

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 31 OCTOBER 1979

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DEATH OF SIR WILLIAM ALFRED BRAND, C.B.E.

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. S. J. Muller, Fassifern) read prayers and took the chair at 11 a.m.

PAPERS

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

Reports—

House-builders' Registration Board, for 1978-79.

Builders' Registration Board of Queensland, for 1978-79.

The following paper was laid on the table:—

Regulations under the State Housing Act 1945-1979.

PETITION

PRESERVATION OF RABY BAY LAND AGAINST CANAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. GOLEBY (Redlands) presented a petition from 4,011 electors of Queensland and others praying that the Parliament of Queensland will take the necessary action to preserve the area proposed for canal development at Raby Bay in its natural state and safeguard the community from the effects of the development.

Petition read and received.

STOCK ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION

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

“That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider introducing a Bill to amend the Stock Act 1915-1978 in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

POULTRY INDUSTRY ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION

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

“That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider introducing a Bill to amend the Poultry Industry Act 1946-1975 in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

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Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah—Premier) (11.2 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

“1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this State by the late Sir William Alfred Brand, C.B.E., a former member of the Parliament of Queensland.

“2. That Mr. Speaker be requested to convey to Lady Brand and the family of the deceased gentleman the above resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the members of the Parliament of Queensland, in the loss they have sustained.”

The death of Sir Alfred Brand at the weekend sees the passing of another great Queensland and a man who had served this State and nation for very many years in public life. He was dedicated to the service of his fellow-men and he played a major role in the development of the political life of this State.

Sir Alfred had a long and distinguished career, and it is well that we reflect on the character of this man who gave so much of himself for the benefit of the lives of so many Queenslanders.

Sir Alfred had a term of some 38 years in both State and Federal politics. As a persuasive and forceful orator, he did much to represent in the Parliament the country people of this State. He sought strongly to convey the problems that faced rural Australians. He did much to expand the cause of those who lived in the country and sought better conditions and standards for those who lived and worked right across the State.

He is remembered with affection and respect as one of the founders of the Country Party in Queensland. He was a very good friend to me when I first entered Parliament. I recall many of the experiences of those days when Sir Alfred supported me and others as new members in this Parliament.

As Mr. William Alfred Brand, he entered the State Legislative Assembly in the general election of 1920, having defeated the sitting Labor member for the seat of Burrum. After the electoral redistribution in 1931, when the seat was absorbed, he successfully contested the 1932 election for the new seat of Isis. He held that seat until his retirement from State politics in 1950.

In May 1954, he successfully stood for the Federal seat of Wide Bay and continued to serve as a member of the House of Representatives until his retirement in December 1958.

For 22 years Sir Alfred was president of the Australian Sugar Producers' Association, retiring from that post in 1964. He contributed much to the stability of Queensland's vital sugar industry, and his influence on its development was very substantial indeed.

When I entered Parliament in 1947 I was impressed by Sir Alfred's dedication to country people. All members were impressed by his forceful speaking in the various debates in the House. He was a very strong politician who travelled extensively throughout Queensland. Certainly he was well known in those years for his advocacy on behalf of country people and primary producers. In 1958 he was awarded the C.B.E., and in January 1965 was knighted for his services to the community. The people of Childers, the sugar industry, and indeed all Queenslanders have been richer because of the contributions over many years of the late Sir Alfred Brand.

On behalf of the Government, on my own behalf and, indeed, I am sure, on behalf of all members in the House, I take this opportunity to extend personal regrets and the condolences of the House to the family of the late Sir Alfred Brand.

Hon. L. R. EDWARDS (Ipswich—Deputy Premier and Treasurer) (11.7 a.m.): I join with the Premier this morning in mourning the passing of a distinguished Queensland and former member of this House. Sir Alfred Brand was a man who devoted much of his life to serving others. His long career in politics and in the sugar industry would indeed be difficult to match. His contributions in both areas were outstanding.

Sir Alfred is remembered as a man who possessed great strength of character and purpose. Those attributes won him the respect and admiration of the people with whom he came in contact day by day.

At a function marking his retirement as president of the A.S.P.A., the late Jack Pizzey, a former Premier of this State, described Sir Alfred Brand as one of the sugar industry's most outstanding leaders. Mr. Pizzey referred to the dramatic development that had taken place in the industry during Sir Alfred's presidency. He said that it was indeed fortunate that the wise leadership given by him had matched the challenges of the time. Inside and outside Parliament, Sir Alfred was a tireless worker in promoting the cause of the sugar industry. Those in the industry today owe him a debt of gratitude for the efforts he made on their behalf.

As a member of this House and the Federal Parliament, Sir Alfred was a forceful representative of his electorate. He derived great satisfaction from helping his constituents with their problems. He was a man with a sense of duty, a sense of purpose and a sense of responsibility to his fellow Queenslanders. He was a man who helped make Queensland a most prosperous State.

During my visit to Childers last May, I was pleased to visit the Childers Hospital with the honourable member for Isis and to meet Sir Alfred and have a short discussion with him. At the time he was not a well man and his life was obviously nearing its end. He has now passed on, but his name and his contribution to life in this State will not be forgotten.

I second the Premier's motion and support the message of condolence to the relatives and family of Sir Alfred Brand.

Mr. CASEY (Mackay—Leader of the Opposition) (11.9 a.m.): On behalf of the Opposition I support the motion of condolence and join in the expression of sympathy to the family of Sir Alfred Brand. As he served in this Parliament before any member of the Opposition came here, he was not known personally to us as a parliamentarian. Probably the Premier is the only member in the House to have served with him, to have known him properly and to have understood his value as a parliamentarian.

He was widely renowned throughout the State as one of the founders or pioneers of the former Country Party in Queensland. From 1920, in times that were very hard for country people in Queensland and elsewhere in Australia, he served in this Parliament. He served here during the very bad Depression years when conditions were hard and harsh for all Queenslanders.

He was well known to two other members of the parliamentary Labor Party, the honourable members for Maryborough and Bundaberg, in other ways, and I feel sure that they will also join in this expression of sympathy. Sir Alfred was best known to me personally for the work he did as president of the Australian Sugar Producers' Association, one of those very strong and viable organisations that did so much for the sugar industry. I know that in that role at that time he was highly regarded by former Labor leaders of this Parliament for the tasks he undertook in assisting them to put into effect the long-term sugar agreement with Great Britain which began in the early 1950s and continued for something like 25 years. That agreement was really what put the sugar industry on its feet in the Mackay district, for a start, and then throughout Queensland. We should pay tribute to the great work he did for the sugar industry. As the years go by it will be through his role as president of the A.S.P.A. over such a long period that he will be best remembered throughout Queensland.

Mr. POWELL (Isis) (11.11 a.m.): I rise to support the motion, so capably moved by the Premier and seconded by the Deputy Premier, to express the sympathy of this House to the family of Sir Alfred Brand on his passing away last Friday. The world is certainly a poorer place when a person such as Sir Alfred, a man who lived for 91 years and contributed so much to the community,

passes away. He deserves high praise indeed. He was a man among men, and a person among people, and that was the story of his success in life. We all enter and leave the world in a similar fashion; it is what we do in between that is important. Sir Alfred certainly made the most of his life. He dedicated it to the people of the Isis area and to the service of his country.

The people of Childers in particular, and the Isis electorate as a whole, mourn the passing of a very great Australian. In the Isis area his oratory is legendary; people were very happy just to be able to hear him speak. He spent 30 years in this Parliament and a further period of four years in the Federal Parliament, and as a result his wisdom was often sought after. He was, as previous speakers have said, a foundation member of the Country Party, and right up to his death he took a very active interest in the National Party. He was a very strong supporter of ours, and it was good to be able to ask and receive his advice on many things. In recent years, since I have been a member of this Parliament, he suffered from ill health, but on the occasions on which I was privileged to visit him he made it abundantly clear that while his physical being was not in very good shape, there was nothing wrong with his mind. He had a very keen mind, which was able to perceive the intricacies of a case.

On behalf of the electors of Isis, I offer our sympathy to Lady Brand and her family, and also express the hope that they will be able to continue on in the knowledge that this great man contributed a great deal to this nation.

Mr. BLAKE (Bundaberg) (11.14 a.m.): It is my privilege to be able to speak to this motion of condolence to the family of Sir William Alfred Brand. I feel sure that everybody in the Isis district and surrounding areas, and people all over Queensland associated with the sugar industry, will remember this occasion with great sadness.

I remember Sir Alfred perhaps most vividly as a long-serving, successful and undefeated politician, both in the State and Federal Parliaments. In 1920 he was elected to represent the electorate of Burrum, which later became the electorate of Isis. He represented Isis from its formation in 1932 until 1950.

After he had retired from State politics in 1950, I recall that he was brought out of retirement in 1954 to contest the Federal seat of Wide Bay against a former Prime Minister of Australia, and this he did successfully. I remember it well, because it was the first time that I had publicly taken part in an election campaign. It is a tribute to Sir Alfred Brand that not only was he successful in winning that Federal seat of Wide Bay but he defeated such a distinguished opponent as Mr. Frank Forde.

Of course, his long service to the sugar industry is well known and deservedly has been well rewarded. His service to the

people, to the sugar industry and to the Parliament was recognised by the bestowal of a C.B.E. and later by a knighthood, and everybody agreed that that knighthood was very much deserved. He was greatly respected by all of his constituents and by what I might term his legion of great friends. I again say that it is a privilege to support this motion of condolence on the passing of a person whom I knew all my life, and to express my deep sympathy and that of the Opposition to Lady Brand and her family.

Hon. C. A. WHARTON (Burnett—Minister for Works and Housing) (11.16 a.m.): I wish to associate myself with the motion of condolence before the House, which has been moved by the Premier and seconded by the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. I just want to say how sad I was to learn of the passing of Sir Alfred Brand. He became endeared to many of the people in my electorate, as it will be recalled that before the redistribution involving the Burnett electorate a great deal of the Isis electorate was in the Burnett electorate. Much of the Federal division of Wide Bay covered, and still covers, the electorate that Sir Alfred represented.

I want to say on behalf of the people of the electorates of Burnett and Wide Bay how much he endeared himself to them, mostly for the way in which he listened to and helped people irrespective of where they were or who they were. He had a wonderful knack of listening to people and helping them, which I think is what politics is all about. He also had a wonderful way of debating and of putting the case for the many delegations that he led on behalf of the people. He led them strongly, firmly and well.

Probably his greatest interest was in the sugar industry, and I want to pay tribute to him for his efforts in that area. It is significant that he played a leading role in the sugar industry, which is so important in that region. Even after he retired from politics, he played an active part in the sugar industry.

I merely endorse the remarks of previous speakers and associate myself with the motion of condolence. On behalf of the Government, I express our sympathy to Lady Brand. Yesterday, at the funeral service, the people of the region paid a high tribute to Sir Alfred.

Mr. HANSEN (Maryborough) (11.18 a.m.): Having represented the areas that were formerly represented by Sir Alfred Brand, I came to appreciate his true worth and the fact that, as both a State and Federal member of Parliament, he had such a rapport with people. He was always approachable, and I think that that was one of his most notable characteristics.

Of course, he belonged to the old school of politicians. He took a rest where he could get it. He travelled on trains in and around his electorate. He had a bed in his Federal electorate office in Maryborough, because very often he had to have a camp

whenever he could. I think that this type of campaigning helped him to live longer than will present members of Parliament who have to battle with the hustle and bustle of television.

If there is one thing Sir Alfred had, it was longevity; he lived for 91 years. He retired from this Assembly after having been a member of it for 30-odd years. Those 30 years of his service to this Parliament were not easy. Sir Alfred Brand was a man who took a keen interest in what was happening about him, and he did carry some responsibility. At one stage he was deputy leader of his party in the State Parliament.

He retired, but he was not to stay retired for long. As the honourable member for Bundaberg has stated, he returned to politics and contested the seat of Wide Bay, a much larger electorate than he had before. He gained that seat at the election in 1954 and also held it in the subsequent election in 1955. That was in the very turbulent era of the Menzies/Fadden Governments. However, he was successful on both of those occasions.

Even after his retirement he continued to take a lively interest in the community. He had the honour of being invited to Golden Jubilee celebrations of establishments that he had opened 50 years previously. That is an honour not available to many of us. His term in the Parliament might not have been a record, but it must be very close to it. It was certainly much longer than the usual term.

I found him to be a person who respected everyone, irrespective of his politics. He knew mine, as I knew his; yet we had a great respect for one another.

I would like to join with the members of this Assembly in expressing my personal sympathy and the sympathy of this House to Lady Brand. I should add that she is a Lady in every respect. She was a great help to Sir Alfred and I am sure she is a great help to her family at this time.

Mr. ROW (Hinchinbrook) (11.22 a.m.): I, too, would like to pay tribute to the late Sir Alfred Brand. I knew him in his association with the Country Party and also with the Australian Sugar Producers' Association, of which I am a member. In days gone by I attended many conferences of that association over which the late Sir Alfred Brand presided. I am quite certain that the success and solidarity of the Australian sugar industry today is largely due to the tenacity, the efforts and the guidance of men of his capacity.

As a representative of an electorate far from the one in which he spent his lifetime, I feel I am justified in expressing sympathy on behalf of the people of North Queensland, particularly of my electorate, and I convey that sympathy to the family of the late Sir Alfred Brand in this time of bereavement.

