and stock in getting to the watering places that are provided along stock routes. The same sort of penalties should apply to some of our transport operators and those in the Railway Department who are failing to provide water or demand water for stock. I am sorry that the Minister for Transport is not in the House; he has some sympathy in this regard. The same sort of penalties should be written into the Railways Act or by-laws covering the transport of stock.

Section 52 of the Water Act provides a \$40 penalty, which is now being increased to \$100 and \$50 a day thereafter for—

“Any person who obstructs travelling stock in the lawful use of any public watering-place or in the use of any pasture or water to which such stock are lawfully entitled shall be liable to a penalty . . .”

Some of the penalties seem to be very light compared with, say, a fine of something like \$20 imposed on a driver for not wearing a seat belt in his car.

Mr. N. T. E. Hewitt: \$6.

Mr. BURNS: Is that all? Obviously the Minister has been caught. So there is a \$6 penalty for not wearing a seat belt, yet a person can be fined only \$50 for failing to allow excess water from an artesian bore to be used by his neighbours or distributed elsewhere. It seems to me that the penalty does not fit the crime. I think that can be said of penalties in many of the Bills that come before us.

As I said at the outset, we on this side of the House have no opposition to the Bill. I have circulated copies of it to as many people as possible. I have sent copies to people associated with irrigation in farming communities who are connected with the Labor Party and I have received no objections from those sources in the short time available to them. Under those circumstances, we will not oppose the Bill.

Hon. N. T. E. HEWITT (Auburn—Minister for Lands, Forestry and Water Resources) (12.51 p.m.), in reply: I thank the honourable member for Lytton for his comments. Naturally, as a person who lives in the bush and has a lot to do with country people, I have a lot of sympathy for them when they have to read many of our Acts. I wonder how they understand them. But they are written by legal experts, and I suppose they have to be good enough to stand up in court if they are challenged.

I think this Bill will generally be well received. As I said earlier, it has been introduced mainly because of problems with which the honourable member for Cairns has been associated. Naturally we do not like continually amending Acts, but if we find that an amendment is a necessity, I think it is the responsibility of a Minister to be big enough to say, “If we can improve it, we should try to do so.” That is what I have tried to do since becoming a Minister. If one looks back over the years, it becomes obvious that it is not easy to introduce ideal legislation. I mentioned the Land Act earlier. I looked through three speeches made by previous Lands Ministers (two Labor Ministers and one of my political colour), when introducing amendments to the Land Act and they all said that the Bill they were introducing would mean the end of the matter, that everything would be all right from there on. Yet we now see a hue and cry for a full consolidation of the Land Act in Queensland.

Mr. Burns: You aren't saying this is the last Water Act Amendment Bill?

Mr. N. T. E. HEWITT: No doubt there will be further amendments to the Water Act as and when we see a real need to amend it.

Motion (Mr. Hewitt) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

(Mr. Miller, Ithaca, in the chair)

Clauses 1 to 7, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

First Schedule—

Mr. BURNS (Lytton) (12.54 p.m.): During the second-reading debate I queried section 7 of the Decimal Currency Act and the fact that the Act now uses decimal currency terms. I would like the Minister to explain why the Bill refers to the omission of penalties expressed in pounds when the copy of the Act that I received from the Parliamentary Library has penalties expressed in decimal currency terms. Having passed the Decimal Currency Act in 1965, is it now necessary for us to still refer to pounds, shillings and pence?

Hon. N. T. E. HEWITT (Auburn—Minister for Lands, Forestry and Water Resources) (12.56 p.m.): My advice is that when the Decimal Currency Act was enacted, it contained a provision that amounts expressed in

pounds in Acts would automatically be altered to equivalent amounts in dollars. I shall try to obtain the information for the honourable member.

First Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Second Schedule, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

Bill, on motion of Mr. Hewitt, by leave, read a third time.

[Sitting suspended from 12.58 to 2.15 p.m.]

BREAD INDUSTRY COMMITTEE BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

(Mr. Row, Hinchinbrook, in the chair)

Hon. V. B. SULLIVAN (Condamine—Minister for Primary Industries) (2.16 p.m.): I move—

“That a Bill be introduced relating to the stabilization of the bread industry and to establish a bread industry committee and for connected purposes.”

Bread is, of course, a necessity and, as such, it is inevitable that its sale should be subject to fairly intense competition. Competition has, in fact, been the cause of a number of significant changes in the bread industry during the last three years. Manufacturers have modernised their plant and production methods, while retailers have responded with modern and sometimes aggressive marketing techniques; so much so that the warehouse technique of selling is now fairly commonplace. As a result of this competition, Brisbane has, for some time now, had the lowest average retail prices for bread of all the capital cities.

However, the progress in the industry has not been obtained without some cost. One of the effects of the changes has been a reduction in the number of small country bakers. These people have been unable to compete with the mass-production techniques of the larger bread manufacturers.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. I ask honourable members to please take their seats.

Mr. SULLIVAN: They are also unable to match the loss-leader-type selling of bread by large retailers. As a result, many smaller bakers have been unable to withstand this type of competition and, consequently, have had to close their bakeries.

This may be an inevitable part of progress, and it certainly has happened in other fields such as corner stores and butcher shops. However, I am most mindful of the role played by country bakers in our many smaller towns. They fulfil a vital role in local employment, and they generate a large

amount of business. Equally important is the role that they play in time of natural calamities, particularly floods.

The Bill follows substantially the recommendations of the committee that was set up to inquire into matters relating to trading practices in the bread industry. The three-member inquiry committee was appointed late last year, and it examined all aspects of the bread industry. It met nineteen times and received submissions from bread manufacturers, flour millers, bread vendors, consumer groups, individuals and retailers. Over 100 interested persons and organisations made their views known to the committee.

Mr. Houston: Was the report published? Has the public had a look at it?

Mr. SULLIVAN: It is not a public document.

I should like to pay tribute to the thoroughness and speediness with which the Committee carried out its investigations.

Mr. Houston: Why didn't you tell us about it?

Mr. SULLIVAN: I am telling the honourable member about it now, if he will sit and listen.

Mr. Houston: The public should have had the report weeks ago. It was paid for with public money.

Mr. SULLIVAN: I think that the joint Government parties in the coalition are capable of governing this State. I am now introducing legislation on which honourable members opposite are given an opportunity to put forward their points of view.

Experiences in other States were also examined closely. New South Wales and South Australia—strangely enough, they are both under Labor Governments—have price controls on bread but their prices are generally higher than those in Queensland.

Victoria introduced production zoning legislation ten years ago in an effort to prevent the decline in the number of small country bakers. Despite that legislation, the number of country bakers in Victoria has since declined by about a third. Western Australia has legislated for a ban on the return of unsold bread, but this does not appear to have been fully effective.

Overall, the measures taken in other States do not appear to have been too successful. Consequently, our committee of inquiry adopted a different approach when making its recommendations for the Queensland industry. It favoured the setting up of an industry committee to look after the industry. This Bill sets out to achieve just that.

The Bill seeks to establish a bread industry committee to supervise trading practices in the industry. The main function of the proposed committee will be to develop a code of practice for the industry. The

aim of the code will be to assure bread manufacturers a reasonable return for their labour and capital, while also ensuring a fair price for bread for consumers.

The committee will consist of six persons. There will be three representatives of bread manufacturers, one representative of bread retailers, a consumer representative, and an independent chairman.

Basically, the committee will be an industry body. That will be its real strength. The industry will be supervising itself and sorting out its own problems.

The main areas in which the committee will operate will cover general trading practices including such aspects as quantity discounts and returns of unsold bread. In short, it will establish a code of fair trading practices for the industry. It will also have power to develop criteria for the establishment of zoning of wholesale prices should it consider these necessary, and to mediate in disputes.

The committee may be called upon from time to time to advise the Minister on any matters affecting the bread industry which are referred to it.

As I indicated earlier, the basic aim of the Bill is to place the bread industry in a position where it can regulate itself.

I commend the Bill to the Committee.

Mr. YEWDAL (Rockhampton North) (2.24 p.m.): I listened very carefully to the outline of the Bill that the Minister has just presented. To my mind, the Government is being hypocritical; in one breath the Minister expresses concern for country bakers, and in the next breath he expresses concern that grocers and butchers are falling by the wayside. All of a sudden there is a need to protect bakers, but there is no need to protect grocers and butchers. That is why I say the Government is being hypocritical. If it is going to protect bakers, why should it not also similarly protect all other sections of the community? I think it is appropriate that I remind the Minister that "man does not live by bread alone"; he has other needs. There are many people in Queensland who are in need of assistance, including the grocer and butcher.

While the action of the Government in setting up a board might have some merit, the concept of a minimum price is not acceptable to the Opposition. Before and during my time, I cannot recall any Governments' showing any great concern for the little fellow. Governments have never shown concern for the grocer that I talk about. They are certainly not showing any concern for the thousands who are unemployed. They certainly do not show any concern when they oppose wage increases. But now they turn round and

suggest that there should be a minimum price for bread. They do not suggest a maximum price.

Over the years the Government has told small organisations, and even sections of rural industries, such as dairy farmers, either to get big or get out. For several years the Government has propounded that policy or theory. But it is not using the same argument with country bakers. Rather, it is saying, "We will sort something out." Opposition members are concerned primarily about the thousands of people who buy bread daily. Our main concern is the cost of bread to the community at large. We are not concerned about sectional areas or small country bakers, but the Government is.

For some time the Government has been floundering with the bread problem. I have here a document that probably all honourable members have read. It is a report on the bread industry in Queensland prepared in 1973 at the Government's behest. The first recommendation was in these terms—

"That the Government take steps to keep itself informed of any further concentration of ownership and control in the bread manufacturing industry, and that it be ready to adopt measures directed against monopolisation in the industry as soon as this seems likely to occur."

I emphasise that that was in 1973. We are now virtually in the middle of 1979 and only now has the Government decided to move. The second recommendation was as follows—

"That where it appears that predatory pricing and other devices are being used by a bread manufacturer established in one area to capture the market of a manufacturer established in another area, the Government bring the case to the attention of the Commonwealth Commissioner of Trade Practices."

Despite that recommendation in 1973, it has taken six years for the Government to bring this proposition before us today.

When I raised other matters relative to costs that affect the community, no member of the Government showed interest. At no time has the Government expressed concern about the cost of meat. It is still silent on the cost of meat and, in fact, is supporting the very high price of meat. We have heard nothing at all from the Government about this essential day-to-day commodity, nor do we hear Government members expressing concern about the cost of a host of other essential consumer goods. Every time Opposition members urge the Government to take action to protect the consumer in his day-to-day purchases, the Government says, "We do not interfere with private enterprise." Even this week the Premier's answer to a question indicated that the Government supports in total the private

enterprise system and that it will have no truck at all with any form of restriction or price control.

The action being taken today under this measure was prompted by the application of pressure to the Government, and the Government is now proposing a minimum price for bread to protect the small country bakers. The Government is making no move to protect the interests of consumers throughout the State.

Since 1976 the Government has adopted a non-intervention policy relative to the bread industry. Indeed, since 1967, the Government has followed a fairly definite policy by which it has left the bread industry alone. It did that despite the report to which I have referred. The Government ignored it completely.

Because of the publicity given to bread and the dissatisfaction in the bread industry in recent months, the Government now presents us with the proposition outlined by the Minister. I emphasise that this move is a result of the inquiry into the bread industry held by three Government members. I reiterate what was said by interjection, namely, that the report made by the three Government members is not available. Yesterday, I tried to get it from the Parliamentary Library. The Library contacted the Minister's department and was told that it was unavailable—that it is not in print. It is unreasonable that legislation should be brought before us based on a report to the Minister which is unavailable to Opposition members. It may be available to Ministers and Government back-benchers, but it is not available to Opposition members.

Because of a number of factors, the committee decided that it would look into a zoning system and a State authority to rationalise and control the industry. But, regrettably, the report is not available to us.

I looked at some prices for bread throughout Queensland. Knowing that the member for Peak Downs was interested in this matter, I obtained the price paid for a standard loaf of sliced, wrapped bread in the Clermont/Emerald/Biloela area. As at 30 September 1978, it was 64c in Clermont, 64c in Emerald and 61c in Rockhampton. I use that as a yardstick. There was a 3c difference between the price of bread in Rockhampton and the price in Emerald and Clermont. Further down the scale, sliced and wrapped milk bread in Clermont was 55c, while in Emerald it was 48c—a difference of 7c! The same bread in Rockhampton was 50c. That is certainly a disparity. I do not think the Government's scheme of a minimum price will have any real effect on that.

I presume that most members who have considered this matter would know that the Prices Justification Tribunal has jurisdiction over an area within 160 km of Brisbane. However, that does not apply to the rest of the State. Generally, manufacturers outside that area have been able to move prices at will—and that is very obvious today.

The Government has spoken about all sorts of ways to overcome this problem. In one instance—and it was quoted in the Press—the Government spoke about imposing some sort of tax on the cartage of bread. Isn't that hilarious! In the last few months this Government has reduced taxes by magnificent amounts. Only last week the Government abolished road tax, to the tune of \$5,000,000, because of the problem with the truckies. Yet the Government was saying that it was prepared to tax people for carrying bread! I cannot see the balance between those two actions. Why would a Government suggest taxing people carrying bread when it has already removed road tax from the trucking industry? To my mind it is crazy. That suggestion is in print as being the solution to the problem.

The Government says it is protecting the country baker against the large chain stores. I know that the principals involved in bread manufacturing have supported and are supporting the Government's move here today. Their reason is that the Government will provide a minimum price. Why wouldn't the bread industry support the Government? To my mind the Government should be looking at a maximum price, not a minimum price. By acting in that way, the Government would be protecting people who are buying bread from day to day. Some people with small bakehouses in the back country—in the bush areas—have had to sell their businesses and leave the industry. They have had to sell them for the very reason that Government members every day argue against any sort of control or restriction. They have done it because of private enterprise in the bread industry; yet the Government is saying today that it is going to do something about stopping that private industry from doing what it has been doing over a period of years, and is continuing to do. That is basically what they are saying.

Mr. Frawley: If you've got any brains, you wouldn't eat it. It's not good for you.

Mr. YEWDAL: That is another matter. The fact is that many, many people rely on it as a day-to-day commodity.

Mr. Davis: Many of the small bakeries have been taken over. They have been bought out.

Mr. YEWDAL: I am fully aware of the problems confronting small bakeries. The problem exists in my own area. I know that it has happened in Rockhampton and Yeppoon. Small bakeries are closing down. They are cutting back their production. They are getting back to cakes, biscuits and smaller products that they can sell to holidaymakers; but they are not baking bread.

Mr. Bertoni: Why?

Mr. YEWDAL: Because the flour-milling companies and the bread monopolies are taking over. They are out-pricing the small bakeries in this State. This is what they have done. The Government is bringing this

legislation forward to halt the move of private enterprise to monopolise the bread industry. However, if we on this side of the Chamber propose that the Government act similarly to stop other private industry and other monopoly, we get laughed off the floor. The reply is, "We don't believe in interfering with private enterprise." Government members are doing it now with bread. Let us see them do it with other products such as meat, vegetables and other goods. In the long term, the aim of the monopolies is to take over all food lines and other essential goods. It is part of the private enterprise system. Why not be honest about it? Government members should stand up and say, "We have reached a stalemate. We cannot do much about the bread industry unless we move in and give someone a minimum price and do something about the country bakers."

The fact of life is that the country baker has a short-term future. Government members have indicated that bakers are walking out of their bakehouses and selling out. Whatever the Government does, they will still be doing it because the monopolies will get around the legislation and it will probably have to be looked at again in a few months' time. They will find a loophole. They usually do find some method of buying out the bakers. They will beat the bakers in some way or other. That is the system.

I feel sorry for any individual baker who will have to close down in a small country town. But, as he is functioning now, he does not employ an apprentice. Because his volume is not enough, it is not worth his while. In many cases his product is not as hygienic—and I am not being critical of the country baker—because he cannot afford to install the modern machinery that is necessary if he is to equal the standard of hygiene of the bulk producer. He is simply trying to stave off the inevitable. In the short term he will be gone anyhow, so that all the Government is doing today is endeavouring to protect a fellow who will inevitably get out of the industry in a short time.

The Government should be looking at the bread problem overall and what it is costing the consumer. I know that certain people in the bread industry are trying to axe Jack the S'asher—that is only one example—because of what he is doing. I have a daughter living in a Brisbane suburb. Recently she bought three loaves of bread for \$1. In Rockhampton and other places people pay 60c a loaf.

I do not think that the Government is really getting to the crux of the matter. We hear all sorts of arguments from both sides of the House. As I said earlier, it has taken the Government six years to reach this point. The 1973 report was tabled and the Government did nothing about it. We oppose this measure, particularly on the basis of the minimum price.

Mr. LESTER (Peak Downs) (2.37 p.m.): I support and commend the Minister for his understanding in this matter. I support and commend those other honourable members who have expressed deep and dire concern for the small baker, particularly the country baker, and for employment generally in this State.

The Government is taking this step because it wants to bring some rationale and sanity into the bread industry, which suddenly seems to be going mad. Trading ethics are going by the board. The price war is continuing, with combines fighting for trade, and they are egged on by the big retailers. Who will be the loser in all of this? It will be the consumer in the long term. It will be the small baker and country baker. It will be the bread vendor. It will be the supply firms. I have all the evidence in the world to prove what I am saying.

Mr. Vaughan: Table it.

Mr. LESTER: I have already tabled one lot of information during the Matters of Public Interest debate. It is there if the honourable member desires to look at it.

How will this affect the Government? It will affect the Government in many ways. It will increase unemployment; it will be a blow to decentralisation; it will be a blow to private enterprise; and it will mean the cessation of opportunities for school-leavers to obtain work and in time become their own boss.

The main reason for the introduction of this Bill is that the Government is concerned about the demise of the small baker and the country baker. I say to this Committee—to each party and each member—"Let us not turn our back on the small man and walk away from him. Let us all do something to try to help him."

Over the years, this industry has provided stable employment for many Queenslanders, such as bakers, labourers, apprentices, shop assistants, office staff, bread vendors and those in the town service industries such as plumbers, butchers (whose meat is used in sausage rolls and pies), electricians, railway people, carriers, the supply firms based all over Australia who manufacture oven machinery, the flour mills and the ingredient suppliers. I have heaps and heaps of telegrams from all of these people.

Mr. Moore: Show us a few.

Mr. LESTER: The honourable member should surely know that they have already been tabled. But the moral of this story is that this activity meant stable, all-round decentralisation of industry, and there is not one member who at some stage or other has not said that he wants stable, all-round decentralisation of industry which would create employment all over this State.

Mr. Warburton: What happened to your free-enterprise system?

Mr. LESTER: Private enterprise is what I am talking about, and it is here in our policy. Before the onset of the present catastrophic unemployment, a young person had a choice. He could go out into the world and choose the job he wanted to do. My own employment history clearly demonstrates that point. I lost my father when I was a very young lad and my mother had to work in a hotel to put me through school. But, because there were opportunities for young people in those days, I was at least able to obtain a job, and although I am here today I have not forgotten my humble background. That is why I stand up for the little person.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. LESTER: It surprises me that Opposition members should try to take up my time. They would do much better to just sit back and listen.

In the late 1950s, there were in Brisbane over 50 bakeries spread throughout the suburbs baking nice, crusty bread. Nearly every town in this State had a bakery which contributed to employment and decentralisation. By the 1970s, most small city bakers had gone out of business, and it was then that we started to receive a large number of consumer complaints. I have here a file of letters written to the editor of "The Courier-Mail", the "Telegraph" and other newspapers.

Then we saw the introduction of hot-bread shops, which gave a personalised service. They got on the wrong side of the large combines, and this is when the rot really started to set in. The combines started to encourage excessive discounts and extended their operations into country areas. It would be reasonable to say that they dumped bread in country areas, and they increased their sales by very eloquently phrased sales promotion tactics.

Mr. Vaughan: That's business.

Mr. LESTER: That is the type of business that has put the little man—the man Opposition members claim to represent—out of business. In recent times some 28 bakeries throughout Queensland have closed. I ask leave, Mr. Row, to have incorporated in "Hansard" the names of these bakeries and the number of people they employed.

(Leave granted.)

BAKERIES CLOSED

	No. of Employees
Golden Bloom, Dalby	8
Regal Bakery, Dalby	7
Jandowae Bakery	3
Pugh's Bakery, Toowoomba ..	30
Morgan Bakery, Greenmount ..	3
Tortora's Bakery, Beaudesert ..	5
Regal Bakery, Gympie	7
Shorten's Bakery, Maryborough	5

Boneham's Bakery, Maryborough	6
Alexsen, Maryborough	3
Butler, Woodford	3
Rogers Bakery, Bundaberg ..	4
Water Street Bakery, Bundaberg	5
Targo Street Bakery, Bundaberg	5
H. Hocking, Tewantin	3
Budgen, Childers	3
Mapp's Bakery, Hendra	12
Lowood Bakery	2
Marburg Bakery	3
Rosewood Bakery	3
Barry's Bakery, Warwick	2
Reardon's Bakery, Toowoomba	8
Blackbutt Bakery	2
Laidley Bakery	2
Millmerran Bakery	2
Yarraman Bakery	3
Toogoolawah Bakery	2
Hodgson's Bakery, Kingaroy ..	2
Kandanga Bakery	2

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Mr. Frawley: Before you change the subject, do you think it is better to eat bread with margarine on it, or butter?

Mr. LESTER: I will support my area at another time. I further point out that since this unfettered competition began not only have bakeries and hot-bread shops closed but many bread vendors have been put out of work. They are the people who give a personal service to the consumers. I have a lot of evidence to support that claim, too. Also affected are the supply firms and service firms. It would be reasonable to say that over 1,000 jobs in the bread industry in Queensland have been lost. That is what I am talking about—jobs.

Country bakeries have been weathering the storm. If they are not able to weather the storm, the people in country towns will not get their bread. It is as simple as that. If these big companies have their way, the consumer will be the loser in the long term, because bread prices will return to what they were before the big companies entered the country areas or be even higher. We have seen that happen in other industries. The supply of bread to country towns will depend on transport, and bread will be available only at supermarkets. It will not be available at the small shops, which people in these areas like to use. There will be no choice, because it is reasonable to assume that the big companies will work out trading arrangements among themselves. The consumer will lose his choice. We in this Parliament, who are sticking up for the small people, have to oppose such action.

One might ask why the Government is setting up this committee. It is setting it up because of its concern for the consumer, the small baker, the unemployment position and decentralisation. The aim of this committee,

firstly, will be to foster goodwill in the baking industry, to guide the industry to a position of self-generation, which will be for the good of the industry, and to set guide-lines that the industry should follow.

The committee will consist of a chairman, who will be an independent, three representatives nominated by the bread manufacturers, one nominated by the retailers and one by the consumers. That will ensure that a fairly balanced committee is set up and that it will achieve the aims that we are hoping it will achieve.

The first aim of the committee should be to set up trading areas, because I believe that there is little chance of success—I hope I am wrong—unless a form of area trading is established in Queensland. This could be done very quickly and very easily. Mr. Jack Sheeran, who has been president of the Bread Manufacturers of Queensland and of Australia from time to time—he has certainly been president of the association in Queensland for the last 20-odd years—has agreed and is prepared to set up a zoning system in Queensland. This would mean that bread baked in the Brisbane area and its surrounds would not be sold outside the Greater Brisbane area. Bread baked in the provincial areas would not be sold outside those provincial areas. This would still allow for competition in the Brisbane area, which has 68 per cent of the population of Queensland. It would also allow for competition among the smaller country bakeries. If the large combines want to go into the provincial cities and country areas, let them do so. The only thing we ask is that they build their own premises in those places. I think that would be a reasonable, fair and logical contribution from them.

Mention was made of the fact that, since zoning was introduced in Victoria some 10 years ago, some bakeries have closed. Of course some bakeries have closed, but the point I wish to make is that nearly all bakehouses in country areas in Victoria are local bakehouses employing local people. If there was not a form of zoning in Victoria, Mr. Row, you could bet your bottom dollar that there would be only three or four bakeries in the whole State and bread would be distributed through a road-transport system. I believe that the zoning system is working very satisfactorily in Victoria. On the last occasion on which I spoke in this Chamber on this subject, I tabled a document from the country bread manufacturers in Victoria saying that the zoning system was their life-blood.

It is all very well for members of the Opposition to criticise me for daring to stick up for the smaller man. Quite clearly, Mr. Row, they cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Davis: Why don't you tell the truth? You could not sell your bakery.

Mr. LESTER: My bakery was sold. If it had not been sold, I would not be here today.

Someone must stick up for and recognise the good work of the small independent employer in Queensland; yet honourable members opposite interject while I am speaking because I am trying to give effect to the philosophy of all political parties by standing up for the smaller people. Because I have been prepared to stand up and be counted as supporting the smaller person in the community—and I consider that the consumer is also a smaller person—I am blasted. I suggest to the Committee that politics should be kept out of this debate and that honourable members should consider sympathetically the problems facing the smaller people of this State.

All political parties have set up committees to inquire into unemployment. One of the first recommendations that such committees make is that more should be done to foster and encourage trade in the bush. In spite of that, the moment the Government tries to do something to assist in that direction, people try to prevent me from making a very valuable contribution in this Chamber in the interests of the little man. If I am labelled as a parliamentarian who sticks up for the little man, that is all right by me—in fact, it is good. In my speech, I have not tried to knock anybody or demoralise anybody; I have simply tried to state the facts and give what I think are some of the solutions to the problems.