Hon. V. B. SULLIVAN (Condamine—Minister for Primary Industries) (11.23 a.m.): It is in my capacity as Minister for Primary Industries that I want to support the motion before the House. Of course, it is a sad time for Lady Brand and her family with the passing of Sir Alfred, who has been referred to by the Premier and other speakers as a great Queenslander.

I speak in my capacity as Minister for Primary Industries because, as has been said, Sir Alfred was one of the founders of the Country Party. The Country Party has done so much over the years to lay down the policies implemented by this Government today. Of course, to keep in step with changing times, changes must take place.

Members involved in the sugar industry have spoken of the magnificent job that Sir Alfred did in that field. The Leader of the Opposition and other members from the area, including the member for Hinchinbrook who is a member of the A.S.P.A., have mentioned that. I know only too well of the high esteem in which Sir Alfred was held by the sugar industry. The Leader of the Opposition referred to the contribution he made to the Labor Governments of the day and the part that he played in bringing about the 25-year sugar agreement with the United Kingdom. He would have seen great fluctuations in the fortunes of the sugar industry during his life-time; but he laid the foundations for what I believe to be a very soundly based industry.

However, his contribution to the community does not rest solely with that rural industry. Because of his association with the Country Party, it could be said that he was one of the great Queenslanders who played a significant role in establishing policies for rural industries generally. Therefore, I join with the Premier, the Deputy Premier and other members in expressing my sympathy and the sympathy of so many people involved in rural industry to Lady Brand and her family.

Motion (Mr. Bjelke-Petersen) agreed to, honourable members standing in silence.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

1. FITTING OF MAG WHEELS TO MOTOR VEHICLES

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

(1) Do some insurance companies reject damage claims because certain types of wheels have been fitted to vehicles involved in accidents?

(2) Are certain wheels of the mag type considered dangerous or illegal and, if so, why are these wheels advertised and readily available from retailers?

(3) If they are neither illegal nor dangerous, why are insurance companies discriminating against persons who have fitted these wheels to their vehicles?

Answers:—

(1) Apart from the State Government Insurance Office, the State Government has no control over the actions of insurers, as they operate under Commonwealth jurisdiction. However, it would appear that if a claim is made in relation to a vehicle fitted with mag type wheels which are not of a make approved by the Division of Occupational Safety and Weights and Measures, the claim could be rejected. Insurers would also be concerned to know whether or not the mag wheels contributed to the accident. For instance, if the vehicle was parked at the time of the accident, the fact that it had mag wheels fitted, which did not protrude from the body-work, would hardly be of relevance.

(2) Certain types of mag wheels are considered to be dangerous, but the Division of Occupational Safety has no control over their sale. Whilst it is known that non-approved wheels are being sold, unless the manufacturer submits pertinent information relative to their construction for survey purposes, it would not be possible for the division to include such wheels on the approved list that is circulated to insurers. As insurers are aware of the wheels approved by the division, they endeavour, for safety purposes, to ensure that their respective clients' vehicles are fitted with approved wheels. This action does contribute to the control of the use of non-standard wheels.

(3) It is a generally accepted practice that when a person takes out motor vehicle insurance he warrants that there is no modification to the vehicle or that the vehicle will not be modified beyond the manufacturer's specifications. Needless to say, should he modify his vehicle subsequently and not notify the insurance company concerned, he then leaves himself at risk.

In the case of the S.G.I.O., if non-approved wheels are disclosed on the insurance proposal form, the office will not insure. Furthermore, if there is a non-disclosure that such wheels are fitted and an accident occurs where the dangerous wheels were judged to have contributed to the accident, the office will reject the claim.

2. DESCRIPTION AND SALE OF PRE-PACKED MEAT

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

With reference to Press reports that earlier this year a leading retail store chain was fined \$1,100 in the Sydney Central Summons Court on charges of selling pre-packed chuck steak falsely described as rib grilling steak and selling pre-packed meat without indicating the full description of the contents—

(1) What consumer protection regulations apply to the description and sale of pre-packed meat in Queensland?

(2) What frequency of departmental inspection is maintained for public protection?

(3) How many prosecutions, if any, have resulted from departmental inspections, and what is the predominant feature of breachings of consumer protection?

Answers:—

(1) Chilled pre-packed meat as sold in supermarkets under clear polythene wrapping is controlled under provisions of the Health Act 1937-1978, section 101 (2), in relation to their sale as falsely described food, and the Food and Drug Regulations 1977, in regard to labelling.

(2 & 3) Sampling checks by departmental health inspectors are carried out at regular intervals. There appears to be infrequent misdescription of meat products, and when this occurs it has primarily involved sausage meat. One prosecution was undertaken in the 1978-79 financial year.

3. NEW FARM POLICE STATION

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

With reference to a recent Government decision to build an extension onto the New Farm Police Station following my representation over a long period, when will the work be commencing and what is the estimated total cost of this project?

Answer:—

As indicated by the honourable member, following his personal representations, approval was recently given for the provision of additional accommodation at the New Farm Police Station. This work is expected to commence on 12 November 1979. The estimated total cost of the work is \$24,900.00.

4. POLICE STATION, DECEPTION BAY

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

(1) Has he received further requests for a police station at Deception Bay?

(2) Has the position changed regarding the necessity for a police station at Deception Bay, or is police surveillance still to be carried out from Redcliffe?

Answers:—

(1) The provision of a police service in the Deception Bay area has been raised on a number of occasions.

(2) A recent needs assessment study of the Redcliffe Police District failed to establish the need for a police station at Deception Bay at this stage. Patrols of the area will continue to be carried out by Redcliffe police.

5. COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE,
CABOOLTURE

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

(1) As the present health centre conducted from premises lent by the Caboolture Shire Council is operating successfully but a health centre providing more services would be of great benefit to the area, is it proposed to erect a new community health centre in Caboolture?

(2) If no proposal is in hand for the erection of a new health centre, will he give consideration to the establishment of a new centre when funds are available?

Answers:—

(1) It is not proposed to construct a new Community Health Services Centre in Caboolture.

(2) In the event that the present premises made available by the Shire Council were to cease to be available, then my department would take steps to rent accommodation adequate for its needs for services in the Caboolture area.

6. POLICE STATION, SPRINGWOOD/
ROCHEDALE AREA

Mr. D'Arcy, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Mines, Energy and Police—

(1) What action has been taken to establish a police station in the Springwood/Rochedale area?

(2) Has land been acquired for this purpose and, if so, where is the land situated?

(3) As he is no doubt aware of the many requests that have been made for a police station which will service the area as well as relieve Woodridge, will he hasten the establishment of this facility?

Answers:—

(1) Patrols of the area are being maintained by Beenleigh and Woodridge police.

(2) Action is proceeding towards excision of portion of the old Slack's Creek school reserve between the Pacific Highway and Winnetts Road, Daisy Hill, for the future construction of a police complex.

(3) Provision for this police complex is included in the department's Forward Planning Loan Works Program and the project will be proceeded with having regard to availability of finance and priority of other police station building requirements throughout the State.

7. TAKE-OVERS OF QUEENSLAND COMPANIES

Mr. D'Arcy, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Industry and Administrative Services—

With reference to his answer to my question of 18 October regarding the failure of the Government to protect Queensland industry from southern and overseas take-overs, in which he stated that some months ago a select committee was established at the specific request of Cabinet for the purpose of examining the impact of take-overs on the economy and living standards—

(1) When was this committee established?

(2) Who are the members of this committee and what are their qualifications?

(3) To whom is the committee responsible and when is a report expected to be made public?

Answers:—

I refute the implication in the honourable member's preface to his question that the State Government lacks concern for industry in this State. He should well know that we have a record second to none in encouraging the establishment and expansion of industry here. Furthermore, it is taking place in an atmosphere of free enterprise, untainted by the socialistic principles he professes to follow.

The answers to the honourable member's questions are:—

(1) 19 June 1979.

(2) Mr. L. A. Hielscher, B.Com., A.A.U.Q.—Under Treasurer. Mr. K. I. MacPherson, LL.B., Barrister at Law—Commissioner for Corporate Affairs. Mr. G. L. Baker, B.Sc.App., B.E., B.Econ., M.Sc.—Deputy Director (Technical), Department of Commercial and Industrial Development.

(3) It is expected that the committee, which has received submissions on the impact of take-overs of Queensland companies from a number of organisations and persons, will present its report to the Honourable W. D. Lickiss, M.L.A., Minister for Justice and Attorney-General, shortly.

8. INQUIRY INTO OPERATION OF
QUEENSLAND FISH BOARD

Mr. T. A. White, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Maritime Services and Tourism—

(1) Is he aware of a recent inquiry into the operation of the Queensland Fish Board by P. A. Management Consultants and, if so, is it one of the recommendations that the Fish Board be handed over to private enterprise?

(2) When will the report be made available to this House?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) I would refer the honourable member to answers given to questions on 21 September 1978 and 3 May 1979, when it was made clear that the consultants' report was commissioned with a view to assisting the Government to formulate future policies in relation to the marketing of fish products, that it is in the nature of a working document, and that it was never intended for release as a public document.

9. LOCATION OF HOUSING COMMISSION ACCOMMODATION

Mr. T. A. White, pursuant to notice, asked the Minister for Works and Housing—

Is he aware of a recent survey carried out by the Psychology Department of the Queensland University in relation to health problems as a consequence of noise pollution and, if so, what action does his department intend to take to ensure that future Housing Commission accommodation is appropriately located?

Answer:—

I am aware of the study. Noise as a hazard is well documented in both medical and architectural literature. It is one of several factors which influence commission locations. In fact, the records show regular rejection of possible purchases because of noise or other environmental factors. Change in noise patterns often occurs after housing is built. People's reaction to noise is individual and varied. On some it causes more stress than on others. We can really only work to averages on known predictable data at the time of supplying houses.

10. TRANSPORT, HANDLING AND USE OF L.P. GAS

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

(1) Are restrictions placed on tankers carting L.P. gas from using the Story Bridge or river crossings at certain times and, if so, what are these restrictions?

(2) What qualifications are required for persons undertaking motor vehicle conversions from petroleum to L.P. gas?

(3) Are persons who commercially fill vehicles with L.P. gas required to undertake any training in the handling of this volatile product?

(4) Is he also aware of an article on 13 July which stated that since the conversion to L.P. gas of Japanese taxi fleets, approximately 200 deaths have occurred from L.P. gas explosions and fires?

Answers:—

(1) No.

(2) Persons undertaking such conversions in Queensland must be at least 18 years of age and shall have satisfactorily completed the L.P.G. Automotive Installers Course at the South Brisbane College of Technical and Further Education and currently hold an L.P.G. installer's licence (motor fuel installations only), which is issued by the Chief Gas Examiner.

(3) Such refuelling attendants must be at least 18 years of age and must be trained and experienced in these duties as per the Filling Instructions listed in the Australian Standard Code 1425 for the use of L.P.G. in internal-combustion engines.

(4) I am aware of a similar published statement. However, during the seven years since the Japanese Government imposed strict safety regulations governing the manufacture, quality and installation of conversion kits, as well as storage and refuelling procedures, no further deaths attributable to such incidents have been recorded.

11. BETHANIA-BEAUDESERT RAILWAY LINE

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

Does the Railway Department intend closing the railway line between Bethania and Beaudesert and, if not, are there plans to have this section included in the suburban electrification scheme?

Answer:—

There is no proposal under consideration to close this branch line. The line is utilised for goods traffic and existing plans do not provide for its electrification.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

BRISBANE AREA RAIL-ELECTRIFICATION PROGRAMME

Mr. CASEY: In asking the Minister for Transport this question, I refer to the Brisbane area rail-electrification programme and remind him of a pre-election promise made by the then Treasurer (Sir Gordon Chalk), on 14 November 1974, that the work would virtually be completed in three years, or by 1977. In view of the Brisbane transport projections tabled by the Minister in Parliament yesterday, is it a fact that with the National-Liberal Party State Government in power in Queensland since the 1957 election, and the Liberal-National Country Party Commonwealth Government in power since 1975, the electrification programme has fallen at least seven years behind schedule? What is the new date of completion for the electrification programme that Sir Gordon Chalk

promised by 1977, and when does the Government believe the Brisbane area lines will be fully electrified for both peak and off-peak periods?

Mr. TOMKINS: I am not aware of any statement Sir Gordon Chalk made in this context.

Mr. Casey: They were well publicised.

Mr. TOMKINS: They may have been, but I am not aware of them.

At the present time the programme envisages the opening of the Ferny Grove-Darra line on 17 November this year. Next year, the line will extend to Ipswich. Between 1980 and 1982 work will commence on the line from Shorncliffe to Kingston. That line will service the Commonwealth Games. Between 1982 and 1984 the line will run from the Wynnum-Lota area right back to Petrie. That is the programme we are working on and for which funds were made available by the Treasurer. So far as I am concerned that seems to be a well-accepted programme. The honourable member referred to what Sir Gordon Chalk said. That gentleman was entitled to say what he liked. I point out to the honourable member that we are working at great speed and everything is going well. I am quite sure that the programme will be completed in 1984.

TRADE UNION OPPOSITION TO INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION PROCESSES AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES ACT

Mr. GYGAR: I ask the Premier:

(1) Is the Government aware of threats by the Australian Council of Trade Unions to withdraw from the arbitration system as indicated by the A.C.T.U. president (Mr. Hawke) recently?