The committee was asked to look at other aspects of the bread industry, but I can go into more detail on those at the second-reading stage. Today, on the floor of this Chamber, every member has an opportunity to do something for decentralisation, to do something for the smaller baker, and to do something for the consumer—indeed, to do something to assist everybody. I ask all honourable members to support what I and my colleagues are trying to do.

Mr. WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (2.54 p.m.): I listened very intently to the honourable member for Peak Downs and to the Minister's introduction of the legislation, and I can only make the observation that the contribution of the honourable member for Peak Downs is utter nonsense. He set out to try to convince the Committee that the proposed legislation is based on a concern for the consumer. How ridiculous!

What is being suggested here is not some sort of maximum-price scheme or profit-control scheme, but a minimum-price scheme—in other words, a scheme to keep the price up. If anyone will be affected by such a scheme, it will be the consumer. This is the worst anti-consumer legislation that I have seen come into this Chamber in the 10 years that I have been here, and I am surprised that the honourable member for Peak Downs and other Government members would support it. On a short-term basis, they may be helping a dozen or so, or even 30 or 40, small bakers;

but they are causing massive financial harm to thousands, tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of consumers.

Consumer organisations in which I have been involved did not take this matter lightly when it was first proposed by the Government. When we first heard that there would be an inquiry, we looked into it. We made our submission to the committee that the Government set up, and we submitted that the Government ought to reject any minimum-price scheme or any zoning scheme because it was anti-consumer in its intention.

We have evidence to show that this proposal could increase the price of bread by between 10 and 15c a loaf, which could mean an increase of \$2 a week in the cost of living of the average family. The honourable member for Peak Downs is saying that it is all right to put on an additional burden of \$2 a week and so reduce their ability to buy. That is what the Government is doing. It says it has a concern for the consumer. With all due respect to the honourable member for Peak Downs, that is a lot of baloney. I acknowledge that in the short term the proposal may be seen in some way to protect the small baker, but in the long term it will not work. Competition is based not only on the price of the product but also on quality and availability. At least we know that the major manufacturers of bread have been able to supply the product.

I might add also that this Bill will not overcome the difficulties of the bread producers caused by the introduction of a new type of industry, and that is the hot-bread industry. It is a brand new development. I am beginning to wonder whether the big fellows are behind this move and whether before long we will see some sort of legislation to control the hot-bread shops. Is that the Government's next move? The hot-bread shops are really the ones eating away at big business; they are the ones causing the harm. They are opening seven days a week. They are supplying bread on the "knocker."

Mr. Davis: It is beautiful bread.

Mr. WRIGHT: As the honourable member says, it is a beautiful bread.

Mr. Bertoni: Do you agree that the hot-bread ovens are not in country towns?

Mr. WRIGHT: They are all over the place.

Mr. Bertoni: No, they're not. You check it out.

Mr. WRIGHT: I suggest to the honourable member that he start looking around; they are everywhere, and they are spreading and they will continue to spread, and I believe they will end up being the real competition to big business. They are mostly family concerns and they are supplying a very good product. If honourable members

carry out a survey of how many people these days have hot bread on a Sunday night, they will be staggered at the number and it is ever increasing. They are certainly giving the big manufacturers the necessary competition.

What the Minister is suggesting in this Bill is in sharp contrast to the philosophies that he has been espousing for many years. It is in sharp contrast with what the Premier and all members of the Government have espoused time and time again—that it is a free-enterprise Government of free-enterprise parties. They are only free-enterprise when it suits them. This proposal would surely be a socialistic step. This would surely be Government intervention and interference in a free market-place. Government members are condoning it. Their aim is obviously to keep the price of bread up; it is to make sure that the return to the bread manufacturer is kept at a highly profitable level. By contrast, they never seem to support maximum-price schemes.

We do not hear Government members standing up and saying, "We ought to have some price and profit control." Of course, we have a prices commissioner, but he is also the Commissioner of Consumer Affairs, and I think he has a staff of one. When we look at the list of things on which there are price controls, it is a blank sheet. There is an Act, but it controls nothing. When we raise this matter with the Government, it just says, "It will not work." It says that we cannot have price control. That has been said by the present Minister for Justice, Mr. Lickiss, by previous Justice Ministers, Mr. Knox and Dr. Delamothe, and all the other Justice Ministers. They say, "You can't have it." This Government is introducing a principle in reverse, but it is still price control. However, it is price control that is not in the interests of the consumer. I suggest that we are allowing an open-ended scheme that will be anti-consumer because it will eventually mean that bread manufacturers will charge what they like. All they will have to do is substantiate to the Minister, or to the board or commission, the price make-up that they need in order to make a profit and not be forced out of business, and the Government will stand by them.

In respect of the real problem, the Government is apathetic. The honourable member for Rockhampton North quite validly raised the 1973 report, and many Opposition members as well as some Government members have also raised questions about this report. The whole essence of that report on the bread industry was the question of wastage. That question was not even considered by members of the recent committee. They were not interested in it even though some 10 per cent of production—I think the Minister said it was 9.7, but it has increased to 10 per cent—is wasted. It means that one loaf in every 10 produced by the bread industry in this State is wasted. It is fed to pigs. What has the Government done about it? Nothing. It says that it is not concerned

about that. What does the wastage amount to? It amounts to something like 12,000,000 to 15,000,000 loaves of bread each year.

About one-third of the world's population is starving, we have thousands of people in this State living on very low incomes, and we have pensioners who cannot afford to buy bread, yet this Government is condoning that wastage. It condones the practice of throwing millions upon millions of loaves of bread to pigs every week and every year. This question must be considered. It is massive wastage, but the Government refuses to act. It refuses to consider its own Consumer Affairs Council report on the return of unsold bread. The member for Peak Downs should consider the effect on the small baker. The return system has done more harm to the small baker than any price-control system could do. The return system wiped out small bakers. They could not compete. The big bakeries simply said, "Don't worry about ordering only 15 or 20 loaves; take 50."

Mr. Davis: They said, "Take what you like."

Mr. WRIGHT: Yes. They said, "It will cost you nothing. Take what you like."

The small baker could not compete. He knew what he could produce. He knew the profit in his area of production and he knew that he could not follow suit. The big fellow wiped out the small man, but what has the Government done about it? Nothing! For six years a Government instrumentality said that the system was wrong, that it was costing the community millions of dollars, that it was immoral and unethical, but the Government did nothing. In recent times I have not heard Government members raise this matter.

We must realise that bread is used as a draw line. It is being used in the marketplace to attract customers, just as butter, sugar and other commodities have been used. Some of the food barns do not have a big mark-up, but that is their business. That is surely their right in a private-enterprise system. They have a right to sell an article for any profit or loss if it means, indirectly, another return. If Jack the Slasher—and I have no brief for him—or anyone else wants to sell bread at a loss, or a minimum profit, in order to draw custom, is that not his right under the philosophy espoused by the Government? But that will not happen under the scheme proposed. He will be bound to sell bread at a certain price because he will be able to buy it only at a certain price. Even if he was prepared to sell at a loss of 15c or 20c a loaf he would not be allowed to do so under the terms of reference announced by the Minister.

The Government is taking away a real advantage to the consumer. Without doubt many consumers will be very angry with

Government members who support this legislation. We know what happened with legislation the other day when most Government members did not understand what the Justices Act Amendment was all about. But they will know what this legislation is all about, because it will affect them. It will cost the average family \$100 a year. The Government is taking away the only real protection that families have through competition.

We should have protection in our consumer industries, protection in respect of the average household goods bought by the people. Regardless of our requests, what does the Government say? It says that price control will not work, but it will not give it a trial. We asked for a maximum-price scheme for everyday products, and pointed out that in the last quarter the price of 800 consumer goods rose, but the Government would not do anything about it. The Government is not at all concerned about increases in bread and grocery prices yet, through the honourable member for Peak Downs, it makes out that this legislation is in the interest of consumers.

What has the Government ever done to support the small corner store, the grocery store, or the small businessman? Nothing!

Mr. Davis: May I make a comment about butchers?

Mr. WRIGHT: What is the honourable member's comment?

Mr. Davis: The butcher shops are closing down left, right and centre.

Mr. WRIGHT: They cannot compete. I am sure that the honourable member for Callide will agree that there is no way that they can compete when they handle only three or four beasts. He is an exponent on this issue; he knows that they cannot operate when they sell only three or four beasts. They cannot make a profit. The regulations introduced by the Government make sure that they cannot. The Government does not give a damn about these people unless big business is involved behind the scenes. I suggest that, indirectly, this legislation will help big business. It will help Tip-Top and other large groups, not the small bakers. In the long term it will mean that big business gets a massive return on the product it sells.

The Government does not appreciate the real problems. The wastage factor is important. The Minister referred to discounting, but that is a right under the private-enterprise system. The Government wants it each way. It is not consistent in what it is doing. Discounting should be possible in a private-enterprise system, because a person has a right to sell his product at the price he determines.

If a person is willing to buy in bulk, there ought to be an advantage in doing it. I am sure that many people on the other side who have been in private enterprise expected a better price if they bought in bulk. Surely

the food barn or any other business ought to be able to offer a lower price to persons who buy in large quantities. It must be realised, too, that private enterprise desires to promote its product. To do this, it often has to sell or desires to sell at a lower price. The Government's scheme in this legislation will prevent that. How can there be promotional lines under a minimum-price scheme? It will simply not be allowed. I made the point earlier that the biggest enemy of small business is big business, and this legislation will prove it. It will prove again that it is the big baker who is causing the problems.

I turn to another problem. This Government ought to look at some difficulties other than that of wastage. The marking of bread has been raised many times before. I have personally raised it in the Parliament. Our own associations have had motions sent to the Minister on it. Again nothing has been done. We have stale bread being sold all over the State. Bread the date of baking of which is not even known is being sold in the various stores. Again nothing is being done. The Government has had an inquiry, but we do not know the basis of the recommendations. Some recommendations have been put forward here; but really we do not know what was decided, as that report has been kept quiet.

This is anti-consumer legislation. Any consumer who gets the opportunity to read the Bill will realise what this Government is trying to do. It is trying to keep up the price of bread and thereby destroy the consumer's quality of life; his ability to buy; his purchasing power. I for one will be opposing it.

Mr. POWELL (Isis) (3.7 p.m.): I intend to prove that, far from being anti-consumer, this legislation will protect both the consumer and the rights of people to choose which loaf of bread they will buy. In fact, it is a distinct disappointment to me that we have to introduce such legislation at all.

Mr. Davis: Why do you do it?

Mr. POWELL: The reason we have to do it is that certain interstate companies are moving into Queensland determined to kill local industry.

If we look at the matter rationally and without the emotion stirred up by the previous speaker, we find that his facts are entirely wrong. The facts do not support the case he was attempting to make. The price of bread in Brisbane in September last year, which is the latest date at which I have comparative figures, was the lowest of any capital city in Australia.

Mr. Wright: Twelve rises in about 19 months.

Mr. POWELL: I am glad that the honourable member interjected. The percentage increase from September 1975 was 15.3 per cent—the second lowest of any capital city in Australia. I notice that he is no longer

interjecting. The price of bread in Brisbane is the lowest of the capital cities of Australia. Its increase in the last three years was the second lowest.

Now let me refer to Adelaide, which is always held by the Opposition as the paragon of virtue, it being in a Labor State. Bread there is 10c a loaf dearer than in Brisbane! In the last three years, the increase in bread prices in Adelaide has been 25 per cent. Looking at those figures, we can understand why Opposition members here are so upset with this legislation. They are trying to use the reverse type of argument by saying it is anti-consumer. In fact, it is in favour of the consumer.

Mr. Wright: Tell us how a 15 per cent increase can favour the consumer.

Mr. POWELL: The honourable member has had his turn. It would be advisable for him to keep quiet and listen.

In my electorate, large companies with bakeries in the south-east portion of the State are flooding the supermarkets in an attempt to gain custom. I have no objection to that; it is a legitimate business practice. They have not succeeded in destroying the local business in my electorate because the businessmen have been operating on a sound basis and the local people have decided to support local business. In other areas, the large bakeries have flooded the supermarkets with bread as a loss line. Instead of selling at the recommended price, they have retailed it at 39c, and even down to 33c a loaf. That is very good indeed for the consumer in the short term, but what happened in the long term?

In the areas where that was done, they destroyed the local baker so that there was no longer any competition. On a Saturday morning, bread in that part of south-east Queensland was selling at 39c a loaf. That morning the local baker closed down because he could not compete any longer. The following Monday morning, bread was sold at 54c a loaf. If that is in favour of the consumer, I am blown if I can see it. If the members of the Opposition wish to close down small bakeries, they will speak against this legislation. If, on the other hand, they are truly for the consumer, they will look at the long-term effects of what is going on in the industry at the moment.

I have no time at all for the big businesses that are able to ride roughshod over small businesses. The fact that the large bakeries have been able to flood the market and pour bread into the shops as a loss line, and take back the returns, is deplorable. I do not think that they should be allowed to do it.

If this legislation is not passed and if this attitude is not stopped, the smaller bakeries in my electorate—and it is by no means a small one—will be forced out of business. The people there, who are 400 km from Brisbane, will then depend on bread

coming from Brisbane—or perhaps Rockhampton, which would be worse still. That means that they would depend upon the whims—and I use the word advisedly—of the Transport Workers' Union, because the only way the bread could be brought from Brisbane or Rockhampton to Bundaberg, Maryborough or Hervey Bay is by road transport. If the members of that union strike, the consumers in my area will have no fresh bread. If there is a major flood, they will have no fresh bread.

Mr. Yewdale: They would have no fresh fruit and vegetables, either. Why don't you include the lot?

Mr. POWELL: We grow them locally. Doesn't the honourable member know that? In the circumstances I have outlined, the consumers would have no fresh bread to buy at all, no matter what the price.

Opposition members claim that this is anti-consumer legislation. If this legislation had not been introduced, and if the committee proposed does not look at the matter sensibly, there will be only two or three bakers in the State. What could be worse for the consumer than having a cartel of industries that could dictate the price of any commodity, particularly bread? That is the situation that is facing us. I do not find it very acceptable at all and we have to do something about it.

An Opposition speaker said that we are not interested in employment. At least 80 people are directly employed in bread-manufacturing in or about my electorate. If the Government had not decided to act, and if the legislation had not been introduced, most of those 80 people would be without a job. They would be forced out of the area because the bakeries would be closed down. Therefore, another of the Opposition's arguments is floored.

Opposition members cannot accept that this Government is concerned about people. They seem to think that they are the only ones who can talk about, or who try to support, the consumer or the average wage earner. In fact, the consumer and the wage-earner have been far better off under a National-Liberal Government than they ever were under a Labor Government, and that has been proved federally very recently. If consumers read the speeches, which I doubt they will do, and if they look at the proposition unemotionally, which is what we are asking should happen, I think they will agree, reluctantly no doubt, that legislation such as this is necessary for the orderly marketing of bread. I do not want to see a situation in which one group of people is dictating the cost of bread or any other commodity. I do not want to see a situation in which a large transport network is carrying bread from large bakeries in the south-east corner to areas all over the State.

I want to see genuine competition, but we cannot get that whilst there are large flour mills operating plant bakeries in Brisbane and

baking and selling large quantities of bread, but not selling flour to country bakers at a price similar to that at which they are supplying flour to their own plant bakeries. There is the crux of the matter. If these large flour mills would sell flour to the bakeries in my electorate at exactly the same price as they can put it into their own plant bakeries in Brisbane, this legislation would be unnecessary.

Mr. Davis interjected.

Mr. POWELL: That is the intent of the legislation. If the honourable member for Brisbane Central had had the courtesy to listen to the Minister in his introduction, he would have found out that the intention of the Bill was to enable people to produce bread on an even footing. And that is all we ask. We are not talking about grandiose schemes; all we are asking for is a fair go for country bakers and country consumers. If we allowed the present situation to continue, with the large flour mills putting flour into their own bakeries at a cheap price, but not selling it to country bakers at the same price, and transporting bread throughout the State and using it as a loss leader in the supermarkets, then we would be denying 80 people a job in my electorate alone, and probably many more indirectly. We would also be denying the consumer keenly-priced fresh bread.

Mr. Fouras: Would you then allow retailers in Brisbane to sell bread at whatever price they wanted to?

Mr. POWELL: I am prepared to allow retailers in Brisbane to sell bread at whatever price they like, provided the bakeries sell bread to them at the same price as they will sell it to other retailers and other consumers. The honourable member is avoiding the question—

An Opposition Member: Price control.

Mr. POWELL: There is no price control. Plant bakeries are bringing flour into their bakeries at X dollars per ton, but they are not selling flour to country bakeries at the same price. All we want is for them to sell flour, the raw material, to the country baker at the same price—

Mr. Fouras interjected.

Mr. POWELL: Hang on; the honourable member does not want to let me finish. I say this because the country baker would then be able to compete with the plant bakeries, which have to cart their bread up and down the coast by road transport, not on an equal basis but on a better footing.

Mr. Fouras interjected.

Mr. POWELL: Shopkeepers have the same opportunity as anybody else to buy their groceries at equal prices from the large manufacturers.

Mr. Fouras: No way. That's not true.

Mr. POWELL: It is remarkable that it is true in my area, because grocery lines are very keenly priced. In fact, the cost of living in Bundaberg, Hervey Bay and Maryborough is very similar to what it is in Brisbane. People in those areas are able to buy grocery lines at their supermarkets at almost the same—in some cases, lower—prices as are charged in Brisbane. So that destroys that argument of the honourable member.

As I said at the outset, I regret the necessity for this legislation. If the large bakeries had been willing to play the game and do the right thing by the people, it would have been unnecessary. It is interesting to read that some of the large bakeries are now crying about the situation which they themselves created. Of course, they thought that they would be able to roll into the country areas and ride roughshod over all and sundry. They found that they could not do it. Therefore, it has been necessary to introduce this legislation. I deny emphatically that it is anti-consumer. Rather, I believe I have proved that it is pro-consumer. We are concerned about the long-term interests of the people who have to buy bread.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: The adjudicator has given you 6 out of 10.

Mr. POWELL: That is more than the honourable member would get.

Money comes out of my pocket, the same as it comes out of other people's pockets, to buy a loaf of bread. I do not want to see my wife's housekeeping money—in other words, my money—being wasted by paying too much for bread.

I disagree with the suggestion that this legislation is anti-consumer. It is designed to assist the consumer. It is also designed to create employment opportunities.

The Opposition has levelled two accusations at the Government. It has said that by introducing this legislation we are being anti-consumer and that we are doing nothing for employment. This legislation will in fact assist employment in country areas by creating job opportunities. It will assist the consumer by ensuring that there is a regular price for a loaf of bread and that there is more orderly marketing of this commodity. Surely that is what every member in this Parliament should be looking for.

Mr. DAVIS (Brisbane Central) (3.23 p.m.): One could not be blamed for thinking that today, when we are talking about the conflict between the country baker and the city baker, we were discussing something new. I just happened to do a bit of research, and I found that in one of the first speeches that I made in 1970—

A Government Member: A lot has happened between then and now.

Mr. DAVIS: If Mr. Anti-consumer would only listen, he would learn that some of the problems that existed in 1970 exist today

One of the big problems was caused by the intrusion into country areas of Tip Top, Cobbity Farm, Pfeffers and the other big bakeries in Brisbane. Even in 1970, that had been going on for a couple of years. Tip Top started buying up small bakeries in about 1960. At one stage, I think it bought 14 or 15 small bakeries on the south side and about four or five on the north side. Then Cobbity Farm, which is a subsidiary of Gillespie Bros., entered the act. All the big combines got into the bread-supply act. They divided themselves into two organisations. There were the Brisbane Bread Manufacturers, which was made up of the big bakeries, and the Bread Manufacturers of Queensland, which was made up mostly of the small country bakeries. It was chaired then, surprisingly, by Mr. Sheeran, who was mentioned by the honourable member for Peak Downs.

At that stage, when we wanted to deal with union matters we had to discuss them with the two organisations. I can say one thing about the bread manufacturers' organisations—whether it was the Brisbane Bread Manufacturers or the Bread Manufacturers of Queensland—and that is they were most dishonest organisations to deal with. By "dishonest" I mean that they never kept an agreement. They broke every agreement that they made. At a meeting they would agree to a certain starting time, but within four or five minutes of the conclusion of the meeting they would change the agreed starting time.

One of the biggest problems arose when the Industrial Commission ruled that there could not be any set starting time. Organisations approached the Government and asked for different starting times, and the change that occurred under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act at that time enabled the big bread manufacturers to move into country areas. I worked for a big bread manufacturing company then, so I know what the situation was. As the honourable member for Rockhampton said earlier, a representative of a big company would go to a small shopkeeper who was taking about 50 loaves a day and say to him, "Take what you want. It won't make any difference."

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. I ask honourable members to reduce the level of conversation so that the debate will not be interrupted again.

Mr. DAVIS: As I said, the usual order was about 50 loaves; but when the representative of the big company came through and offered free returns, the small shopkeeper could order anything up to double that quantity and next day return what he did not sell. Naturally, no small manufacturer could compete with that. I agree completely with that, and I mentioned it in 1971.

At that time, the honourable member for Sandgate (Mr. Warburton) was a member of the Consumer Affairs Council, and the council brought down its own report on this matter. Sometimes the Labor Party has been very critical of the Consumer Affairs Council and of some of the members of it. I expected that when it published its report, it would be a whitewash. Surprisingly, that report, if implemented, would have cured the ills of the bread industry at that time. As the honourable member for Rockhampton mentioned—I am sure that the honourable member for Sandgate will also mention it—one of the big issues in that report on the bread industry was the return of waste bread. Over the years, waste bread became a big industry because returns were as high as 12 or 15 per cent. But that could have been stopped. As a matter of fact, the big companies got into such a bind over it that they wanted the Government to act.

I have here a newspaper cutting from 1974 that says, "Decision on bread sales was overruled by State Cabinet". Sir William Knox was Minister for Justice at that time and, of course, he blamed everybody but did not introduce legislation to stop the practice. As a result, over the years we have all had to pay for the problems in the bread industry.

At one stage the big companies, whether they were members of the Brisbane Bread Manufacturers or the Bread Manufacturers of Queensland, were very powerful. Let me give honourable members an example. Tip Top started selling in bulk to Woolworths and B.C.C. before B.C.C. was taken over by Woolworths. Then Woolworths decided to reduce the price by 2d. a loaf—before decimal currency. After two days, other bread manufacturers complained and said to Woolworths, "If you don't stop selling bread at the reduced price you will not be supplied." That shows how powerful they were then.

Since then, the Prices Justification Tribunal and the Restricted Trade Practices Act have prevented the setting of maximum prices, and the establishment of food barns—Jack the Slasher's, for example—has had a big effect.

The problem is not so much the transportation of bread into country areas. I will defy any National Party member to show that this practice has not changed over the years. The small bakeries have had these problems for over 20 years. It was because of the change in the Restrictive Trade Practices Act, which prevents the setting up of price cartels, that the big bakeries such as Cobbity Farm were allowed to come in. Cobbity Farm is the firm that is supplying Jack the Slasher. It is surprising that a representative of one of the big companies was a member of the three-man tribunal that was set up.

The problem does not lie with the transportation of bread into the country. The biggest problem is that country people are coming into the provincial cities and buying up

to 30 or 40 loaves at a time and storing them in freezers. This is where the real problem lies.

The honourable member for Rockhampton North mentioned the farcical situation of having to obtain a road permit to transport bread. That is completely foolish.

The proposed committee will run into problems when it starts setting up zones. We all recall the problems that section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution caused. Road-maintenance tax was introduced in this State partly because of the famous section 92 High Court case involving Cobb and Co. If a system of zoning is introduced, the policing of the zones will prove difficult. If a company wishes to go over the border of a zone and sell its product, it will be very hard to prevent it from doing so. It is all very well to talk about the 28 or 30-mile limit that operates around Melbourne. It must be remembered that Melbourne's manufacturing section is placed better strategically than that of Brisbane. Brisbane is only a short distance from the New South Wales border. The companies that have big trucks to transport the bread can go straight over the border, turn around and come back. That is one point that I think should be considered.

One of the factors affecting the big combines in the Brisbane area is the setting up of hot bread kitchens. This seems to have been overlooked by members of the National Party. Over the years, hot bread kitchens have mushroomed to such a degree that there are very few places in Brisbane that do not have one within easy reach. This has led to the fact that very few people in Brisbane now get their bread delivered. Delivery of bread to the homes is now a thing of the past. Bread vendors are a dying race. I will be fair and say that the bread manufacturers don't want this to happen, but it has been brought about by the introduction of these hot bread kitchens. They are an entirely new field for the consumer. There is one near my place and every Sunday morning it has a queue half a mile long wanting to buy fresh bread. The hot bread kitchens are making inroads into the big companies.

Mr. Fouras: Also the prices.

Mr. DAVIS: I differ with a lot of people when it comes to prices. The big companies have got to go before the Prices Justification Tribunal to get an increase in price. I take umbrage at the remark of the honourable member for Peak Downs. I believe he misled the Committee when he said that the people at Beaudesert had put the price up by 3c. That is not on. I suggest that, if Jack the Slasher sells bread at 20c below the price, he does not get such a big discount. The bread manufacturers make their profit. Woolworths and other places cut the price of bread to entice customers, but they also buy at a recognised price. If they increase the price of bread by 1c or 2c, the hot bread kitchens soon follow suit.

We oppose this legislation. We believe it is not in the interests of the consumers. The honourable member for Rockhampton North asked what the Government did to protect butcher shops. At one time there were five or six butcher shops in Spring Hill, but now there is not one. Likewise, in the Valley, there were half a dozen butcher shops but the supermarkets took over and made it uneconomic for them to operate and they have all closed down. The Government did not say to the butchers, "You are in an uneconomic situation; we will have to prop you up." This legislation is merely a fop to protect one or two National Party members who are trying to bolster their political interests.