(2) Does the Premier see a connection between this threat by Mr. Hawke and organised trade union opposition in Queensland to arbitration processes through the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act and the new Essential Services Act?

(3) Is the Premier aware of similarities between strike-promoting material distributed at a waterside workers' strike yesterday over the Essential Services Act and material recently widely distributed by the Communist Party in Queensland?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: Yes, I am aware of the general attitude of the A.C.T.U. towards the arbitration system and the administration of the industrial laws of our State. We have known for a long time that the unions accept the commission's rulings if they feel they can gain by them, but if they feel they are unlikely to get what they want then they do not support the arbitration system.

As was mentioned in the honourable member's question, when considering what is happening across the board in Australia one

has only to examine the literature that is being printed by the Communist Party and posted to people, in association with the A.C.T.U. and the Labor movement generally, advocating very strongly the rejection of the arbitration system of deciding industrial disputes. An examination of this literature shows exactly what aims are being promoted by the Communist Party. I have some very interesting literature in my possession. Honourable members opposite will also have it because it is being widely distributed. I do not doubt, of course, that they are not only supporting Communist Party policy, but actively advocating it.

We have to keep in mind that the general attitude of the unions towards strikes, street marches and all the rest comes from the literature distributed by the Communist Party. This is just another method of trying to further its aim, in which it is supported by the A.L.P., to do away with the arbitration system. Ultimately, of course, it will lead to their destruction.

SALES OF CRAB MEAT AND REEF FISH TO TOURISTS

Mr. POWELL: I ask the Minister for Maritime Services and Tourism: With reference to the suggestion that crab meat and reef fish should be readily available for sale to tourists in Queensland, what action has been taken to implement this suggestion? Would the fear expressed by some negative people that Queensland mud crabs would be seriously depleted as a result be resolved if the Labor Government of New South Wales would adhere to regulations pertaining to the taking and selling of crabs similar to those operating in Queensland?

Mr. M. D. HOOPER: Many people in the past have advocated the packaging and sale of Queensland seafoods to visitors returning to the southern States. In recent weeks I have had talks with a private entrepreneur who is very keen to start such a business in Queensland. He is having talks with the Queensland Fish Board at the present time about the regular availability of this type of product.

It is true that Queensland seafoods are in great demand in the southern States. It is also true, and regrettable, that the New South Wales Government has not seen fit to follow the practice adopted in Queensland of prohibiting the sale of female crabs, particularly undersized female crabs, and undersized male crabs that are coming mainly from Queensland. The defence of the New South Wales Government is that the crabs that are caught in northern New South Wales are smaller than the Queensland crabs, and as that is the only type of crab that can be caught in New South Wales it believes that is quite fair to sell in that State Queensland crabs of an immature age.

When talking about female crabs, I might add that recent research by biologists at the James Cook University and the Australian Institute of Marine Science has indicated that female crabs, when they reach a certain age, no longer lay eggs. They have suggested that it would be quite reasonable to market female crabs when they measure about five inches across the back and are no longer capable of producing eggs. That, of course, would make crabs more available to the consuming public. At the present time, my department is researching the matter. No decision has yet been made on whether we should sell large-sized female crabs.

QUASHING OF SUSPENSION OF PROMINENT A.L.P. MEMBERS IN QUEENSLAND

Mr. SCASSOLA: I ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer: Is he aware of the reported decision of the A.L.P. Federal Executive to quash the suspensions imposed on prominent A.L.P. members by the Q.C.E. for their severe public criticism of the performance of the Opposition in this place? Is not that decision of the A.L.P.'s Federal Executive an endorsement of the criticism made by those members?

Dr. EDWARDS: I am aware of the newspaper reports which indicate that the Labor Party, as usual, is in tatters. That has been the case for many years. The newspaper reports also indicate that there is every likelihood that there will be Federal intervention in the Labor Party in this State, and that, of course, is feared by honourable members opposite.

I also wish to say—and it is quite relevant—that the A.L.P. members were suspended because they dared to criticise the Leader of the Opposition and his performance. I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that there are many people in this State who are just as critical of him. Of course, the policies and programmes of Opposition members will be continually criticised by the people of Queensland for a long time.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

TRANSFER OF AUSTRALIAN PENSIONERS LEAGUE FUNDS TO AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY

Mr. GYGAR (Stafford) (12 noon): I have previously raised in this House the matter of the Australian Labor Party's involvement in the Australian Pensioners League scandal. This matter has been ventilated often—in questions by me on 22 and 29 November 1978 and 10 April 1979, in speeches I delivered on 22, 23 and 29 November 1978 and 29 March 1979, and in a ministerial statement by the Minister for

Justice and Attorney-General on 6 December 1978. These revelations have created turmoil in the A.L.P. There have been witch-hunts and investigations that have culminated in the expulsion of Mr. Joe Harris, a B.W.I.U. organiser and member of the State Council of the A.L.P., from the Labor Party for life. There have also been law suits initiated between members of the A.L.P. A desperate attempt was made to gag further discussion on this matter in this House on 3 October 1979. They are worried—and well they should be.

There are two theories currently abroad as to why Mr. Harris was expelled from the A.L.P. The first is that on 15 March 1979 he wrote a letter to Mr David Combe, the National Secretary of the A.L.P., at Mr. Combe's invitation, outlining details of the scandalous involvement of senior A.L.P. members in the Australian Pensioners League swindle and calling for Federal intervention. The second theory is that he was thrown out of the party for leaking that letter to me. I categorically assure the House that I have never met Harris, that I have never spoken to him, and that I did not get the letter from him. I am sorry to disappoint those honourable members who pilloried an innocent man. My sources of information remain undetected so far by the inquisitors from the Breakfast Creek gang.

However, the people of Queensland, and indeed the whole of Australia, have a right to know what is going on inside the Queensland A.L.P. They have a right to know what has so infuriated the Australian Labor Party heavies that they have expelled Harris for life. They have a right to know what was said in the Joe Harris letter. Therefore, I table that letter and read its contents to the House. And interesting reading it is.

Whereupon the honourable member laid the letter on the table.

The letter is dated 15 March 1979 and it reads—

"Mr. David Combe,
"National Secretary,
"Australian Labor Party,
"P.O. Box 1,
"CANBERRA. A.C.T. 2600.
"Dear Mr. Combe,

"In March 1978, Australian Pensioners' League (Qld.) Secretary Geoff Goulet approached me to complain about the agreement between his organisation and Queensland Volunteer Fundraisers not being adhered to. He knew I was associated with the Wavell Heights ALP Branch stall at the Edinburgh Castle Hotel and that I was the B.W.I.U. delegate to the Q.C.E.

"In this discussion, Goulet agreed to negotiate with Gerry Jones and Gordon O'Sullivan, and agreed to see how he could take up the dissatisfaction of the Pensioners' League with these two in some other manner—so that they would know the world was watching.

"I felt that it would be best if it was raised with them by someone whom they did not consider a bit 'way-out', and accordingly asked my Branch Secretary, Jack Geran (candidate for Wavell in the last, and also the next, State Election) to take the question up.

"Geran was assured by Gerry Jones that the whole matter would be settled satisfactorily from everybody's point of view.

"Late in October last year, Goulet approached me again—this time advising that they would be cancelling the agreement between them and Q.V.F.R. The matter was again raised by Geran with Jones and by T. Wilson with Gordon O'Sullivan. They were assured that all was okay.

"Shortly after, the Australian Pensioners' League (Qld.) cancelled the arrangement. O'Sullivan sent a letter on an ALP letter-head to the eight or so branches manning stalls; one of these got into Government hands and the matter was raised in State Parliament. It has been raised several times since.

"Other really damaging material from the Pensioners' League point of view appears to have been handed to the State Government by Bob Lawson, a former ALP member who was ousted from the Presidency of the Australian Pensioners' League (Qld.) in an internal power struggle in April 1978.

"In the June 1978 meeting of the Pensioners' League, Lawson made threats to call for a public inquiry to be launched into the League's fundraising project—and the Australian Pensioners' League (Qld.) minutes record this threat.

"Originally the Q.V.F.R. project was to result in a three-way split of all funds, 25% to the ALP branches involved; 25% to the Australian Pensioners' League; and 50% was to go for prizemoney. Q.V.F.R. was to take nothing. But despite the fact that Q.V.F.R. was not to get a cut, it finished up with considerable sums at its disposal.

"Subsequently the branches' share was reduced to 20%, and as the Government investigators reveal, the Pensioners' League did not get its cut in accordance with the agreement.

"A glance at the A.P.L. (Qld.) statement shows that in its last year of operation it lost \$5,000 plus.

"Where did the Q.V.F.R. profit come from? The pensioners allege a number of 'ghost' stalls were set up using the A.P.L. (Qld.) licence which were operated by all sorts of people.

"They got the A.P.L. (Qld.) cut, Q.V.F.R. got the Branch cut, and it would appear that A.P.L. (Qld.) paid off the prizes from the takings from the genuine stalls.

"'Ghost' stalls were set up in George Street (City), Redcliffe, Sandgate, and at other places.

"Since the Government became interested in the matter, they have had either the Justice Department or Corporate Affairs take all the A.P.L. records and the records of Q.V.F.R.

"My understanding is that the papers wended their way through various Departments—finishing up in the Premier's Department—and now they have gone back to the Crown Law Office.

"It is interesting to note what the Government did before the Sherwood By-election—it began to bucket the ALP with material on Q.V.F.R. on 22 November 1978—three days before the Sherwood By-election.

"We are now moving up to a more important election—the Brisbane City Council election. Will the Government bucket us again?

"There are some who hope to do a deal. The ALP lay off Russell Island etc., the Government lay off Q.V.F.R. I do not know who is trying to initiate the trade-off, but I understand Mr. Bjelke-Petersen is calling for blood.

"He has already whitewashed Wally Rae in regard to Russell Island, and Hughes (ex-Liberal Member for Kurilpa) has said his nose is clean in this regard also.

"There may be nothing to trade Q.V.F.R. off on. If the ALP gets the bucket—with Gerry Jones, Tom Burton and Gordon O'Sullivan being charged with conspiracy to defraud to the tune of \$98,000—where does the ALP in Queensland go from there? What will happen in the Brisbane City Council elections?

"A defeat here will have repercussions far beyond the ranks of the ALP. The Labor-controlled City Council acts as an important bastion in the struggle for civil liberties in Queensland. Liberal Leader Syd Macdonald would no doubt close the City Square and other Council properties to rallies of any kind.

"Both Tom Burton and Gerry Jones know how sticky the whole thing is. They reputedly had Terry Mellifont (a solicitor and ALP candidate in the Chermiside Ward in Brisbane, and now a member of the Administrative Committee of the Queensland Branch) draw up a document which they tried to get Gordon O'Sullivan to sign. The document was designed to get Gordon O'Sullivan to accept full responsibility for all that has happened in the Q.V.F.R. area.

"It would appear to me that it is imperative that the Party must be seen to be cleaning itself up—rather than that the Queensland Premier should be seen as cleaning us up. If the National Executive acts urgently, Labor has some hope. If it doesn't, it has none.

"Thankfully, I understand that Gordon O'Sullivan refused to sign the document mentioned above.

"I have not associated myself with the Reform Movement or the earlier calls for Federal intervention. However, the 'winner takes all' situation leads to loss of accountability. And this is what has happened.

"Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. The corrupt practices that have grown up in Queensland arise from the nature of the Party structure here. Power is centralised—is absolute. There are no checks and balances.

"People see the ALP apparatus as a means of getting jobs for the boys—for fixing this and that. The objective of challenging the ruling establishment, the objective of changing the Government, seems to have been lost sight of.

"Why else would people threaten to disaffiliate or take the ALP in Queensland out of the Federation if they did not get their own way?

"Yours fraternally,
(sgd.) W. J. H. Harris.

"W. J. H. (Joe) Harris,
"Organiser, State Executive,
"Member, B.W.I.U.
"Senior Vice President,
"Wavell Heights Branch ALP,
"Delegate to ALP State
"Council."

That is the letter which, one way or another, led to the expulsion of Joe Harris. One can understand, Mr. Speaker, why there was fury, because, firstly, the letter confirms A.L.P. involvement in the Australian Pensioners League swindle. It shows the existence of ghost stalls whose sole aim was the criminal misappropriation of funds. It makes revelations about the mysterious Q.V.F.R.—an organisation apparently run by Tom Burton, Gerry Jones and Gordon O'Sullivan, and an organisation that was supposed to act only as a clearing-house but, for yet unexplained reasons, began to make a considerable profit. It is a clear statement that the Queensland A.L.P.'s hierarchy is absolutely corrupt. It is a call for Federal intervention to remove from these corrupt elements the absolute power that they presently wield.

The power of the corrupt ones has been demonstrated by the expulsion of Harris from the A.L.P.

A number of questions remain unanswered. They are—

(1) Who ran the ghost stalls, and what has the A.L.P. done about them?

Their operators certainly have not been expelled as was the courageous Mr. Harris.

(2) How much did Q.V.F.R. siphon off from the A.L.P. and its own A.L.P. branches?

(3) What did Jones, Burton and O'Sullivan do with the thousands of dollars they gained control of through Q.V.F.R.?

(4) Who were the beneficiaries of the mysterious \$3,500 in cash cheques paid out by these three from their private slush fund?