Mr. Fouras: It is sectional socialism.

Mr. DAVIS: It is.

Fancy the Government accusing the A.L.P. of being socialistic when, under the free-enterprise system supported by the Government—the big high priest of the free-enterprise system—it introduces this legislation.

I shall be interested to see who will be on the seven-man committee. Recently we seem to have had a spate of legislation setting up boards and corporations, and now we are to set up a committee. I am sure I could name three or four of the usual Government political hacks—and most likely they will be Country Party hacks.

A Government Member interjected.

Mr. DAVIS: I am sorry, I mean the National Party. I get mixed up with the change of name.

A Government Member: You are always mixed up.

Mr. DAVIS: As I have said on other occasions, I do not recognise the change. In my mind it will always be the Country Party.

A Government Member: You are behind the times.

Mr. DAVIS: The National Party has never moved with the times and this legislation proves how far behind the National Party is.

A Government Member: Why not lay off the National Party?

Mr. DAVIS: Opposition members are waiting to see how members of the Liberal Party—the other high priest of this coalition Government of convenience—vote. Will they support this anti-free-enterprise legislation? Or will they weakly and calmly agree with the National Party on this backward legislation?

As the honourable members for Rockhampton and Rockhampton North said, this is anti-consumer legislation. I will bet my life that every consumer group and women's organisation—those patronising the food barns and buying the cheap bread—will realise that this legislation is anti-consumer and anti-worker.

Mr. Prest: It is against anyone who eats bread.

Mr. DAVIS: That is right.

In cold, simple terms—it has been introduced to protect some poor unfortunate National Party member who has been approached by one of his big financial supporters and told, "You must do something about it."

As I said before, I do not trust bread organisations, either the Brisbane Bread Manufacturers or the one that the member for Peak Downs probably belonged to. They broke every deal that was made.

Mr. LESTER: I rise to a point of order. I do not belong to any bread manufacturing organisation other than the manufacturers of Queensland. I ask that that be withdrawn.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order! The member for Peak Downs asks that that reference be withdrawn.

Mr. DAVIS: I withdraw it. I said he "belonged" to either the Bread Manufacturers Association of Queensland or the Brisbane Bread Manufacturers.

Mr. Powell: You should enunciate more clearly, shouldn't you?

Mr. DAVIS: We can't all be Rostrum trained or schoolteachers. Some people have to work for a living. We can't all be born with the old silver spoon in our mouth.

Mr. Powell: You can, you know. It's a matter of intelligence.

Mr. DAVIS: I don't think it's got anything to do with intelligence. If I look at the member for Isis, I don't have to worry about being intelligent. He should look at himself in a mirror.

Mr. Row, those are the points that I wish to make. As I said before, this is an anti-consumer Bill. And if it is anti-consumer, you can bet your life that the Australian Labor Party will be against it.

Mr. SCASSOLA (Mt. Gravatt) (3.41 p.m.): In rising to participate in this debate, I desire at the outset to take up one or two points that were made by the honourable member for Rockhampton. One that he sought to make was that the matter of unsold bread had not been considered by the committee that was recently set up. To my knowledge, that question has exercised the minds of every committee that has looked at the bread industry in recent years—including the Consumer Affairs Council, which considered the matter in 1973. However, the point ought to be made that the banning of bread returns by statute has not solved the problems of the industry in other places. It certainly has not helped in keeping the price of bread at a reasonable level.

Earlier in the debate the honourable member for Isis made the point that Brisbane still has the lowest price of bread of any capital city in Australia. That is not a matter without significance—the lowest-priced bread of any capital city. It may be that the quantities of unsold bread do fluctuate from time to time. Perhaps on occasions they do become somewhat unreasonable. But that matter will not be resolved by statutory rules. It will not be solved by imposing rules that, with the greatest respect, cannot be policed. It is a matter that can be solved only by self-regulation and self-discipline within the industry. I am informed that there are instances in this State where, by self-discipline and self-regulation, manufacturers have indeed substantially reduced the volume of unsold bread.

One of the other matters to which the honourable member for Rockhampton referred was stale bread, as he put it. He alleged that stale bread was sold in Queensland. To my knowledge, there is no instance—and I have not heard of any—of stale bread being sold. To my knowledge, the only bread that is sold is in fact fresh bread—bread that is manufactured on the day of sale. The so-called over-supply to retailers is one of the matters that seem to be causing the Opposition in this place a great deal of heartburn.

The trend that we now see in the bread industry is not new. It is a trend that has existed for 29 years. The tables in the 1973 annual report of the Consumer Affairs Council show that the number of bread manufacturers in a number of centres in Queensland dropped substantially between 1950 and 1970. I shall cite only a couple of examples. In 1950, Brisbane had 78 bakeries; in 1970, it had 18. Dalby had three in 1950 and three in 1970. Rockhampton had 11 in 1950 and five in 1970. So the trend towards a reduction in the number of manufacturers of bread is not new; it has been with us for a very long time.

Going hand in hand with that trend has been the emergence of what is commonly called the hot-bread shop. Those shops are now prolific throughout the State. They are owned and operated by small business people. They have now gained a share of the market ranging from about 15 per cent in some places to 25 per cent in others. So there has been a significant change since 1950. As I said, we have seen the emergence of the small hot-bread shops, which are owned by the people who manage and run them. They provide a service to the public. They are open so that the public can purchase the product at convenient times.

The allegation has been made that one of the significant problems confronting the industry in Queensland has been the dumping of bread, as it is called, in other places by Brisbane manufacturers. It is certainly true that there are a number of large plant manufacturers in Brisbane—I think it is

four—and at least one on the Gold Coast. It is misleading to say that that is the root of the problem, if for no other reason than that at least one large plant bakery outside the Brisbane area has a significant number of subsidiaries—some 18 of them—that manufacture in a large number of centres throughout the State. So that in a significant number of places in Queensland there are bakeries owned by a plant bakery outside the Brisbane area. That ought to be remembered. The trend in the bread industry has not occurred simply because of what has happened in one place or what has happened in a short period. It is a set of circumstances that has developed over a very long period and is now Statewide.

The prevailing circumstances in the bread industry are not peculiar to it. The sort of trend that we see is common to a large number of other manufacturing activities. We have seen it in many other cases. For example, over the years we have seen shoe repairers disappearing, and the same trend applies to other small businesses. The point that I seek to make is that the circumstances at which we are now looking are not peculiar to the bread industry. Other industries as well are undergoing considerable change, and we are seeing those changes over a long period.

There is no suggestion, to my knowledge, that any of the methods used by various people in the bread industry are illegal—that they are not legitimate business practices—and that point was referred to in the report of the Consumer Affairs Council in 1973. The point was made there that if there were illegal trade practices—if there happened to be predatory price-cutting—there was machinery available to deal with that very problem. This is the second of the recommendations made by that body at that time—

“that where it appears that predatory pricing and other devices are being used by a bread manufacturer established in one area to capture the market of a manufacturer established in another area, the Government bring the case to the attention of the Commonwealth Commissioner of Trade Practices.”

Mr. Davis: That wasn't done, of course.

Mr. SCASSOLA: The point is that there has been no suggestion of any illegal trade practice. One of the propositions that has been put forward by some people is that there ought to be a territorial zoning arrangement. That has been canvassed in a number of places. It was implemented in Victoria some 10 years ago and, as the Minister pointed out, it has proved to be a catastrophe. It certainly has not helped the bread industry at all. It is also a matter that was referred to in the 1973 report. On the zoning question the council said—

“The Council considers that a restriction of this kind is contrary to the interests of consumers. If competition is to serve its

functions of providing the consumer with choice, of maintaining efficiency in production and distribution, and of preventing prices from rising more rapidly than is justified by increases in costs, it is important to avoid creating local monopolies."

That is one of the consequences of a zoning system. It is important from the point of view not only of those in the industry but of the public generally, and the consumers in particular, that there be effective competition in the interests of all concerned. The report of the Consumer Affairs Council went on to say—

"... and in the opinion of the Council, it calls for legislative and administrative action directed against monopolisation in general . . ."

if that indeed existed.

As I have said, territorial zoning leads to the creation of monopolies in particular areas and to the circumstance where the consumer is deprived of choice. It will not solve the problems facing the industry. As I have also said, zoning has proved to be a failure in all places where it has been tried. It has caused an increasing number of manufacturers to depart from the market scene.

As I have pointed out, the problems facing the industry have not necessarily, in my view, been caused by the operation of people in the Brisbane area. They are industry-wide and Statewide.

The Minister said that it is proposed to set up a committee that, in effect, will be a self-regulatory committee. Some of the problem areas in the industry need to be looked at by the industry itself to see if any distortions can be corrected. Reference has been made to bread returns. It might be necessary to look at that matter from time to time to ensure that a reasonable and balanced approach is maintained.

The problems of the small manufacturer in this industry have been raised. I am certain that we all are concerned for small business people. Certainly I and the people in the party to which I belong are concerned about the various problems faced by small business people. But their problems will not be solved by introducing price-fixing or zoning arrangements or by imposing statutory provisions. I believe that small business people, not only in the bread industry but in other industries as well, can be assisted by the implementation of a comprehensive policy of assistance and encouragement. In this Chamber previously, I have referred to such matters as the availability of finance on terms that are competitive with those available to others, tax concessions, and the right to participate perhaps more readily in Government contracts.

In my view, there is no objection to having a self-regulating body if that, in fact, is what it is, because there are some areas in the bread industry at which the industry itself ought to have a close look to see if,

by mutual arrangement, by mutual restraint or by self-discipline, adjustments can be made and some of the problems in those areas can be overcome.

Certainly one of the points that concern all of us is that the small baker, in the main, has departed from the scene in Queensland. The facts of life are that the small baker is not able to manufacture large quantities in relatively small markets and make his operations profitable. In the main, he is unable to find the money to buy and install very expensive equipment that will manufacture large quantities. Even if he is, unless he is in a market of very large volume he is unable to make it pay in the long run, and the cost will inevitably impose a greater burden rather than enable him to make the venture profitable. Small bakers have certainly suffered because of increased labour costs in recent years, and most bakers who operate on a small scale run labour-intensive enterprises. There have also been instances in which they have been unable to obtain labour.

(Time expired.)

Mr. WARBURTON (Sandgate) (4.2 p.m.): The honourable member for Mt. Gravatt introduced some rather relevant points, principally those associated with the report on the bread industry by the Consumer Affairs Council, and I think that he, without having the initiative to say so, was in fact speaking against the proposals introduced by the Minister. Other Government members, including the Minister, seemed to be grasping at straws.

Let me say now that there is no doubt in the minds of members of the Opposition that in the long term the legislation is contrary to the interest of the consumer. As the spokesman for the Opposition, the honourable member for Rockhampton, said, there could be some short-term benefits, but there is no doubt that Queensland consumers will suffer in the long run.

It is true that I have a personal interest in the proposed legislation because I was a member of the Queensland Consumer Affairs Council when a committee set up by that council carried out a very extensive investigation into the bread industry. Although I disagreed with small sections of that committee's report that are not relevant to what is now being discussed, I think it was the most comprehensive and informative report, and probably the best report, that has ever been brought down relative to the bread industry in this State or in any other Australian State. That is undeniable, and that report was accepted by all groups in Queensland—consumer groups, the public, and even Government members.

We see, of course, a complete shelving of that report—I shall delve into the report a little more in a moment—and, because at about that time there was a change in ministerial responsibilities, it probably finished

up in the bottom drawer of the Minister. Responsibility for the Consumer Affairs Act was formerly vested in the Minister for Labour and Tourism, I think it was, and for reasons known only to the Government of the day, a change was made and responsibility was vested in the Minister for Justice.

Mr. Davis: We do not hear very much about the Consumer Affairs Council now.

Mr. WARBURTON: No. I shall have something to say about the Consumer Affairs Council as it now operates.

The situation now is completely different, because the Minister, and possibly a number of Government members, have access to secret reports. They have access to the bread report that I referred to. They have access to a secret report that was brought down by a committee at public expense. Her Majesty's Opposition in the Queensland Parliament does not get a look at it so that it can effectively debate the issue. And that is going to be told to the public of Queensland again and again.

There is also the infamous report of the National Party. No doubt the Minister and his department did take some cognisance of that report in framing this Bill. We agree that small business must get a great deal of consideration, but the consumer should always be to the forefront in getting consideration. I believe that the Government will suffer if this Bill is passed.

Mr. Sullivan: When you look at the Bill, I hope you will change your mind.

Mr. WARBURTON: We can only act on the very brief comments made by the Minister and on the leaks that have occurred through the media. That is all we can go on at this stage.

The Government is pretending that suddenly we have big business swamping little business. What a ridiculous statement to make! As Opposition members as well as some Government members have pointed out, this has been happening for well over 20 years. It has been happening since monopoly started flexing its muscles in the State of Queensland. However, I will not go into that argument at this stage; every Queenslanders knows about it. The Government is not going to be able to foist this story upon the people of Queensland as being something new.

Another point comes to mind. We all understand that bread is one of the most basic commodities. It is considered basic enough to be taken into account in the Consumer Price Index. I put it to the Minister that toying with a minimum price structure is a very dangerous exercise indeed. We will be asking the Minister whether he received Treasury or other reputable advice about what this Government is really getting

itself into. I see it as a dangerous exercise. In fact, I would say the Government is playing with dynamite.

The honourable member for Isis made some rather remarkable and startling revelations about the proposals and claimed that in the long run they would help consumers.

Now let me go back to the bread report I referred to and state what the people on that committee said at the time. They were from all walks of life. No doubt many honourable members will know some of them. There were men in the category of Rod O'Loan, a director of David Jones. He was in favour of the proposals, as was each and every one of the prominent people, the free-enterprise people, who constituted the Consumer Affairs Council in 1972.

Let us see what that committee said when it discussed "Cross-marketing between Areas." After all, that is the relevant issue facing us today. The Consumer Affairs Council, as a result of its investigation, was well aware of the points that had been made and canvassed all aspects of the bread industry before it drew up its conclusion. It was aware of the Victorian legislation that restricted the distance over which bread may be delivered. That matter was referred to this afternoon by the honourable member for Mt. Gravatt. The council knew that section 104 of the Victorian Labour and Industry Bread Act of 1967 provided that bread must not be delivered more than 30 miles from the place at which it was baked. It was also aware that the 30 miles is interpreted as the radius, and that the Act also provided that the Minister, at his discretion, may grant certain permits. It had all the information before it when it came to this conclusion—

"The Council considers that a restriction of this kind—it was talking about the Victorian situation—is contrary to the interests of consumers."

That is the point which the Opposition is making this afternoon. That is why we are arguing against the proposal. The quotation continues—

"If competition is to serve its functions of providing the consumer with choice, of maintaining efficiency in production and distribution, and of preventing prices from rising more rapidly than is justified by increases in costs, it is important to avoid creating local monopolies."

That is the other side of the picture of the council's attitude. In its findings on the same matter, it had this to say—

"The geographical widening of competition helps to provide the consumer with choice, to maintain efficiency in production and distribution, and to prevent prices from rising more rapidly than is justified by increases in costs."

I suggest to the Minister that those are very important findings. They defeat the arguments advanced to the Committee by some Government members—the so-called upholders of free enterprise.

When the crunch comes on this Bill it will be very interesting to see where members of the Government stand. It will also be interesting to read in the week-end Press whether Ministers and members of the Government suddenly divorce themselves from the whole thing. I shall not be surprised to learn that the Premier has made another of his remarkable statements in these terms: "I did not want it. It was Cabinet or the joint parties. It was Mr. Lester. He pushed it." The honourable member for Peak Downs is probably the only person who could convince the Premier.

The fallacy of the Government's exercise in 1979 is borne out by an examination of the manner in which the investigation was carried out on this occasion. Unfortunately for this Parliament, it was done secretly—which is totally different from the manner in which the bread industry was investigated by the Consumer Affairs Council. Incidentally, that was done at the request of the Minister for Labour and Tourism, who, as I said at that time was the Minister in charge of the Consumer Affairs Act. He remained in charge of the legislation until June 1972, when it was handed over to the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General.

Some honourable members may recall the dispute over the printing of the report. At that time the chairman of the Consumer Affairs Council was Professor Gates. He was a very prominent person who, as a member and chairman, worked tremendously hard for consumers in Queensland. The dispute arose because the Government hesitated to make the report public. Honourable members will recall that, initially, the Government refused to print the report. The reason was that the report was critical of the inaction of this Government on consumer matters. The new Minister soon withdrew the teeth of the Consumer Affairs Council when it dealt with the bread report. I do not believe that was coincidental. Until 1972, that council had carried out significant work in the area of consumer affairs—not the least important being the report on the bread industry of this State. It has been referred to by me and other Opposition speakers in this debate.

Soon after Professor Gates and I, and others, became aware that our services were no longer required on that council, I made the statement that it would become a lame duck and that we would cease to hear from the council as distinct from the bureau. I believe that history has proven my statements at that time to be correct. From that time on, the council has been very conspicuous by its silence.

In 1972, the second annual report of the Consumer Affairs Council indicated that preliminary inquiries had revealed that there were at least five aspects of the industry

about which dissatisfaction was felt in the community. I think that this is important. These were—

1. The inroads made by some manufacturers into areas served by others.
2. Variations in discounts allowed to retailers.
3. The possible waste involved in accepting the return of unsold bread as a promotional device.
4. Concentration of ownership in the industry.
5. Arrangements among manufacturers for the setting of retail prices.

It was clear that the Minister's requests for advice could not be met without a very full knowledge of the structure and marketing arrangements of the industry. The Consumer Affairs Council's initial attempts to obtain the necessary information when it began the investigation were not very successful. That is admitted. It was therefore decided in August 1971 to ask the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs to arrange for a special investigation into the bread industry. That investigation was concerned primarily with the structure of establishments, the structure of enterprises, the promotional methods used by bread manufacturers and the movements in prices and costs—all matters relevant to what we are discussing in the Committee this afternoon.

There was no change. In other words, it has already been done before. The findings of the Consumer Affairs Council, as I said earlier, were scrubbed—wiped. So why this sudden, renewed interest by the Government? Why does the Government in fact shove these recommendations of an expert committee completely aside and abide by a committee's findings that we and the public have not had an opportunity to see? Although ready co-operation was obtained from the Brisbane Bread Manufacturers Association and the Bread Manufacturers of Queensland, it proved necessary for the council to seek information from a large number of individual bakers. So it was a widespread investigation at that time. In May 1972, the council appointed a subcommittee to consult with a gentleman named Searles and to prepare a draft report. The general conclusions of the subcommittee were considered by the council in June 1972.

So that honourable members would be under no illusions about the manner in which the Consumer Affairs Council went about its task involving the bread industry in Queensland, I would, if I had the opportunity, retrace some of the events leading up to the final report that was submitted to the Minister. Despite the wide acclaim by consumer groups, despite the unanimous approval of members of the Consumer Affairs Council, who are prominent people drawn from all walks of life, and despite the widespread public approval and acclaim that

it received right throughout Queensland, that report was shoved away by this Government, never to be seen again.

We are faced with an unfortunate situation. All I can ask the Minister to do is the decent thing. If he wishes the Opposition to give a judgment based on all information that is available to him—and he has this report—he should table the report of his special committee and give us an opportunity to see what it had to say.

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (4.21 p.m.): On listening to the debate this afternoon I have been absolutely amazed at the Opposition's diagnosis of the ills of the industry. It has presented a problem with which we, as members of the Government, have been confronted for some time and to which we have been seeking a solution. The solution to a difficult problem is not easily found, and perhaps Opposition members should be fair-minded enough to recognise that point.

What has happened is that there has been complete chaos—I think that is the mildest term I can use—in this industry for at least the last year. For more than six months now, the Government has been making an honest and conscientious attempt to find some solution to the problem.

The purpose of the legislation is to regain stability in the bread manufacturing and retailing industries. That might sound a simple assignment. If the Opposition members who have made comments this afternoon are not personally confused, I am certain that they confused the other members who listened to them. It would appear to me that they have not offered a solution. They have been critical of the decisions taken. If people are to do something worth while they should be positive and, rather than say something is wrong, they should come forward with a practicable solution.

Opposition members talked about the effect on consumers. They said that what is happening now has been happening for a number of years and it is not new. They said that the Government is wrong. The next statement they made is that we should be doing something about it. Now that we are attempting to do something about it, they are critical again. I should like to think that members of the Opposition will, some time in the future, make a conscientious attempt to sort themselves out. Then perhaps we will go places.

The purpose of the legislation is to maintain the supply of a range of products—I emphasise "range"—at a fair and reasonable price. In saying that, I am thinking of all sections of the community. It was suggested earlier, as would be expected from the Opposition, that we would be concerned only with monopolies. I think it would be fair to say that some six months ago I suggested to the joint parties that,

in their wisdom, they might have a look at the problem. Since then, we have been looking for the real persons responsible.

In the initial stages I believed that the large monopolies were the only ones responsible for the difficulty. After a little further research, I found that others were involved. We have to point the finger of scorn at all of these people. But they are a fact of life and we have to live with them. It is to be hoped that, as a result of this legislation, there will be a prospect of their rationalising their thinking. This is the whole purpose motivating the Government at the moment.

It was suggested earlier by the honourable member for Isis that various strange things had happened. Of course, this was not accepted graciously by members of the Opposition. I now want to tell them of some of my personal experiences. I will refrain from mentioning names because persons could be embarrassed by these comments. I have always felt it was unfair to mention names if the persons concerned did not have an equal opportunity to reply. Consequently, I trust Opposition members will respect my point of view in this matter.

Over a number of years in my area there have been a number of bakers providing the necessary products to consumers, and doing it quite successfully. Then the big monopolies moved in. That is their prerogative, and I am not being critical of them for having done this. We recognise their right to do so in a private-enterprise system, but I wish they would also be conscious of some of the problems they create when they do move in. What they did was produce bread on a large scale, transport it into country areas and considerably undercut the prices of local bakers. As was mentioned earlier in the debate this afternoon, when the Prices Justification Tribunal fixed the price of bread at 54c a loaf, the big monopolies moved into country areas and began selling bread at 39c a loaf. This was temporarily of great advantage to consumers. When I made an initial statement and prepared an article for the local newspapers, consumers approached me and said, and perhaps with some justification, that I was attacking consumers and the monopolies and that it was my desire that they should not have the right to produce bread at a lower price. The fact was that those people who were monopolising the industry had no intention whatsoever of keeping the price at that low level. I was consequently proved to be right, because in the town of Beaudesert, having destroyed two local bakers, having purchased their premises and then continued to trade in them, and having completed the acquisitions, they immediately increased the price of bread from 39c to 54c a loaf. What long-term benefit is there for the consumer in that sort of action?

Mr. Davis: Will you repeat that?

Mr. Akers: You should have been listening.

Mr. MULLER: Yes, the honourable member should have been listening. But I am here to enlighten him. If he meets me outside, I will give him the names of those bakers. That is my purpose in life. The facts are that the day after they took over these two local businesses in Beaudesert they increased the price of bread from 39c to 54c a loaf. That is a fact of life. I am worried about the consumer. That is the main issue at stake. In addition to that, we have to be conscious that these monopolies are interested only in the sale of the bulk-manufactured product. We have seen the disappearance of all the other sideline products that were produced by the local bakers for years, such as cakes, pastries and what have you; all essential for the comfort and well-being of any well-balanced community. That sort of product is no longer available to the consumer.

It amazes me that Opposition members have the audacity to rise in this place and say that we are not making any attempt to look after the needs of the consumer. Such allegations are completely false, and I think I have an obligation to correct any misapprehensions that may be caused by what they have said. I have many more consumers in my electorate than bakers, and if I were not interested in the welfare of the consumers in my electorate I would not be here today representing them. I want to put in a word for them, but I think that we have to be fair about the matter. I know that in the initial stages they were concerned, but after I was able to give them an explanation of what had happened, they readily accepted the position and suggested that we should proceed with action to overcome the difficulty.

One could say that these country bakeries are not able or do not have the capacity to compete with the large monopolies. I venture to say that they are having difficulties and that they will continue to do so. I am not here to protect the baker in a country area if he is not manufacturing an acceptable product at a reasonable price. If he is not, he is likely to go under. I am here to protect the bakers who have told me on numerous occasions that they are quite prepared to accept certain obligations placed on them. That, I think, is free enterprise. I do not accept that free enterprise should be tolerated to the stage where monopolies can destroy all the smaller people within the community. If Opposition members support that attitude—and I am sure they do not—they disappoint me.

Mr. Davis: What about if that manufacturer goes to Tweed Heads? How are you going to stop him?

Mr. MULLER: I do not know. Tweed Heads is only one small area. I readily admit that there will be many difficulties.

Having discussed this matter, having considered the views put forward by all of my parliamentary colleagues, and having listened

to Opposition members this afternoon, I have come to the firm conclusion that this is a job that the Government does not have the time or perhaps the inclination or the capacity to handle indefinitely, and when I say "indefinitely", I think I use the word with some judgment.

We are dealing with a group of people who are attempting to supply the market on a competitive basis. Although we may be able to correct the ills of the industry today, there will be a different set of circumstances tomorrow. I should hate to think that the Government would accept responsibility for attempting to overcome all of the problems that will arise daily.