(5) What will be the fate of the courageous Mr. Harris, who was expelled from the A.L.P. because he had the integrity to fight the corruption at Breakfast Creek?

The way in which these questions are answered will determine the fate of the A.L.P. in this State for many years to come.

RIGHTS OF PATIENTS IN QUEENSLAND HOSPITALS

Mr. D'ARCY (Woodridge) (12.12 p.m.): I am disturbed at the fact that patients in Queensland hospitals virtually have no rights under existing legislation, nor are they protected. In fact, unlike patients in hospitals in other States and countries, those in Queensland hospitals have no rights. This matter is of great concern to all Queenslanders, and today I call for the establishment in Queensland of a medical consumers' association similar to those that exist in other States.

Such an organisation should have as its objective the protection of the rights of patients in Queensland hospitals. The Hospitals Act should be amended to give Queensland patients full protection.

A recent report published by a committee of doctors from hospitals throughout Australia contains a fascinating finding concerning the impression of patients about the outcome of their treatment in hospitals throughout Australia.

Of 367 patients interviewed after discharge from hospital, only 45 per cent reported that their condition had improved. A similar percentage felt that there had been no improvement. The disturbing factor is that 10 per cent of the patients actually claimed that their condition had deteriorated.

On previous occasions I raised this matter in the Press. I was greatly disturbed by the number of responses that I received from people throughout Queensland. I received letters from all over Queensland and from all types of people. The letters stated what had happened to patients in hospitals and their families. I point out that in almost no instance did any person who wrote to me complain about the service that had been given by the nursing and other staff in the hospitals. Their complaint generally was that relatives were not kept fully informed and that patients had not been informed of their condition.

One case that comes readily to mind concerns a lady who wrote stating that her father had died in hospital after a prostate operation and that although she had asked when the operation would take place she had not been told, nor was she told that a risk of blood clotting was involved. The patient subsequently died from blood clotting.

In other words, she was not kept informed by the doctor. Under Queensland legislation, a doctor is not required to keep a patient or the family informed of the risks that he undertakes.

I have previously referred to the case of a young lad who became ill at school on the Friday. After three attempts he was eventually admitted to the Southport Hospital, and he died on the Monday, three days later. In that instance, doctors, through the board, virtually confused the parents about the treatment the boy received. They certainly confused them with medical terms when the parents asked what the boy died of.

In many instances patients in Queensland hospitals are not fully advised of what they are being treated with. I have received many letters from patients who were allergic to penicillin, tetracyclines, sulpha and other drugs, but they were not told what drugs they were getting. If a patient was made fully aware of his treatment he would know if he was being given drugs to which he was allergic.

In another instance an elderly man was told by one doctor that he had suffered a heart attack. Three days later he was declared fit to go home, but he died three days later. This is typical of what is happening in Queensland hospitals. Every Queenslanders could relate a story or two about problems experienced in obtaining information from Queensland hospitals about treatment.

In the same context, I cite a letter from a hospitals board that is in complete control. I have here a stereotype letter which I will table, if necessary, from the Prince Charles Hospital. As honourable members will note, people who pay a fee can get the information they want. This letter was written by a doctor, a former member of the hospital staff who had treated this patient. The letter is in these terms—

“Dear Dr.....

“Re.....

“I acknowledge receipt of your letter of 15-7-79 in which you requested medical information on the abovementioned patient of this Hospital.

“Preparation and forwarding of this information is subject to the following marked item(s):—

“Receipt from you of the patient’s written specific authorisation to the Medical Superintendent of this Hospital to act.

“Receipt from you of a report fee (\$23 normal report or \$11.50 short report) payable in advance and as yet not received.

“Supply of additional information as we are currently unable to find any trace of this patient having attended this Hospital.”

In this instance, although the doctor had treated the patient at the hospital, an “x” was placed against the last item indicating that the hospital authorities could not find the records that the doctor had written up while he was on the hospital staff. I emphasise that this standard form indicates only too well what is happening.

Patients’ basic rights in Queensland should be laid down as they are in the American and New South Wales charters. Such rights would lead to a happier situation in Queensland hospitals and would contribute to more effective patient control, with greater satisfaction for the patient, the physician and the hospital organisation. I also believe that these rights are basic for cost containment in hospitals. The American charter states—

“The patient has the right to considerate and respectful care.

“The patient has the right to obtain from his physician complete current information concerning his diagnosis, treatment, and prognosis in terms the patient can be reasonably expected to understand. When it is not medically advisable to give such information to the patient, the information should be made available to an appropriate person in his behalf. He has the right to know by name, the physician responsible for co-ordinating his care.

“The patient has the right to receive from his physician information necessary to give informed consent prior to the start of any procedure and/or treatment.

“The patient has the right to refuse treatment to the extent permitted by law, and to be informed of the medical consequences of his action.

“The patient has the right to every consideration of his privacy concerning his own medical care programme.

“The patient has the right to expect that all communications and records pertaining to his care should be treated as confidential.

“The patient has the right to expect reasonable continuity of care. He has the right to know in advance what appointment times and physicians are available and where.”

That is a very important point, because it is one of the major complaints of Queenslanders. It continues—

“The patient has the right to examine and receive an explanation of his bill regardless of source of payment.”

That is another source of complaint in Queensland hospitals. Medical practitioners in this State have been abusing that right and privilege through Medibank.

Dr. Lockwood interjected.

Mr. D'ARCY: The honourable member for Toowoomba North knows that that has been happening. It continues further—

"The patient has the right to know what hospital rules and regulations apply to his conduct as a patient."

That is the American charter. The New South Wales charter is worded on similar lines. It states that the patient has the—

"Right to a clear, concise explanation in lay person's terms of your condition, problems or disease.

"Right to a clear, concise explanation in lay person's terms of all proposed procedures and possible alternatives. The explanation should include information about the risk of any side- or after-effects, problems relating to recuperation and possibility of success, risk of death and whether such procedures or treatments are of an experimental nature."

That right is not being extended fully to Queensland patients. One has only to ring the Health Department to be told that patients do not have that right.

(Time expired.)

LABRADOR LAND REZONING; LETTER FROM MR. IAN RICE TO NEWSPAPERS

Mr. P. N. D. WHITE (Southport) (12.21 p.m.): During the past two weeks a letter written by Mr. Rice, of Bexley Corporation fame, has been published in several State and national newspapers. The most recent publication of this letter was in "The Australian" of Monday, 29 October. It is this misleading letter which prompts me to speak today.

Generally speaking, I will confine my remarks to Mr. Rice and his letter. This should not be interpreted as meaning that I or the honourable member for Surfers Paradise are in any way satisfied with the explanation given by the Minister for Local Government about his part in the Labrador rezoning matter, nor am I satisfied with what I regard as the distinct conflict of interest which exists between the business affairs of the Minister and his responsibilities as a Minister of the Crown. That is another subject that is very much alive. On the subject of the Labrador rezoning, I consider that I have discharged the responsibilities that I assumed when I was elected to this Parliament by placing publicly before the House on 19 September a strong circumstantial case that warranted further examination by a judicial inquiry.

In Mr. Rice's letter to the Press he claimed there was no single person whom I could name who had ever heard that he was prepared to pay \$100,000 for a favourable rezoning decision. He conveniently overlooks the point that has been made time and time again that when a judicial inquiry is held the witnesses will come forward. I will admit that it is not in Mr. Rice's interests to dwell on this point. His promise

to execute a formal release discharging any witness from civil claims is not regarded by the witnesses as being of any worth whatsoever.

Mr. Rice states in his letter to the Press that there were 4,000 signatories in support of his Labrador rezoning application. He carefully omits to point out that he was prepared to pay some \$20,000 to a Brisbane p. and c. association to obtain 1,000 signatures in support of a rezoning at Bracken Ridge. In view of this unscrupulous method of obtaining signatures, what credence can be given to the 4,000 signatures obtained in favour of the Labrador application? I would say none whatsoever.

Mr. K. J. Hooper: You're suggesting that he misled this Parliament.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will continue with his speech.

Mr. P. N. D. WHITE: In an underhand way, what he was trying to do was obtain a favourable decision by a local authority. That is an unacceptable way to do business.

The matter central to the whole of the Labrador rezoning controversy is the overruling of the strong recommendation made by the Gold Coast City Council. That is central to the whole issue. Yet in Mr. Rice's letter to which I have referred we find this extraordinary statement—

"... the new council ... decided not to recommend the rezoning, and although it gave no reasons, apparently acted on the objections."

I repeat, "gave no reasons". That is in his letter. What a statement by a man who is central to the whole affair! The fact is that council gave detailed and substantial reasons why the land should not be rezoned. The recommendations of the council have been tabled before, and I table them again.

Whereupon the honourable member laid the document on the table.

This letter was written to the Press by Alderman Dennis O'Connell, the chairman of the Health Committee of the Gold Coast City Council. Alderman O'Connell and the members of his committee are the aldermen responsible for taking these recommendations to full council. It is the overthrow of these strong recommendations by an elected council responsible for the administration of the town plan that caused concern from the beginning. Particular note should be taken of the recommendations that the land not be rezoned because the town plan was under review and the whole question of shopping centres was being reviewed. That is one of the things that the council is elected to do. Why the Minister for Local Government would deliberately ignore the recommendations of the Gold Coast City Council has never been satisfactorily explained.

Mr. HINZE: I rise to a point of order. I cannot allow the honourable member for Southport to say that I have not given an explanation. I believe that I did explain the position satisfactorily to this House. I think that the statement made by the honourable member is incorrect and should be corrected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Minister stated that he has explained to this House, which I believe he has, and I would ask the honourable member to withdraw that statement.

Mr. P. N. D. WHITE: I withdraw. It has never been satisfactorily explained to me. In the absence of an inquiry, people are putting their own interpretations on the Minister's actions.

In his letter, Mr. Rice seeks to convey the impression that he has been the victim of a political plot, an innocent bystander unfairly dragged into a political controversy. I therefore outline these facts: Mr. Rice is a Victorian Liberal with Queensland business interests, and he has recently made at least two substantial donations to the National Party's Bjelke-Petersen Foundation. He is, as I say, a Victorian Liberal and area chairman in Victoria of the National Party's Bjelke-Petersen Foundation. He is the man who has hosted functions in Melbourne for the Queensland Premier and for the president of the National Party, Sir Robert Sparkes. He hosted one function in his own home. He is the man who sat in the Premier's office in the Queensland Parliament while his activities were being discussed in this House. He is the man who asked his political friends to ring the member for Surfers Paradise and me when the controversy began. Mr. Rice is in politics up to his neck. It is futile of him to believe otherwise, and it is too late to plead embarrassment and ignorance when his plans go astray.

The Labrador land rezoning has cast a shadow over the whole process of local government. People elect aldermen to represent them, to make decisions on their behalf and to administer the town plan.

Mr. HINZE: I rise to a further point of order. The honourable member has said that the rezoning of the Labrador land has cast a reflection on all local authorities. I deny that. On behalf of the local authorities in Queensland, I ask that that statement be withdrawn.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member to withdraw the comment.

Mr. P. N. D. WHITE: If I may repeat it: I say that the Labrador land rezoning has cast a shadow over the whole process of local government. People elect aldermen to represent them, to make decisions on their behalf and to administer the town plan. The Minister for Local Government has now recognised the disturbance that his actions

have caused. He recently met representatives of the Gold Coast Combined Chambers of Commerce and Industry, who were worried and angry about the implications of the Labrador land rezonings. As I understand it, the Minister gave an undertaking to take to Cabinet proposals to amend the Local Government Act to allow objectors to rezoning the right of appeal and to incorporate economic factors—

Mr. HINZE: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member said that I met representatives of the Combined Chambers of Commerce on the Gold Coast because they were concerned about the Labrador rezoning. That is entirely incorrect. The matter that they wished to speak to me about was the general allocation of land for shopping complexes throughout the State. That is the matter they wished to discuss with me. I gave them an assurance that I would be prepared to give consideration to their request.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member to accept the Minister's denial and withdraw the comment.

Mr. P. N. D. WHITE: I was not at the meeting, so I accept that.

I and others await these amendments with interest. The attitude is growing in Queensland that if a project is big and involves big money, it will be approved regardless of whether there are any real benefits involved and whether it is in the best interests of the people. People elect their aldermen and their State and Federal members of Parliament to represent them. They do not expect to have the recommendations of their elected representatives overruled without good reason. They certainly do not expect these decisions to be influenced by any developer.

I warn Mr. Rice and anybody else that if they think they can move into Queensland and attempt to bend the rules to suit themselves, they will not have an entirely easy passage.

NORTH QUEENSLAND LAND PURCHASES BY MEAT-PROCESSING COMPANIES

Mr. KATTER (Flinders) (12.32 p.m.): I rise to discuss briefly an issue which has been in and out of the news for some time and it is once again in the Press headlines. I refer to the continuation of purchases of cattle-producing land in the State of Queensland by meat processors.

An Opposition Member: You don't care about the processors or the producers.

Mr. KATTER: Somebody has just said that I do not care about the processors or the producers. I am very concerned about them. If members read two of my latest Press releases they will find that they are concerned with the consumer as opposed to the processor or the producer. I do not want to continue with that subject as my time is short.

An Opposition Member: I'll say it is.

Mr. KATTER: I do not have in my electorate the number of idiots that obviously the honourable member has to vote for him in his electorate. With the member's appalling and lamentable performance in the House, I do not know how he could be re-elected.

There are some five companies operating in Queensland. Of the total carrying capacity in North Queensland, one company alone owns 160,000 head. Another company owns 60,000; 130,000 are owned by another; 100,000 head by another; and 35,000 by another. That gives a total figure of approximately 480,000 head in North Queensland.

Honourable members will note that I am confining my remarks to North Queensland. However, this is a point that I must drive home to the House: in the beef industry North Queensland is an island. There are only two meatworks in Rockhampton, both of which are constantly fully engaged. People from the North therefore have no chance of selling their cattle in Central Queensland. If we want an alternative to selling to those five processors in North Queensland, we must move our cattle all the way from North Queensland to southern Queensland—to the Brisbane markets. That means the cattle have to be moved over 1,000 miles. Recently a personal friend of mine lost what would have been a whole K wagon of bullocks during transport to Brisbane. I know the member for Lytton has been making noises about the transport of cattle by the railways. However, this was road transport, and the transport turned over. He lost the lot.

In another case, when cattle were being moved south in drought time they simply perished in transit. Numerous things can happen to cattle when they are transported to Brisbane. The market can collapse around your ears in the two weeks that it takes to get cattle from North Queensland to Brisbane. It is therefore very, very difficult for northern cattle producers to shift their cattle out of North Queensland. So, to all intents and purposes, North Queensland is an entirely different country when it comes to the beef industry. There are 3,000,000 head of cattle in North Queensland and 500,000 of those are owned by the five meat-processing companies.

Mr. Burns: It will be more with the latest nine properties.

Mr. KATTER: Not all of those more recent purchases are located in North Queensland.

I stress that I am not going out with an axe after Tancreds. All that company is doing is coming on line with the other meat-processing companies. The two big British companies and the one big American company already own far in excess of the holdings of Tancreds. All that company is doing is catching up and getting into step with its competitors. I have nothing personal against that company,

as it probably has a case to go up to a certain percentage. I will admit that they have a very good case to go up to a certain percentage of cattle. However, where are they going to stop? Within the next five years, on present buying rates they will be up to almost 1,000,000 head of cattle, which will be approximately one-third of all the cattle in North Queensland.

I will give some statistics, because it is very important to pin-point what I am talking about. The figures have been argued backwards and forwards a hundred times. The figure of 480,000 head in North Queensland is not a Cattlemen's Union figure; it is not a U.G.A. figure; it is not a figure put by the people who are complaining about these sales. It is a figure put up by the department itself. These are official departmental carrying capacity figures.

Those familiar with the beef industry fully realise that the department's carrying capacity figures are highly conservative—and so they should be. They are drawn up on the basis of ultra-conservatism. In two of the stations sold, the carrying capacity quoted by the department was half the actual number of cattle carried at the time of sale. However, if we add only 20 per cent to that figure of 480,000, we get a total close enough to 600,000.

There are another 50,000 or 100,000 head owned by these processing companies just across the border in the Northern Territory—to all intents and purposes, part of the North Queensland beef industry. It must be realised that almost a quarter of Australia's cattle are in North Queensland and the part of the Northern Territory bordering Queensland. We are in a very real sense the Australian export market and, to a very large degree, the home market as well. We are the beef industry of Australia. That is particularly true if the figures from Central Queensland are added as well. We will not argue about where the line is drawn on that matter.

The resultant figure is about 650,000. However, the crux of the matter is turn-off. How many head can be turned off and put through the meatworks? The B.A.E. quotes 20 per cent as the turn-off rate for all of Australia. The banks in the area quote a figure of one-seventh. Therefore, I think it would be fairly conservative if I selected one-sixth. That results in a turn-off of 110,000 head of cattle. Last year, which was the highest ever recorded in Queensland, 624,000-odd head of cattle were killed in North Queensland. Our normal kill is 500,000. Consequently, these people can supply themselves with one-fifth of their kill.

The question I then put to the House is this: can the market be controlled if one-fifth of the supply of the commodity can be controlled? The answer to that is, "Yes, of course it can." In the wool industry, all we have ever needed to do was to buy 5 per cent of the wool clip. By buying

that five per cent we have been able to manipulate the market to the point where it rose from 35c to 50c a lb. in almost one year and, some three or four years later, the figure is sitting at 110c a lb. The maximum amount that the Wool Corporation is able to buy is 20 per cent; yet it has only ever had to buy 5 per cent. The Minister for Mines, Energy and Police has said time and again in the House that in the sugar industry an overproduction or an underproduction of 5 per cent causes a wild and serious swing in price. Again, the figure of 5 per cent is mentioned. Yet these people have 20 per cent!

This is all airy-fairy—all very theoretical. The question we must ask is: does this have a detrimental effect on producers, the ownership of land, and the people who work and live on land in North Queensland? Is it having a detrimental effect on these people? Representatives of two shires in my electorate sat down and worked it out with me the other day. Nearly half of those shires now consist of people who have been there for only the last three years. In other words, half of the inhabitants of those areas have simply got up and walked off, been pushed out, thrown out or sold up. They are very, very serious statistics for any Government to reflect upon.

Even more serious is the crisis in the saleyards of North Queensland. We have been receiving prices almost 30 per cent lower than those received in the rest of Australia. That includes Brisbane and the southern markets. Of course, it is far worse if the figure is compared with that of Sydney or Melbourne only. North Queensland has been receiving 30 per cent less for its fat bullocks than is paid anywhere else in Australia. In the last four or five months we have come a little closer to the average. At the beginning of this year—and I can quote cold, hard statistics—people who have sent identical herds to Brisbane, Townsville and Charters Towers have received \$80 a head less in North Queensland. So the situation is that the producers are receiving far less for their product and the market is being very seriously affected by something. I venture to suggest to honourable members that that “something” is the supplying of about 20 per cent of their own product by processors.

(Time expired.)

NORTH QUEENSLAND LAND PURCHASES BY
MEAT-PROCESSING COMPANIES; FINANCIAL
AFFAIRS OF MR. WILEY FANCHER

Mr. BURNS (Lytton) (12.41 p.m.): When I read this morning's newspaper, I knew that the honourable member for Flinders would be speaking today about the take-over of land by meat-processing companies in North Queensland. He has raised the matter without success before, and the Opposition raised it recently in the debate on the Lands Department Estimates. Unfortunately, the

honourable member was not in the Chamber at the time, but I am sure that if he reads “Hansard” he will see that honourable members on this side of the Chamber made some kind references to him in relation to this issue.

When I think of Tancreds and their take-overs in this State, I am reminded of the statements made by the president of the Cattlemen's Union at a meeting on 27 March 1979 with Mr. Neville Hewitt, Mr. Tomkins and others, in which he referred to Tancreds. He said that a few years back, according to the company's balance sheet, for every dollar of shareholders' funds, Tancreds had \$3 borrowed, and that was in the bad times. He agreed that that was a fairly dangerous situation for any company to be in. He said also that in the intervening period, when the industry was down, Tancreds had apparently amassed sufficient money to spend millions of dollars buying land, and he commented on the offers at that time to Austral Downs and Brunette Downs. He claimed that if cattlemen had received a fair price for their product at that time, Tancreds would not have huge amounts of money to spend now. The Government has not answered that claim.

At the cattlemen's conference in North Queensland, Jack Tooth from Mareeba, and others, moved votes of no confidence in the National Party over this issue. But when I wondered why the Government is not doing anything to stop these growing monopolies and to look after cattlemen in North Queensland, I realised that Mr. Tancred was one of those mentioned as being involved with a fellow by the name of Wiley Fancher—Henry Wiley Fancher—Mr. Bjelke-Petersen's American loans spy who went overseas in 1974 on a trip paid for by Queensland taxpayers.

Mr. Jones: His adviser.

Mr. BURNS: That is right, his adviser. I can understand that the Government, because of its foreign investment policies, is not interested in the big British and American companies that are taking over meat processing. I suppose because Mr. Tancred was tied in with Fancher, who today is running roughshod in North Queensland, even as a bankrupt, Tancred is being protected by the Government and nothing is happening to stop these take-overs.

Fancher was made a bankrupt on 16 December 1976. One of the questions that was raised with Mr. Fancher at the bankruptcy proceedings was a telephone account. It totalled \$14,920, and the telephone was used for calls in connection with the loans affair. Mrs. Harris, the woman who owned the phone, said when she went bankrupt that the reason was the failure by Mr. Fancher to pay for telephone calls made by or for him for political purposes.

Fancher was questioned on the matter, and he said that he did use the phone for political purposes. He was asked whether

he went on an overseas trip, and he was also asked, "In the course of your investigations, did you pay out any of your own money as expenses on that trip?" He said, "Yes", that he paid \$770—one cheque—on that trip. In his public examination in bankruptcy, he said that he was away overseas for about five months and that his total expenses were only \$770.

When asked about the overseas fares, expenses and telephone calls, he said, "My interpretation of what was said to me was that I had made a statement, and in fact that statement proved to be true and was supported, I was looking for the cost of accumulating the supporting evidence as being borne by someone other than myself, but not necessarily the same group that paid on this trip." He added—

"I was actually looking to the Government. To me, it was like a man letting me put the roof on and then charging me for the use of the house; quite different if we had been a private company or a public company. That phone belongs to the Government."

He ran up bills to the extent of \$14,000 on the State Government's behalf, and he was sent bankrupt in December 1976 for not paying his bills to the Federal Government and for not paying his bills in other areas.

At his public examination on the occasion to which I am referring, he said that he owned \$600,000 worth of shares in Hayman and Sons Pty. Ltd., that he owned that company. He said that he was involved in these other companies: Mount Mulgrave Pty. Ltd.; Yarraden Pastoral Co. Pty. Ltd.; Yarraden Pastoral Holdings Pty. Ltd.; Rand Pastoral Co. Pty. Ltd.; and Cool—Y Pastoral Co. Pty. Ltd. So he was very much involved in rural industries in North Queensland.

In the last few years, Mr. Fancher has been able to carry on uncontrolled like a man from the American Wild West. He was able to travel overseas and round the country and return to run the properties on which he went broke. He is running them and he has been able to hold decent Australian cattlemen to ransom.

For example, a Mr. Hart, formerly of Caboolture, bought properties named Inorunie and Chadshunt from Fancher around 1975 for over \$133,000. These properties were owned and controlled by Hayman & Sons, a company that Wiley Fancher admitted he owned and operated. At the time of this sale by Fancher to Hart, all of the stock and the property were subject to a mortgage to a person named Hayman, who had been involved in the original company. In other words, Fancher did not even own the property, it was mortgaged. But he went ahead and sold it to Hart.

Wiley Fancher did not tell Hart of the mortgage for quite some time and, in fact, Fancher deliberately refrained from applying for a transfer of the lease for Hart. In

other words, he did not even tell Hart he would not get a transfer of the lease on the area.

In 1977, Hart sold Inorunie and a number of cattle to a Carter & Sons. Mr. Carter is a decent Australian battler who has battled around the North for years. He met Hart, who was misled, conned and taken down by Fancher. Hart was eventually sent broke and, after working all his life, walked off his property without a penny. Carter paid approximately \$50,000 as a deposit on the property and some cattle.

I hold copies of agreements signed by Fancher on 23 February 1977 and on 15 May 1977, in which he warrants that he has the authority of Hayman & Sons Pty. Ltd. to sign the agreements on their behalf.

As I understand company law, Mr. Fancher, having been declared bankrupt in 1976 and still being a bankrupt, could not and should not have been able to act as a director of Hayman & Sons. Why has no action been taken against Fancher for committing breaches of the Companies Act?

After going broke, Fancher went to the U.S.A. He returned acting for a company named M.C.H. Holdings, now known as Chadshunt Grazing Company. It is alleged that this is a Fancher front. It has been said that M.C.H. then bought Chadshunt back from the liquidators.

The liquidators' return to the court on 5 December 1978 showed that the liquidators had received no money for Chadshunt, but Fancher has been living there since last August and has been around two neighbouring stations trying to buy them up.

Here is a man who went broke and was unable to pay his bills running around operating the companies in which he went broke. He is back operating companies similar to those he owned before he went bankrupt. No wonder people wonder what is going on. Honest people are being ripped off by this Yankee crook—the friend of the Premier who was involved with Tancreds and others in this shady loan deal investigation and who spent five months running around the world at our expense and maybe at the expense of the meat producers. Because, as the Cattlemen's Union president said, the producers were given low prices by Tancreds and others when they manipulated the market to bring in money to enable them to buy properties today, so the producers also met some of the expense of Fancher's travels.

Mr. Jones: A rotten Government and rotten friends.

Mr. BURNS: There is no doubt about that.

The liquidators' returns say that no money changed hands. While all the unsecured creditors remain unpaid, Fancher is spending up. If he does not control M.C.H., how does he control the properties?

Hart sold Carter occupation lease 393. When Carter checked up, he found that a lot of money was owing by Hayman & Sons, the Fancher-controlled company.

I refer to a letter dated 4 October 1977 from the accountant of the Land Administration Commission. Portion of that letter reads—

“Re Proposed Transfer—Hayman and Sons Pty. Ltd. to Arthur Harry Carter and Another Special Lease 34591.

“With reference to your letter . . . the rental positions are as follows—”

It goes on to reveal that in relation to occupation licence 393, the annual rent is \$3,550. Fancher owed half of it for 1975 and the full rent for 1976, and the full rent for 1977. In relation to occupation licence 459, the annual rent is \$46. He owes 72c for 1973 and the lot for 1974, 1975, 1976 and 1977.