There will be a tremendous variation in the price of bread throughout the State, and that will be justified. I believe that these people on the committee will be charged with the responsibility of monitoring prices to ensure that the prices are fair and equitable not only to the manufacturer but to the consumer as well. If they fail to do this and show at any time that they intend to take advantage of the consumer, I can assure the members that I, as a member of the Government that provided the wherewithal for this to happen, will be most critical of them, possibly even before the Minister takes action.

Surely honourable members must be conscious of the fact that the Government could not survive if it considered the welfare and the well-being only of the monopolies and perhaps of one or two selected people within the community. In the long term, the consumers are all-important. Without consumers, there would be no manufacturers, as the world knows. It rather amazes me that we have to continue to emphasise such frivolous details, but it seems to be necessary.

Apart from our country bakers, there are many hot-bread kitchens. The member for Brisbane Central mentioned them earlier, and I give him full credit for doing so. In the initial stages, when the inquiries first commenced, I met people from the hot-bread kitchens. They came to see me once in the old Parliament House and put certain submissions to me. They told me that, having had an opportunity to analyse what we were attempting to do, they entirely supported the Government's proposal. To my amazement, within a week the same people adopted a different attitude. This seemed rather strange to me, and I was confused. I thought that perhaps earlier they had taken me for a ride. I found that that was not the case. Other influences within the industry, which were attempting to monopolise it, had contacted these people and told them, "You will do this." No names will be mentioned; I will not take advantage of the people of whom I am critical. However, I wish to put that point forward. That is the situation, and that is the problem with which we are confronted.

Mr. Davis: Flour mills control three of the four bakeries and George Weston Foods control Tip Top.

Mr. MULLER: We listened to the honourable member earlier. I was not terribly interested; it was possibly one of the dreariest speeches that I have heard for a long time. I hope that the honourable member will not waste my time now.

A number of policies and philosophies have been put forward by Government members. I will readily admit that I would not agree with all of them. My colleague from Peak Downs, who has been very dedicated to this cause and has worked hard to promote the interests of the people whom he represents, has certain beliefs. I do not necessarily think that he is right.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: I'm sure he's not.

Mr. MULLER: Well, whatever the case may be, we respect his point of view. We both have the same objective, but it seems that there will be some divergence in our courses before that objective is reached. As I see it, that is the situation at the moment.

The fact is that the Minister has told the Committee, without spelling it out in detail, that it is his intention to establish a committee representative of all groups within the community. Manufacturers, retailers, and consumers and wholesalers will be represented on the committee, which will be charged with the responsibility of monitoring some of the difficulties that occur. It will have a man-sized problem, but I believe that, with the support of the proposed legislation, it could well be successful. I would be the last person in the world to falsely assume that the members of the committee are likely to have an easy coast home. They have the barrow in front of them, and they are pushing it uphill. They are confronted with enormous difficulties.

However, I venture to say that, as a result of the experiences that some of the people who have been monopolising the industry for a long time have had during the past few months, the stage is being reached at which they will become a little more co-operative. If a monopoly takes on an institution half its size, the smaller institution is immediately in difficulty. But if two massive organisations are attacking and competing against each other, it is like two champion fighters of the same weight going into the ring and, at the end of the 15th round, both having had more than enough. That is what has happened here.

I pay my respects to the companies that have supplied the consumer to date. I believe that the product supplied by the monopolies has been quite acceptable and satisfactory. Had that not been so, the consumer would not have purchased it. In my opinion, the smaller baker has the capacity to do that if he is given an equal opportunity. As I see it, all the Bill attempts to do is give equal opportunity to all those

who are desirous of servicing the community, give them a chance to perform and meet the needs of the customer—nothing more, nothing less. Despite the fact that claims have been made that there is some sinister or ulterior motive associated with the introduction of the proposed legislation, I assure the Committee that no members of the Government would support it if that were the case.

I shall confine my contribution to those few comments, and I hope to make further comments at the second-reading stage.

Mr. HARTWIG (Callide) (4.39 p.m.): I should like to add my 5c worth to the debate on the proposal before the Committee. With out being parochial, let me say at the outset that I am vitally interested in the bakers in my electorate, both at Yeppoon, where there are three bakers baking very good bread, and at Biloela, where the bakers also bake good bread. In small country towns, it is a great advantage to be able to buy a loaf of fresh bread. Being able to obtain a loaf of fresh bread at the week-end and sometimes on a public holiday is also a great convenience.

I want to make it abundantly clear that I fully support small industries, including in this case the small baker. However, I view with concern any mention of the word "control". I do not believe that price control in any shape or form should be in the platform of this Government. I am firmly of the opinion that goods should be sold on a free and open market according to their quality and quantity and where and how they are delivered. What worries me is that if we reach the situation of having to rely for our bread on a few large bakeries around the State, a lot of people will be eating stale bread.

The small baker plays a very, very important part in our community. He assists in alleviating the unemployment problem. I might add that I believe that the price of bread is far too high.

Mr. Moore: It should be 4½d. a loaf, like it was when I was a kid.

Mr. HARTWIG: Yes; it is far too high. It has been established that it costs more to wrap and slice a loaf of bread than it does to purchase the ingredients that go into that loaf, yet we find we are paying about 60c for a loaf of bread.

I have said before that I am opposed to boards. I am against the setting up of the proposed board. I do not go along with that proposal, because I believe that the Government should be the master of its own destiny. We are creating too many boards. On Tuesday night, we talked about setting up the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation. We are now talking about setting up a bread board. We already have a

vegetable board, an egg board, a water board, a fire brigade board, a milk board, a fish board, a poultry board, and so on.

An Honourable Member: A peanut board.

Mr. HARTWIG: Yes, a peanut board. I often wonder about the erosion of control by the employer, the consumer, or whoever. We are delegating our authority to organisations outside the Government and over which we have very little control.

We must be realistic about this. We have too many controls already. We should be able to legislate to remedy this sort of problem without having to set up a board. Several years ago we legislated to do away with small petrol bowsers situated on footpaths. When we go to a service station in a country town we cannot buy a gallon of petrol on a Sunday or after hours, and we do not even know where the owner or the manager lives to get him to help us. If we go to Woolworths—they are the only ones who are going to sell bread after they have put our small bakers out of business—

Mr. Davis: Oh!

Mr. HARTWIG: I hope this doesn't happen but, if it does, I wonder if the honourable member will be able to buy a loaf of bread at the week-end.

To present the other side of the coin, I point out that just recently a baker was sent to gaol for baking bread over the week-end in his own shop and in his own time.

Mr. Davis: I would say that was 10 years ago.

Mr. HARTWIG: It was last year.

Mr. Davis: Where did that happen?

Mr. HARTWIG: In Sydney.

It is obvious that control in New South Wales is so strict that a baker is not allowed to bake bread out of hours. What a shocking state of affairs under the Labor Government of New South Wales. Surely we do not want that to happen here. That is my worry when we delegate authority. I do not know who will be on the board. The Minister, in his wisdom, will probably make recommendations to the Governor in Council, who will appoint the members of the committee. I hope that they will be answerable to the Minister so that we will be able to voice our concern if anything should happen, as it did in the case of small butcher shops.

I do not believe that bread baked by a big bakery is any better than bread baked in a small country shop. The small-town baker has to produce the goods. It is useless to say that we will protect him by stopping bread from going into places such as Yeppoon and Biloela. He has to produce the bread at a reasonable price.

We are thinking in terms of a minimum price. I want an assurance that the minimum price will not put the small baker out of business. We could fix a minimum price at which the small baker could not compete. I ask the honourable member for Peak Downs if I am right.

Mr. Lester: You are.

Mr. Sullivan: You seem to be confused, just as other honourable members have been. The minimum price is at the wholesale level. The retailer may elect to sell a loaf of bread for 20 or 30c. That is his business.

Mr. HARTWIG: He would still have to compete at the minimum price; he has to make a profit. We cannot take that away from him.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: Why not?

Mr. HARTWIG: The honourable member has not made a profit in his life.

If a minimum price is fixed, a country baker will not be able to charge much more than that because of competition from the large bakeries. But he has to be able to stay in business and make a profit. That is the only thing that concerns me and I want my thoughts on this matter made known in this Parliament.

I am concerned about the small businessman—the small baker, the small butcher and all the other small traders in country areas who provide a service. I am sure that the Government will do everything possible to see that their interests are protected to the utmost. They provide a service seven days a week. They produce a good article, but they must be able to withstand competition from other areas.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (4.49 p.m.): I do not wish to delay the proceedings, but I want to deal with a few matters that concern country people and particularly country members. Much has been made about country bakers virtually going broke. Government members seem to be saying that the country baker will not be able to sell his product. That means the local people are not buying the local product. If the local people are not concerned about employment in their own area—are not concerned about keeping their local baker going—I feel it is wrong for them to say to other people, "You have to pay an extra 10 to 15c a loaf so that we can buy the local product at the same price as the other fellow can buy it." To me, there does not seem to be much logic in this.

Mr. Lester: The trouble is that they put it up again when they knock the little fellow out.

Mr. HOUSTON: But the point is this: what is to stop the combines buying the local fellow out? That is what has happened in

the country. We see the same thing happening in other fields. The Government is allowing the small dairy farmer to be bought out by the bigger fellows—yet it passed legislation here.

Mr. Yewdale: The local baker won't stay there if the big fellows give him his price.

Mr. HOUSTON: Of course not. What is happening is a breakdown of local community support for local effort. That is one of the base problems.

I support my local shop. I know when I go in there that I pay a few cents more for this and that. The fact is that it keeps him in business. Local people, by doing that, are keeping him. By the same token, if he decides at some time that he wants to sell, my patronage will not stop him selling. That is one of the aspects of this legislation that concerns me.

The Government is going to force up the price of bread right throughout Queensland and particularly in the capital, Brisbane. The price of bread will be forced up for everybody, which can only mean higher profit for the big manufacturer. As the Minister said, he is not intending to fix the retail price; he is fixing the wholesale price. That means that the wholesale price to the larger outlets will be higher than it is today. A lower wholesale price is the only means by which they can undersell, as they are doing at the present time. The result will be more profit for the bakers.

I have not received any representations—nor have I heard of other members receiving any—from the major baking establishments in Queensland. Normally when proposed legislation constitutes a threat to anyone's existence, members of Parliament are contacted. I have no fight with that; it is the people's right. However, the remarkable thing about this legislation is that, although it has been known for some time that the Government intended to introduce it, we have heard nothing at all from the major manufacturers. They are the ones who are supposedly having their trade stopped, but apparently they are not worried about that. If they were, they would have contacted us.

Mr. Lane: Have they been to see the Q.C.E. about it?

Mr. HOUSTON: The honourable member would know more about that than I would, apparently. He knows very well that they have not been in touch with anyone. They certainly have not been in touch with the honourable member. As he is a member of the Government parties, I would expect them to go to him.

Mr. Lane: No, not me.

Mr. HOUSTON: Nor the member for Windsor and some of his other colleagues.

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It could be expected that if any organisation felt that its business was in jeopardy, it would contact members of Parliament on all sides. That has not occurred.

Mr. Lester: Both Mr. Katter and I have had representations from various large companies.

Mr. HOUSTON: The honourable member had his opportunity when he was speaking. We will listen to him intently in the second-reading debate, when he can name the companies that approached him and tell us what their propositions were and what their objections to the legislation were. However, I am saying that, to my knowledge, they have not been to the Opposition, where one would expect them to go. That has happened in the past when people or organisations have believed their livelihood to be threatened.

The point I make is that they are not concerned and, if they are not concerned, they must have an alternative. The alternative that I see is that they will increase their profits in the larger outlets here.

I invite honourable members to consider the additional profit that will be made on the number of sales in the capital city and surrounding areas at the much higher wholesale price declared under this legislation and to compare it with what would be lost in country areas. The situation may be to the major manufacturers' advantage and, in this case, the Government may be doing them a good turn financially. If they find that a country baker is able to compete with them and keep their product out, there is nothing to stop them buying him out. What will happen then?

What I am saying is that surely the local people have a responsibility to support their local baker. If they do that, there can be no competition from anyone else. The honourable member for Peak Downs and others have told us about the wonderful bread that is available in country areas. I go along with their remarks. I have tasted decent country bread.

An Honourable Member interjected.

Mr. HOUSTON: Yes. Provided one does not have to buy it, it is jolly good bread. I have no criticism at all of the quality.

An Honourable Member: What about Gold Coast bread coming up here?

Mr. HOUSTON: That is something that will happen. Only a few days ago the Government abolished road transport taxes. This will make it cheaper for the city bakery to transport its bread.

It looks to me as if this is a case of country domination of the Government. It is failing to really tackle the problem, which is the cost of flour. I think a Government member admitted that. That is what should be

tackled. If the Government does that, however, it will be hurting some of its supporters. It is not prepared to take on the flour millers, but it is prepared to take on the people who live in the cities. They are the people whom the Government expects to pay for its own incompetence. This will have far-reaching effects on country people as well, and then we will hear the Government complain about it.

How often have Government members complained about the trade unions and cost-of-living increases because of wage rises? What will happen in this case? Bread is one of the important factors in the cost of living, which is based on the cost of the product in Brisbane, not in country towns. So if the Government increases the Brisbane price of bread by 10c or anything like that amount, there will be a tremendous effect on the cost of living. That will increase the price of everything else throughout the State.

It is my view—and I support the honourable member for Rockhampton and other Opposition members—that the Government is tackling the question in the completely wrong way. I have great sympathy for people who lose their business. I, too, want to keep them in business. There must be an effort made, but not at this level. This is the wrong way to tackle it. The Government is going to penalise some in the hope of saving others, when I do not believe it will save them at all. If the monopolies want to take over the smaller businesses because they believe that is where their market lies, they will quickly do what they have done in the past—gobble the little fellows up.

Dr. LOCKWOOD (Toowoomba North) (4.58 p.m.): I say at the outset that I do not support the Bill at all. Let there be no doubt about that. All that was required to overcome the problem was a report to the Trade Practices Commission on all attempts at predatory price-fixing in the bread industry.

We were told in our party meetings that the price of bread had been slashed from a little more than 50c a loaf to 35c and when certain purchases, take-overs or business arrangements had been made with every baker in the town, the price jumped back to 53c. This was the problem. The way we are going about solving it will not, in my opinion, do anything to help the country bakeries. Where there is predatory price-fixing, there is a problem. Major industries can roll their low-price bread into any small country town until they achieve their aims, which are to force the country bakers out of business, buy them out cheaply or close them down, or get them to make some agreement to purchase bread from a major centre. This practice has been going on for a long time and I do not see anything proposed today that will end it. Therefore I say that the proposed legislation is nonsense.

I am concerned that we will put into operation a State Act that may well conflict with Commonwealth legislation, and anyone who knows the Constitution realises that, if a State Act conflicts with a Commonwealth Act, the Commonwealth Act prevails. I believe that the existing Commonwealth trade practices legislation will take care of the problems as they arise, if they are diligently reported. What we are saying is that people have not diligently reported the problems to their local members, and through them to the Prices Justification Tribunal.

Mr. Yewdale: This Government was told about that in 1973.

Dr. LOCKWOOD: I think it needs to be told again. It is not too late to throw this legislation out—to put it aside. I can envisage the time when this State will be seen as being in collusion, which is a nasty word under the Trade Practices Act, with bakers. That is not a nice situation in which to have a State Government placed, but I can see that it will happen. I can see that this State will be blamed for bread price rises, and I am dissociating myself from it right here and now.

Mr. Davis interjected.

Dr. LOCKWOOD: The honourable member has had his say, and I think he dissociated himself from it, too. This is nonsense legislation. I do not believe that anyone here today can predict what will be the outcome of its implementation, and if we cannot predict the outcome I do not see why we should be introducing it at all. It is like firing shots wildly in the night; one does not know where they will hit. It is meddlesome legislation. It falls into the category of fools rushing in where angels fear to tread. I believe that the Government's best course would be to get right out of it. I say this because a quiet revolution in bread-baking has been going on now for many years. In fact, it has been going on ever since machines were first used in the baking of bread, and that must have been when I was a lad.

Machines get better and faster. The term commonly used now when referring to increased production is "economies of scale". I have been told that the big machines can make bread at up to 11c per loaf cheaper than some of the smaller machines, and this is where the problem arises. By fixing a minimum wholesale price, I think we will prevent any future price drops that could come about through improvements in machinery, and I think everyone has to understand that. If we had adopted this approach 30 years ago, consumers would still be paying the price for bread manufactured by hand, despite the fact that bread is now manufactured by machine.

There will be improvements in machinery, and no-one here is going to deny that. Yet here we are legislating for antiquity. The machinery is modern now, but in a

few years it will be antiquated. We are legislating for the old horse-and-buggy days when bread was made by hand. Those were the days when there were a dozen men each side of long narrow flour troughs kneading the dough, and that is what we are legislating for. I believe that, when the legislation becomes law, the price of bread will be forced up. It will increase suddenly as soon as competition ends.

Mr. Houston: Just on election eve.

Dr. LOCKWOOD: It could be any time; it could be next month. When the huge combines enter into collusion—and we will be hard pressed to prove that collusion—there will be one price for bread, and it will be their price. It will not have anything to do with any price we might set; it will be their price. The Minister's department will have no way of finding out the cost of production, and so it will be left to those in the baking industry to tell the Government the prices that they want for bread. They and they alone will fix the price, so this proposal to recommend a minimum price for bread is nonsense.

I pay credit to the honourable member for Fassifern for some of the things he said here today. He explained some of the side problems that he unearthed as he went into the problems of the bread industry, but I cannot help likening him to a fish hook. He started with a strong point going one way, felt a barb and turned the corner, and ever since has been going hard the other way. He initiated this, and we are continuing it. When he ran into his problems and found that the position was not as he stated it to be, the whole thing should have been dropped in the party room and it should never have been raised again. It should certainly never have got as far as this Chamber.

Anyone can establish a committee. There is no need to have a parliamentary Bill to establish a committee, unless one is planning to give that committee some power. If the National Party wants a committee to advise it on the price of bread, it can have two committees—Vince Lester's and someone else's. If the Liberal Party wants a committee to advise it on the price of bread, it can have one. The Labor Party can do the same. There is no need to have legislation, if the only function of the committee is to advise on price.

Mr. Houston interjected.

Dr. LOCKWOOD: Yes, the housewives have been through it. I have been through all the arguments for and against the proposal.

There is no need to have legislation to establish a committee. There is no need to give a committee any powers, if its only function is to advise on price. It does not need powers. It does not need the powers of search or discovery. It can just

advise. There is no need for legislation. I do not see that the legislation is necessary at all, and I do not support it.

Mr. LANE (Merthyr) (5.7 p.m.): What disturbs me about this legislation is that we are buying a pig in a poke. We are not quite sure just where it will lead us. As I listened to the Minister's speech, seeking some enlightenment, I heard vague implications about what powers this committee might have or what tasks it might perform. I find myself somewhat in the dark.

As one who believes that Parliament should legislate and make plain on the floor of the Parliament what it intends to do so that its proposal can be examined by the people's representatives, I am disturbed to find that by this legislation we are going to establish a committee that will have some vague powers that will be given legislative strength in due course.

We are trying to get an insight into what the committee will actually do. We see that it will develop criteria for the establishment of zoning of wholesale prices.

Mr. Houston: What does that mean?

Mr. LANE: As the member for Bulimba says, what exactly does that mean? One presumes it means that a system of price control will flow from the committee's actions. It will facilitate discussions and mediate on disputes between various sections of the industry. If it does not have some arbitrary power, how will it facilitate discussions and mediate on disputes in the industry?

We discover also that it will develop maximum rates of return of unsold bread to bread manufacturers by retailers. So it will control bread returns, presumably in an arbitrary way. We also discover that one of its responsibilities will be to develop a range of discounts that should be given by manufacturers to retailers either within zones or outside. That would seem to indicate that it will lay down a price by inhibiting discounts. That is another price-control proposition.

But, of course, the committee's overall responsibility—it is referred to as a "responsibility" at this stage, although one fears that at a later date it will be a power by regulation—is to establish a code of trading practices for the bread industry and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, to establish practices that will ensure bread manufacturers a fair return for their labour and capital investment, whilst ensuring a fair price for bread for consumers, and facilitate the operation of the bread industry. What a big broad statement that is! Just what are the implications of that? The implications, of course, are price control. All sorts of restrictive trading practices will be imposed by this committee.

I have studied the report of the official inquiry into the bread industry, and I do not mean the one that Vince Lester conducted, presumably quite ably. He is quite entitled to do that, just as the honourable member for Brisbane Central, if he had the nous, could convene an inquiry into the matter.

Mr. Davis: I have already.

Mr. LANE: Of course, the honourable member has not the nous to do that, as the honourable member for Surfers Paradise points out to me. Did the honourable member say he has already?

Mr. Davis: I have already.

Mr. LANE: I understood from the report of the committee of inquiry that there would be a self-regulating committee within the industry that would carry out some sort of liaison on a voluntary basis. I think that would broadly describe the recommendations of the official committee of inquiry.

One now sees that, at a later date, that concept has been ignored and that bread manufacturers will observe the code of practice determined by the committee, and that if a bread manufacturer wishes to enter into a trading arrangement for bread and to trade in bread in a manner that is not in accordance with such code, he shall first seek the approval of the committee. Let us have that out in the open. That was not part of the Minister's speech, by the way, so it might enlighten a few honourable members if they are aware of that fact.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. LANE: I do not want to have to say it twice, but some honourable members opposite are too dull to get the message.

Mr. Davis: No. I will work on it.

Mr. LANE: I suggest that the honourable member read the pull in the morning. He might find it useful.

We are talking about a very basic commodity, something that is on every breakfast table—a loaf of bread.

Mr. Sullivan: They will eventually read it in the Bill, of course.

Mr. LANE: Oh, I see; yes. Let us spread our facts about bread sales on the table where everyone can see them.

Mr. Davis: What did the Minister say? We did not hear it.

Mr. LANE: It will be in the Bill.

We also know that where a bread manufacturer enters into a trading arrangement for bread or trades in bread in a manner which is not in accordance with the code of practice or which has not been approved by the committee, he shall be guilty of an offence against the Act. In this place, much is said about subordinate legislation. Perhaps we are

moving towards subordinate legislation that will be brought down by a committee outside Parliament. That is something about which we ought to be getting a little bit alarmed—laws made by people outside Parliament; not even by Ministers but, in practical effect, by people outside Parliament who are not responsible to the electors.

Mr. Moore: Regulations superseding legislation.

Mr. LANE: Regulations superseding legislation, yes. I just wonder in which direction the committee will wish to go in exercising the two powers it will be given.

One can go to the Minister's speech and read some of the comments that he has made about control of the bread industry generally. He said that experiences in other States will be closely examined, and the comment was then made that New South Wales and South Australia have price controls on bread. As that is mentioned, one presumes that it is something that will be considered.

Another comment is that Victoria had zoning legislation 10 years ago. As that has received favourable mention today, perhaps it may receive favourable consideration by the committee when it puts forward regulations.

Another comment that we heard from the Minister today was that Western Australia had legislated for a ban on the return of unsold bread in that State. That is something else that the committee might well take up. The code of practice will be broad and wide-ranging and will give broad general power.

The Minister commented that basically the committee will be an industry body, and that that will be its real strength. I suggest that its real strength will be in recommending to the Minister the code of practice, which will have the effect of regulations—no doubt we will see it tabled in Parliament at some later date—and will have the force of law.

It is not what the Bill does about the bread industry that disturbs me; it is the underhand way in which it will be done by a committee outside this Parliament. I am putting these points forward as matters of principle.

Mr. Yewdale: Do you believe the legislation will save the country bakers?

Mr. LANE: I do not think that it will save them. I will get to its practical effects in a moment. I am trying to grapple with this subject of control from outside Parliament. That is what we should be addressing our mind to. I know it is too large a concept for members opposite to grasp—certainly too large for the honourable member for Brisbane Central, whose only contri-

bution since his return to the Chamber has been an addition to the strength of the bass quartet on that side.

Mr. Davis: I think we are lucky to have a detective on the other side to ferret out these things.

Mr. LANE: Yes. I think the bread industry could be left alone. It should have a free trade situation, which virtually exists at the moment, in which competitive and market forces regulate the bread industry. If the industry itself wishes to set up an advisory committee as recommended by the committee of inquiry, or a voluntary self-regulating committee, let it do that, just as many other industries do. I do not see any need for the Government to get itself involved at all in this field. If the housewives want to go to Coles supermarket or one of the other big supermarkets around the city and purchase a large loaf of white bread for 42c instead of going to the corner store and paying 52c, let them. It is a matter of personal choice, surely. If they want to go to hot-bread kitchens and pay a little more, let them. Surely that is the way free enterprise should operate. It is better than having these artificial controls and zones.

I do not accept the proposition that the Government should presume that it is conferring rights on people when it legislates for some facility. I feel that the Government should approach it from the point of view that people have a right to do anything that does not interfere with anyone else. Legislation that is passed in this place merely takes away a right. We are not the conferrers of rights. We do not give gifts to people by legislating here. Of course, that is a Liberal attitude, so I suppose it will be misunderstood by members on the other side of the Chamber.

I think that in 12 months' time we will end up with a tight system of zoning in which a person will not be able to sell bread on one side of an artificial line but will be able to sell it on the other side. If it is made in one factory, its sale will be allowed, but it will not be allowed if it is made in another factory. We will find ourselves in such a situation that the local grocer will have to watch a scale of charges issued by the Government for a loaf of bread and sell it at the legislated price. That is another thing that is quite foreign to Liberal attitudes.

As a free trader, I find much to disturb me in the Bill. As a supporter of the democratic system under which laws are made in Parliament, I also find much to disturb me in the Bill. I am aghast and I ask the Minister to tell us where this is leading us today.

Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 5.20 p.m.