As to special lease No. 34591, the annual rent is \$20. In 1972 he owed \$2.77 and the lot for 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976 and 1977. What a good tenant!

On the Littleton pastoral holding No. 2646, the annual rent is \$832.20. He owed \$5.50 for 1973 and the lot for 1974, 1975, 1976 and 1977. In other words, he has not paid the rent for any of those years. Do I need any more evidence to show that our friend Wiley Fancher, of loan scandal fame, was being given preferential treatment?

Mr. Jones: The Premier's friend.

Mr. BURNS: Not our friend—certainly the Premier's friend.

Fancher did not pay the rent on Mount Little pastoral holding No. 2503 for 1974, 1975, 1976 and 1977. Nor did he pay the rent for Linley pastoral holding No. 4231 for 1974, 1975, 1976 and 1977. Likewise, for Guala pastoral holding No. 3343 he did not pay rent between 1974 and 1977. On my understanding, if rent on a pastoral property is more than 12 months in arrears, the property reverts to the Crown. What happened when rental was owing by Fancher on these properties for four or five years? He is now in the North and the Carters and others to whom he owes money have had to go to court to try to get it back.

(Time expired.)

CAPELLA; PEAK DOWNS SHIRE COUNCIL

Mr. LESTER (Peak Downs) (12.51 p.m.): Today, I will use my time in this debate to present some important points about the town of Capella which is situated on the Central Highlands, and the Peak Downs Shire Council. Only four years ago Capella had a population of 350. Today it has a population of 750, with a district population of 2,000. Capella is the central town for the Peak Downs Shire Council. East of the

town are the beautiful peaks, and looking back from the peaks towards Capella is beautiful downs country.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. LESTER: For the information of A.L.P. members who are trying hard to interject and spoil my speech, I point out that the chairman and councillors of the Peak Downs Shire Council are sitting in the public gallery. Opposition members have been caught out. They have demonstrated the way they act when I am trying to do something worth while in this Chamber

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. W. D. Hewitt): Order! I suggest that the honourable member proceed with his speech.

Mr. LESTER: Until it was wound up in 1957 the British Food Corporation controlled all of the land around Capella. When that very valuable land was split up it was purchased by various people. The area can now boast an excellent farming, pastoral and grain-growing community. Because that great tract of land was split up for closer settlement the area is now one of the richest in Central Queensland. It was an excellent exercise in progress.

Capella will be the base town for the Gregory coal-mine, and many of the houses being built in the town will be occupied by Gregory coal miners. It will also be a base-type town for the new town of Tierrie, to be built for the Oakey Creek mine. To a lesser extent, it will be a base-type town for the new town of Middle Mount, which will cater for the German Creek operations.

Like most country towns Capella has a good business community, scouting and guide groups, churches and so on. The Peak Downs Shire Council is one of the more progressive councils in Queensland. It has not hesitated to move with the development in the area. It has not sat back waiting for development to come to it, nor has it come crying to the Government for help. It has moved in and helped to build roads and provide employment for the local people. It has bought good machinery to do the job. The council has moved forward with the times rather than backward. Over the years Capella has been well known for producing good cricketers and footballers. In 1949, the Rugby League team went close to winning the premierships.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. LESTER: A.L.P. members are very upset about being caught out today. They thought they could rubbish me about the towns in my electorate until they heard that I had the local councillors sitting in the public gallery. One of the big lessons Opposition members will have to learn is to behave themselves when I am speaking in this House.

This year the Capella Rugby Union team won the premierships, and I had the privilege of being present at that match.

The Capella State School now has an enrolment of 229 students, as compared with 187 in 1975. With this increasing enrolment we have recently been able to obtain an extra teaching block and a pre-school at the school. It is a good school that has produced many children who have done very well in State sporting contests. Because of his excellent efforts in school projects, Shane George was brought to Brisbane this year.

A secondary school complex is very urgently needed in Capella. Secondary school facilities up to Grade 10 should be provided as soon as possible. That would pave the way for the building of a high school as soon as the numbers warrant it. The Education Department should give priority to the acquisition of land, etc. for such a high school. At present upwards of 90 students travel to Emerald to attend secondary school.

Approval has been given for the building of a medical centre at Capella. It is urgently needed because the town is 35 miles by road from Emerald and 37 miles from Clermont. Approval for it has been given, as I said, but we should begin construction without delay. I would not ask that this be done urgently unless it was extremely important.

The town also needs an ambulance. It would fit in very nicely with the medical centre, and could be operated on a voluntary basis for the time being.

The Peak Downs Shire Council has prepared a submission on the provision of fire services for the town. There are some 180 houses and 40 public buildings in the town, with another 50 houses to be constructed. The construction of a sewerage system is about to begin, at a cost of something like \$500,000. This will upgrade facilities and enable us to get away from the old septic system. It has served the town well, but we must progress with the times.

The State Emergency Service in the area requires a building. We are looking for Federal Government funding for that building, and I understand that it will be available in the not too distant future. I will certainly be pushing for that funding with a view to getting the building constructed without too much delay.

The Peak Downs Shire Council has played a big part in paving the way for the construction of an aged persons' settlement in Capella. In fact, work has already started on that settlement. This will enable the pioneers of the area to remain there in their retirement. Some people have spent most of their lives in the area, such as those who worked on the railway and on stations around the district. They do not want to go to some impersonal home in the city to live out the rest of their days. They want to stay in Capella, and I pay a tribute to the shire council for the work

it has done in establishing that home. I hope that the home will be opened in the not too distant future.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. W. D. Hewitt): Order! Under the provisions of the Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 28 August, the time allotted for the debate on Matters of Public Interest has now expired.

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

LAND TAX ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. L. R. EDWARDS (Ipswich—Deputy Premier and Treasurer) (2.15 p.m.): I move—

“That a Bill be introduced to amend the Land Tax Act 1915–1978 in certain particulars.”

Honourable members will recall that in presenting the Budget for 1979–80 I indicated that steps would be taken to increase the exemptions applying to resident landholders under the Land Tax Act in respect of both town land and land used for primary production, and to increase the level of tax below which an assessment is not issued. The proposed amendments which I now outline will give effect to the Budget announcement.

It is the Government's intention that the increased exemptions be applicable during the financial year 1979–80. Land Tax is charged on land owned at midnight on 30 June immediately preceding the financial year in which the tax is levied. The Bill, therefore, provides that the amendments shall be deemed to have commenced on 29 June 1979.

It is proposed that the basic statutory exemption to an owner other than an absentee or a company be increased from \$30,000 to \$36,000 and that the special exemption on country land personally worked by the owner be increased from \$90,000 to \$108,000. The amendments to section 11 of the principal Act as outlined in the Bill provide for these increased exemption levels. By way of explanation, I mention that an “absentee” is, briefly, a person owning freehold land in Australia but who does not ordinarily reside in Australia or in a Territory under the control of the Commonwealth of Australia.

The present level at which an owner other than an absentee or a company becomes liable to lodge a return is \$34,000. Present liability for an absentee or company is \$4,000. The adoption of the higher levels of exemption and the new level of minimum assessment will allow these figures to be increased to \$40,500 and \$4,500 respectively as provided in the amendments to section 16.

At the moment, under section 18, the Commissioner of Land Tax may, in his discretion, refrain from levying an amount of tax less than \$12. This figure for the minimum assessment is now to be increased to \$15.

The combination of the special exemption at new levels and the new level of minimum assessment will mean that a primary producer who personally works his land will not pay land tax if the unimproved value of his land is less than \$112,500. In the case of a taxpayer other than a primary producer, an absentee or company, the figure is \$40,500. This excludes of course the value of land on which the owner's residence is situated, which is already exempt as a result of amendments to the Act in 1978. There is no statutory exemption for an absentee or a company, although the new level of minimum assessment means that land to a value of \$4,500 will not attract tax.

The Government has kept land tax exemption levels under constant review in order to minimise the effects of increased valuations. This has meant that land tax exemption levels have been increased on five occasions in the last seven years, with the result that exemption levels for residents and primary producers have risen by some 260 per cent in that time. Particular emphasis has been placed on assisting primary producers. As a result of the proposed increased exemptions applying this year, the number of primary producers paying land tax on either town or country land is expected to reduce from 655 to 454.

I commend the Bill to the Committee.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (2.19 p.m.): The big query here is whether the increase in the exemption level is sufficiently great. My view is that it should be greater. I am sure that the all-round increase of 20 per cent in the exemption level is much less than the increase in land values determined by the Valuer-General's Department. There is not an exact run-down for every area, but those of us who have been watching our own areas, and areas that we are partly responsible for, have noticed that the increase in land values has been much higher than that.

Today land tax is an important and substantial part of the State's income. If one looks back a little, one finds that in 1977-78 the land tax collected by the State Government was \$15,122,706. In 1978-79 it was \$16,041,805. In other words, the increased income in that 12 months was \$919,099, which is an increase of 6.07 per cent. The estimated land tax for this year, according to the Treasurer's own figures, has gone up from \$16,041,085 to \$18,370,000.

I take it that the reduction in land tax will be effective from 30 June 1979. I do not think the Treasurer indicated an operative date, but I take it that it will be for the full financial year. If that is so, the Government expects to get \$2,328,915 more. Even

allowing for the Government's generosity, it anticipates an increased revenue for land tax of 14.51 per cent over last year. The Government cannot claim that it is very generous in regard to land tax.

The Minister boasted that the Land Tax Act has been amended five times in the last seven years. I am not denying that at all. However, over the last few years the increase in exemption has been at a flat rate of 20 per cent. The Government is not keeping pace with the alteration of the Valuer-General's valuations of land in Queensland.

When we hear about the increase in income that the Government expects, even after its exemptions, we have to look at where the increase in income is coming from. I have no fight with the Government if it is getting it from those who have been abrogating land without using it, because I think that was the original purpose of land tax. However, I have a lot of fight with the Government if it is getting more money from people and companies that are caught up in the land valuation boom of recent years.

Other ramifications come into it if a company is involved. I instance the case of retail shops in Queen Street. If they have to pay more land tax, the added cost will be passed on to the consumer. It will not be taken off their profits; the shareholders will demand certain profits so that the businesses can retain their liquidity. The extra charges imposed by the Government will be added to the cost of their goods, or more unemployment will be caused. It has to be one or the other.

One of the tragedies over the years has been that many retail establishments have seen fit to cut their costs. I am sure that land tax is one of the charges that makes companies look seriously at cutting costs. One of the ways they do this is by reducing staff. Obviously a company cannot reduce its land tax, but it can alter its internal working structure by reducing the number of employees. A few years ago large retail stores employed many shop assistants to provide a service to customers. Today customers have to look hard to find a shop assistant. Previously there would have been a ratio of one shop assistant to so many customers, but today one shop assistant is provided to attend to a much larger number of customers. The facts speak for themselves. I know that the present Treasurer did not introduce the last Land Tax Amendment Bill—the Treasurer at that time was Sir William Knox, as he now is—but in a similar speech, except that he changed some figures—

Mr. Prest: He changed the date.

Mr. HOUSTON: He changed the date and changed some figures. The then Treasurer said that because the exemption level was being increased from \$75,000 to \$90,000 for primary producers, the number of taxpayers in that area would be reduced from 301 to 249. That was the estimate. Today the Treasurer told us that this amendment would drop the number from 655 to 454. Surely

that reinforces my argument that the Government is not as generous as it is trying to make out. Whereas the previous change was to drop the number from 301 to 249, the Treasurer is now saying to the Committee, "I am sorry. We did not get to the 249 figure. We did not even make the 301 figure. We have now gone to 655. We are hoping through this amendment to drop it to 454."

I recognise that land tax is a means of financing Government activity. If it is used primarily to stop the aggregation of land for no real benefit, I have no fight with it. But I have a lot of fight about it if the tax results in the cost of articles and services being increased or employment being reduced. That is an opinion that would be held by both the city-dweller and the primary producer. The Treasurer said that this would result in a substantial number of primary producers being charged land tax this year—454, if his figures are accurate—compared with 301 as at 30 June 1977.

Hon. L. R. EDWARDS (Ipswich—Deputy Premier and Treasurer) (2.28 p.m.), in reply: I thank the member for Bulimba for his comments. I recognise the relevance of some of the points he has made. Of course, I cannot agree with everything he said. For example, he said that we were not a generous Government on the matter of land tax. I am sure that the Government's record of generosity not only in land tax but in taxation in general is recognised throughout Australia, not just in Queensland.

Mr. Houston: Do you know the old saying that self praise is no recommendation?

Dr. EDWARDS: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition makes that comment; but it is certainly about time that we informed him of the facts. It is not necessarily self praise; but we are informing him of the results we have achieved.

He made the statement that land tax led to a reduction in employment. I do not think it can be claimed that there is a correlation between the application of land tax and the number of people employed. Many factors other than land tax have an effect on employment.

The member for Bulimba said that we will receive an increased amount in land tax. Of course, this tax is based on valuations. The Government is bound by an Act covering the valuation of land. As the honourable member knows quite well, the basis is related to sales in an area.

I thank the honourable member for his comments. I cannot comment on the number of properties to which he referred and relate that to the previous Treasurer's comments. I will certainly have that matter examined between now and the second-reading stage.

Motion (Dr. Edwards) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

Bill presented and, on motion of Dr. Edwards, read a first time.

PAY-ROLL TAX ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

(Mr. Row, Hinchinbrook, in the chair)

Hon. L. R. EDWARDS (Ipswich—Deputy Premier and Treasurer) (2.31 p.m.): I move—

"That a Bill be introduced to amend the Pay-roll Tax Act 1971-1977 in certain particulars and for a related purpose."

Honourable members will recall that the 1979-80 Budget, which I presented to honourable members last month, provided for still further concessions in pay-roll tax for employers generally and for smaller employers in particular. The Bill that I now present will give effect to the proposals set out in the Budget.

The specific proposals provided for are an increase of 20 per cent to \$150,000 in the level of pay-roll below which no pay-roll tax is payable, and an increase in the minimum pay-roll tax exemption from \$27,000 to \$30,000 per annum. Accordingly, any business with an annual pay-roll of \$150,000 or less will not be liable to pay pay-roll tax. Above the annual pay-roll level of \$150,000, the maximum benefit of \$150,000 will reduce by \$5 for every \$2 by which the annual pay-roll exceeds \$150,000. It therefore reduces gradually up to the annual pay-roll level of \$198,000, at which point the minimum exemption becomes effective. The new minimum exemption of \$30,000 will then apply to respect of employers whose annual pay-roll exceeds \$198,000.

As announced in the Budget speech, the additional concessions are proposed to be made effective from 1 January 1980. I am sure that all honourable members will welcome these adjustments to the exemption levels. They represent a further step in the programme of pay-roll tax reform that has been followed by the Government in recent years.

The Government is determined to provide continuing concessions in this area. We are particularly looking to provide real benefits to small business. We have therefore concentrated our efforts on the level of the maximum exemption. This is now increased to \$150,000. Businesses with pay-rolls below this figure will not be required to pay pay-roll tax. This will be of substantial benefit to the small business sector, which is a very significant employer. Other businesses as well will benefit from the increase to \$30,000 in the minimum exemption.

Queensland is, of course, leading the other States in pay-roll tax reform for small businesses. The new maximum exemption

level of \$150,000 compares with maximum exemption levels ranging from \$60,000 to \$84,000 in the other States, after taking account of any additional concessions announced by them in their respective 1979-80 Budgets.

Mr. Houston: What are their rates?

Dr. EDWARDS: I do not have their rates with me, but I can easily get them for the honourable member and send them to him. As I said, the exemption levels range from \$60,000 to \$84,000.

Mr. Houston: Yes, but their rate in the dollar might be different.

Dr. EDWARDS: The percentage is the same throughout Australia.

Mr. Houston: It is the same?

Dr. EDWARDS: It is a constant 5 per cent throughout Australia.

I believe that the Government can be justifiably proud of its record in relation to concessions in the pay-roll tax field. Thousands of small businesses no longer pay any pay-roll tax. Many others have benefited from the increased exemption levels. Much has been done previously; we are now doing more.

Prior to the 1975-76 Budget, the maximum pay-roll tax exemption was \$20,800 per annum. It will now be \$150,000. This represents an increase of somewhat over 600 per cent. In the period since 1 January 1976, average weekly earnings have increased by only around 40 per cent by comparison.

I have no doubt that the significant concessions which we have provided in recent years have been of real benefit to our local businesses in assisting them to maintain employment and encouraging them to engage additional employees. I believe that the realistic and progressive attitude that we have adopted in relation to pay-roll tax has improved the confidence of the business community.

The concessions in the pay-roll tax area which we are now proposing for implementation this year, together with those flowing from the 1976-77 and 1977-78 Budgets, will mean savings to business and industry of the order of \$22,000,000 each year.

I commend the Bill to the Committee.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (2.36 p.m.): This tax, too, is a straight-out State tax. I do not think the Treasurer would deny that. It is also a most important tax. In fact, in terms of revenue collected, it is the second-largest tax. It is exceeded only by the revenue collected from the Federal reimbursements on personal income tax. That has been the situation for many years past.

It is quite interesting to look again at the generosity of the Government, and I must say that in relation to pay-roll tax it is more generous than in regard to land tax. I am sure that when the Treasurer checks the figures that I quoted in the debate in the

preceding Bill, he will agree with me. I suggest that a further look be taken at the relativity of various taxes.

In 1977-78, the pay-roll tax collected amounted to \$211,861,517 and last year the figure was \$225,783,880. In other words, the revenue collected increased by \$13,922,368, or by 6.57 per cent.

Dr. Edwards: Much less than inflation.

Mr. HOUSTON: Yes, that is so. However, against that there is the tremendous increase in the unemployment figures. If the Treasurer wants to argue that point, we will have to relate the figures to the number of employees in industry.

Dr. Edwards: The number of people employed in Queensland would also have a bearing on the unemployment figures.

Mr. HOUSTON: I am not denying that. Once we follow this line of argument—I do not think you will let me develop it, Mr. Row—we could get into a number of different aspects. I am sure that the Treasurer would not be able to answer off the cuff any questions that I pose to him. The fact is that the revenue collected by way of pay-roll tax increased by 6.57 per cent from 1977-78 to 1978-79.

What is expected this year? The Treasurer's estimate for 1979-80 is \$243,800,000. In other words, even allowing for the concessions, he expects to receive an additional \$18,016,120, which represents an increase of 7.98 per cent over last year's figure. That means to say that, if the allowances had not been contemplated, the increase would have been higher. This is due basically to higher wages. I should like to think that it was due to a tremendous boost in employment but, as much as I would like that to be the case, that is not so.

As I say, an increase of nearly 8 per cent is expected. As the Treasurer indicated, the rate will not be changed. Perhaps this is one of the unfortunate taxes in which there is a combination between the Commonwealth and the States under the early agreement and a decision that the two would remain in unison.

If there is one field of taxation that the State Government should be using extensively to encourage development and industry, it is that of pay-roll tax, where special exemptions can be granted. With the increase in the exemption rate to \$150,000, and to \$198,000 before the tax applies fully, many small businesses employing between 15 and 20 employees will be exempt. However, this tax is a tremendous disadvantage for employers because it is based on wages paid and does not take into account the financial viability of a business. A tax that applies across the board, without allowing for profitability of an undertaking, has that major weakness.

I realise that this form of taxation is tremendously important to Queensland and the other States, but I should like the State

Treasurers to get together and introduce a new formula that takes into account the profitability of a business. A business pays income tax on the profits it makes, and I have no fight with that. But when an industry is battling—

Dr. Edwards: You say that you would like the tax related to profitability?

Mr. HOUSTON: That figure should come into it. At present pay-roll tax is levied purely and simply on the wages paid. It does not take into account whether the wages paid are returning an appreciable profit. In fact, many businesses run at a loss in a particular year. It would be more acceptable to the business community if a loading was paid while a high profit was being earned and, a rebate was granted when the legitimate profit was down, to be made up at a later stage.

An employer could be at the critical stage at which he says, "If I put on another man I will go into the pay-roll tax bracket, whereas if I do not put a man on I am clear of it." That would worry a businessman whose operations were line-balled, but it would not worry a man whose business was quite profitable. That is the main weakness in this type of taxation.

The whole purpose of any tax is to finance Government activity, but I believe taxes should be adjusted, particularly in these days, to encourage employment. If we can get people back to work they will pay general taxes to the Federal Government and, in turn, we will get back a percentage of their personal income tax contributions.

The Treasurer said—I think quite rightly—that over the years the exemption figure has increased by 600 per cent. I point out to him, although I am sure he is well aware of it, that income from this source has increased tremendously in the same period. In 1972-73, the State income totalled about \$61,000,000. In the short period of seven years it has increased by 400 per cent.

At this stage the Opposition has no objection to the introduction of the Bill.

Mr. W. D. HEWITT (Greenslopes) (2.45 p.m.): This is probably the field of State taxation that comes under more criticism and attack than any other field of revenue. Through their organisations both of the coalition parties have committed themselves to its abolition. I am not without my criticism of both the Liberal and National Party organisations in the rather bland way that they have made policy declarations. They have merely committed themselves to the proposition that pay-roll tax should be abolished. That is the grand theory, the grand design, but when we recognise the fact that pay-roll tax now brings in something to the order of \$225,000,000 a year, and that it accounts for 53 per cent of internal taxation, the parties did not do us much of a favour by putting forward that all too simplistic proposition that the tax should be abolished.

The organisations and others who criticise the tax would be much more helpful if they put forward proposals as to what other fields of taxation could be exploited in the place of pay-roll tax or, conversely, put forward proposals on how pay-roll tax could be levied in a more equitable fashion.

I believe that on occasions political parties raise their expectations too high of the practitioners in this place when they make those all-too-bland policy statements and then look to us for performance. So while we would all like to see the abolition of this tax—I suppose in a totally utopian situation we would like to see no tax at all—the realities demand that a Government must have a lucrative tax field, and this is one of the Government's most lucrative tax fields.

It would be useful if positive proposals were forthcoming. One recalls that some months ago the combined chambers of commerce carried resolutions along the same lines, and wrote to most members of Parliament acquainting them of their sentiments. I responded to that correspondence and expressed the sentiments I have expressed today, namely, that those chambers of commerce would be helpful if they suggested to the Government other fields of taxation to take up the slack. I am bound to say that to date I have had no response to that letter.

Dr. Edwards: Did you expect some?

Mr. W. D. HEWITT: I do not believe that anyone in the community is entitled to take a totally negative point of view. The facts are that pay-roll tax brings in \$225,000,000 a year, and accounts for 53 per cent of internal taxation. To have this over-simplistic statement that it should be abolished is not very helpful at all.

The history of pay-roll tax is an interesting one. It was introduced federally in the early '40s by the Menzies Government with the intention of funding child endowment. That was its original intention. The two proposals grew away from each other. Child endowment was funded separately, and pay-roll tax more and more became just another field of taxation for the Commonwealth.

Mr. R. J. Gibbs: Is that part of your portfolio?

Mr. W. D. HEWITT: Let us hear it and get it out of the way. What are you trying to say?

Mr. Moore: He's mumbling again.

Mr. W. D. HEWITT: Yes, mumbling again.

Mr. R. J. Gibbs: Carry on.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Row): Order!

Mr. W. D. HEWITT: There was once a Dick Tracy character named Mumbles, and he was just about as intelligible.

In all the years since the introduction of pay-roll tax the Commonwealth has maintained an exemption rate of \$20,800 a year

or \$1,733.33 a month. Because I used to make out pay-roll tax returns, I remember it well. For year after year the Commonwealth refused to vary that exemption rate, and in consequence it had a vested interest in inflation. As wages went up the return to the Commonwealth increased, and quite steadfastly it refused to vary the exemption rate. Now, to the great credit of all of the States since the tax has come their way, they have reviewed the exemption rate and attempted to keep it consistent with inflationary pressures, so that while there may not be a significant easing of the tax, at least there are no additional imposts. That is to the credit of all of the States that took over this field of taxation some years ago.

Five or six years ago a means was found whereby the payment of pay-roll tax could be avoided or minimised. I was doing some part-time accountancy work at the time, and I could see the practice developing. I could also see that the time would come when a Government would have to do something about it. Companies more and more were developing a whole string of related private companies, with each attending to a specific function of the overall operation. Each of these separate private companies or separate enterprises was able to take advantage of the exemption rate. If an enterprise fragmented itself six times, instead of getting the one exemption it was getting six exemptions. During the treasurership of Sir Gordon Chalk it was seen that this gate would have to be closed, and legislation was introduced to bring this tax avoidance to heel. All of the incomes were deemed to be one, and only one exemption rate could be applied. That was good sense, and the Government acted to protect its own revenue. I have no argument with that whatsoever.

But in trying to close that gate, those who administer this law have been over-heavy and have seriously disadvantaged some people who, acting in good faith, had established private companies for good and legitimate reasons. In fact, in some instances they had set up that structure before the amendment to the Act took place. I have referred a particular case to the Treasurer. I am not going to detail the names of the people or the names of the enterprises, but they had, in fact, set up a set of companies before the amending legislation was enacted, and there was no intent whatsoever on their part to avoid taxation liability. They were brought to heel by the officer responsible for collecting pay-roll tax and, in my opinion—an opinion that I adhere to—they received a rough form of justice.

When they appealed against the officer's findings, they received the rather summary advice that the appeal was not sustained, and no dialogue was entered into. I believe that when an appeal is lodged, at least the appellants are entitled to know the grounds on which the appeal is denied. That advice was not forthcoming, and those people, who acted quite legitimately in doing things for

proper business reasons, have been very seriously penalised. It has cost them an enormous amount of money. I am displeased; I am annoyed; I do not accept the officer's judgment. I repeat that those people have received a rough form of justice. I still believe that the matter deserves looking at; it deserves some sympathetic consideration.

As to the tax itself—it is one of those fields of taxation that lends itself to a good deal of flexibility. When it was a tax field for the Commonwealth alone, it was levied throughout the Commonwealth and there were no variations to it. When the States took it over, for a number of years they, too, were totally inflexible; the same exemption rates were to be found in every State, and there was precious little imagination or flexibility. It is one of those taxes that could be used to encourage pioneer industries, to encourage the employment of apprentices, to encourage the decentralisation of industry and, indeed, to attract new industry to this State. Conversely, it is a tax in respect of which, on occasions, a higher level could be applied. I see no reason why a common rate has to be adhered to, and I see no reason why some industries, for a specified period, could not enjoy total exemption from the tax. I believe that industry would be encouraged to employ more apprentices if given exemption from pay-roll tax on wages of apprentices. There is a great opportunity for introducing flexibility in this field. I hope that the Treasurer considers those observations.

I emphasise again that the Government has at least recognised the ravages of inflation and has attempted to maintain a consistent level of taxation, including pay-roll tax. The increasing levels of exemption are at least a recognition that there is inflation and that the Government is prepared to make concessions to industry to ensure, in clear contradistinction to the attitude of the Commonwealth Government, that the State Government does not have a vested interest in inflation.

Hon. L. R. EDWARDS (Deputy Premier and Treasurer) (2.56 p.m.), in reply: I thank the two members for their contributions. The member for Bulimba, on behalf of the Labor Party, made some interesting comments. Basically, I think he supported what the Government is doing, although he feels that it has not gone far enough. That was quite an interesting statement from a member of a party that believes in high taxation. I am sure the Labor Party's record in that matter speaks for itself. I was also interested in his comment that one of the methods of increasing revenue is to levy a tax on profitability. That is a very interesting comment, one which is related to the philosophy of the Labor Party.

Mr. Houston: I put it this way: it relates not only to profitability but also to losses. Why do you tell only half the story?

Dr. EDWARDS: I did not tell only half the story. I particularly asked if it related to profitability and the member answered that it did.

The member for Greenslopes demonstrated a very good and realistic approach to this very big problem. He pointed out quite clearly, as I would have thought the Deputy Leader of the Opposition might well have done, the problems associated with policies of particular political parties.

Mr. Houston: There is no problem with our policy; you have got the problem.

Dr. EDWARDS: That is not so. The Labor Party is a high-tax party. It does not have any financial problems because it levies such high taxes. Of course, Mr. Hayden has made statements about a wealth tax, a profitability tax and all other kinds of taxes.

Mr. Wilson interjected.

Dr. EDWARDS: I would like to inform the honourable member that on a pro rata basis the highest tax levels in the history of this nation were levied between 1972 and 1975 by a Labor Government. I suggest that he needs a lesson in economics.

I return to the comments of the member for Greenslopes. He had the most realistic approach that people in the community must recognise, as I said in the Financial Statement, that Governments have to get revenue and also have a responsibility to spend within that revenue. His is a realistic and worthwhile approach to this problem.

He raised a matter concerning a specific problem. I assure him that the Government will look at that problem again. In regard to the exemption of apprentices' wages from pay-roll tax, the Government did look at that proposal and a number of others. It will continue to examine this matter. Our advice is that it raises administrative difficulties and other problems. I assure the honourable member that we will certainly continue to examine the matter quite fully. I appreciate the comments he has made.

I thank both members for their comments.

Motion (Dr. Edwards) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

Bill presented and, on motion of Dr. Edwards, read a first time.

MEDICAL ACT AND OTHER ACTS (ADMINISTRATION) ACT AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. Sir WILLIAM KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Health) (3 p.m.): I move—

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

The Medical Act and Other Acts (Administration) Act 1966-1977 requires the professional registration boards to contribute

towards the costs of the office of the registrar, medical and other boards and provides for the appointment and the powers of inspectors. This Bill will extend the provisions of the Act to the Chiropractic Manipulative Therapists Board of Queensland and to the practice of chiropractic manipulative therapy.

As I stated at the introductory stage, the amendments are of a machinery nature only. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr. D'ARCY (Woodridge) (3.1 p.m.): As the Minister said, this is a machinery measure which adds the provisions of the Chiropractic Manipulative Therapists Bill to this Act. The Opposition has no objection to it.

Motion (Sir William Knox) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

(Mr. Row, Hinchinbrook, in the chair)

Clauses 1 to 4, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

Bill, on motion of Sir William Knox, by leave, read a third time.

NURSING ACT AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. Sir WILLIAM KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Health) (3.4 p.m.): I move—

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

During the introductory stage, the honourable members for Salisbury and Townsville expressed their views that the training of nurses should not be divorced from the hospital situation, and I have indicated my philosophy on this matter. However, this Bill relates to the enrolment of enrolled nurses and not to the training of student nurses. It is almost three years since this Act was proclaimed and it is considered that enrolled nurses should not now be enrolled purely on the grounds of experience.

Eighty-three hospitals in Queensland are presently registered by the Nurses Registration Board of Queensland to conduct enrolled nursing courses. Courses are therefore available to persons who wish to be enrolled.

The current situation with regard to a person who is summarily convicted of an indictable offence is that he cannot be charged by the board with having committed an indictable offence for the purposes of disciplinary action. The proposed amendment will enable this to happen.

I am sure that honourable members will support the Bill, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. D'ARCY (Woodridge) (3.6 p.m.): The Minister mentioned that he supports the thoughts on nurses' training expressed by the honourable member for Salisbury and the honourable member for Townsville at

the introductory stage. It is obvious that the Government has had a change of mind, because the former Minister for Health, the present Deputy Premier and Treasurer, did not support that concept and stated so in this Chamber.

The Opposition does not support that method of training. It is in favour of having preliminary training carried out at colleges of advanced education or other colleges at which nurses can attain a higher academic standard before entering a hospital situation. That is also the policy of the Royal Australian Nursing Federation, and I believe that the Minister will be taken to task by that body.

Sir William Knox interjected.

Mr. D'ARCY: That is not what the State secretary has told me. It is the stated policy of the federation to improve the training of nurses through colleges of advanced education in this State. It is important that the Government take that into account so that the preliminary training of nurses will not be, in effect, an apprenticeship system within the hospitals. However, as the Minister stated, that is not actually involved in this Bill. It deals with enrolled nurses and virtually removes the grandfather clause so that the 83 established hospitals throughout the State with the right to organise training of enrolled nurses will continue to do that under the Act.

As I understand it, the other point made by the Minister was that if a nurse is dealt with summarily for an indictable offence, he or she cannot now be charged by the board for the purposes of disciplinary action. The Bill will enable the board to do that, and there is a similar provision in the Public Service Act.

The Opposition agrees with and supports the Bill as it now stands.

Motion (Sir William Knox) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

(Mr. Row, Hinchinbrook, in the chair)

Clauses 1 to 4, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

Bill, on motion of Sir William Knox, by leave, read a third time.

SPEECH THERAPISTS BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. Sir WILLIAM KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Health) (3.10 p.m.): I move—

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

At the introductory stage, I gave an outline of the major provisions of the proposed legislation. Now that honourable members have had an opportunity to study the Bill,

they will be aware that its provisions are consistent with other registration Acts which are administered by my department.

In closing the debate at the introductory stage, I indicated that I would answer queries raised by honourable members, and this I shall now do.

The honourable member for Woodridge stated that the Opposition had no objection to the introduction of the Bill but expressed his concern at the number of boards being created. I share his concern in this matter, but I feel that if controls are to be placed on the members of particular professions, these are best administered by members of those professions. With at least five of the seven members of the board being speech therapists, this will be the case.

The honourable member for Mt. Isa gave an excellent speech in support of the Bill, but along with the honourable member for Salisbury and other speakers he indicated that there are not sufficient speech therapists to service the needs of the community. I am hopeful that this situation will change in the future. As the honourable member for Mt. Gravatt stated, the Government is looking at the matter closely.

The honourable member for Salisbury requested the estimated number of speech therapists practising in Queensland. The precise number is not known, but I believe there are approximately 200. There are 23 employed by the Department of Health, approximately 35 employed by hospitals boards and approximately 30 in private practice. The remainder would be employed by other Government departments and voluntary agencies.

The honourable member also referred to the provision in the Bill which will enable the board to formulate rules governing the practice of speech therapy. These rules will relate to the ethics of the profession.

I would like to thank honourable members for their support of the Bill. The legislation can only be of benefit to the people of Queensland and to the profession itself.

I advise honourable members that I will be moving an amendment in Committee to clause 38 of the Bill, which relates to the procedural provisions with regard to by-laws. The amendment will have the effect of extending the provisions of the Acts Interpretation Act 1977 concerning the tabling of regulations to by-laws made under the Act.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr. D'ARCY (Woodridge) (3.12 p.m.): As the Minister stated, the Opposition has no objection to this Bill. At the introductory stage, we raised the problems associated with speech therapists, and I have no intention of reiterating them today.

The Minister did say, however, that he shared my concern about the number of boards created in Queensland and their administration. The members of this board will be paid and they will be elected for a term of three years.

The number of speech therapists in Queensland concerns me. The Bill provides for the appointment of five to the board. I would ask the Minister if he has any idea how many speech therapists will be registered under the Bill.

Sir William Knox: I have said that the number would be approximately 200.

Mr. D'ARCY: Of that number, five will be on the board. Admittedly the registration of speech therapists is needed, but the Bill will provide for the registration of only 200. I wonder whether the time of Parliament is not being wasted on the discussion of minor Bills that set up boards. As I say, this board will administer only 200 speech therapists. Of course, we hope that the number will be higher.

Dr. Lockwood: There will be only occasional meetings.

Mr. D'ARCY: I realise that. If the position was otherwise, five speech therapists out of a total of 200 would be lost to the profession because they would be sitting on the board. Isn't that what the honourable member complained about at the introductory stage? Queensland is short of speech therapists. The point raised by the Minister is an important one. Perhaps this Bill will lead to an increase in the number of speech therapists, because those wishing to enter the profession will realise that they will have security of tenure.

We realise that the provisions in this Bill are in line with those in other registration Bills. We do not oppose this legislation.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Health) (3.15 p.m.), in reply: I point out to the honourable member that the registration is not designed to administer 200 possible registrants. By this legislation we hope to provide standards for the patients who visit the therapists. The Bill will not be looking after the 200 therapists but the 2,000, 5,000 or 10,000 people in the community who need the services of a therapist. We propose to set the standards and ensure that the people get what is advertised, promoted, or otherwise indicated by referral. That is important to the public. We do not introduce such legislation in order to create boards or register people just for the sake of registration, but to look after the public interest.

Motion (Sir William Knox) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

(Mr. Row, Hinchinbrook, in the chair)

Clauses 1 to 17, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 18—Qualification for registration—

Mr. D'ARCY (Woodridge) (3.17 p.m.): I have only one comment to make on the clause. Speech therapists have to undertake courses at a university or other tertiary institutions in the State. But as the Minister admitted, we have only 200 speech therapists

in Queensland. A recent newspaper article pointed out that the quota for speech therapists at the University of Queensland in 1980 is only 35. It is crazy to set a quota of 35 when Queensland desperately needs more speech therapists. Why is there such a limitation on the training of speech therapists when there is ample room for further speech therapists in the State?

Hon. Sir WILLIAM KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Health) (3.18 p.m.): The question raised by the honourable member for Woodridge indicates some of the difficulties in the way of getting more speech therapists into the community. The fact is that a quota of 35 is not an unreasonable number considering that it is about 17½ per cent of the total number of speech therapists in Queensland.

Mr. D'ARCY: That is the quota for the year; there will be drop-outs and so on.

Sir WILLIAM KNOX: I realise that.

Mr. D'ARCY: There are also the qualification requirements during the three-year course. I am talking about those who will qualify in 1983.

Sir WILLIAM KNOX: That is so. Of course, we will have graduates this year to swell the ranks. This profession is dominated by women who usually continue to practise after marriage. Indeed, most of them practise for a considerable number of years. There are not actually a great number who drop out of the practice once they get into it.

It is true that there is at the moment a shortage of speech therapists. The reason for that is that those wishing to come here from interstate have hesitated to do so because of the lack of registration. Once registration is introduced, I feel that the numbers will be swelled considerably, as people from other States will willingly come here once they know they will be registered. I think that, not increasing the quota, will be the answer to the problem. I suspect that in a few years' time, as is the case in a number of other professions, there will be an over-supply throughout the nation, even though there is a temporary shortage in this State at the moment.

Mr. JONES (Cairns) (3.21 p.m.): I tried to raise this point by way of interjection, but it is probably better that I raise it whilst I am on my feet. The Minister said that there was a shortage because interested people in other States did not want to come into this State and not be registered. He said, in effect, that registration will rectify this problem. I think it would be better to train our own people; to have our locals, one might say, being trained in this area. I suggest that the Minister might also look at the tertiary education score required for entry to the speech therapy course. This score is very discouraging to a lot of young people.

Sir William Knox: What is the T.E. score?

Mr. JONES: The honourable member for Woodridge raised the point that the quota is limited to 35, compared with 245 for medicine. The T.E. score for the speech therapy course is 945, compared with 950 for veterinary science and 975 for medicine. That is a very difficult assignment for young people who want to enter the field, and it could put some of them off. I understand that there are a lot of young people keen to become speech therapists. We have admitted that there is a crying need for them. Over a long period members from both sides have been screaming for speech therapists in their areas, so we know that the need exists. So, apart from the quota, I think that the T.E. score has probably been set a little too high. Perhaps that is one matter that the registration board should look at very early in its existence.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Health) (3.23 p.m.): I do not have any direct influence over T.E. scores, but I think the point made by the honourable member for Cairns could well be brought to the notice of the board, which might wish to make its point of view known to other authorities. But, as I understand it, the standard of education required for speech therapists is high because it is a fairly difficult course involving a great deal of conceptual understanding. It is very difficult to become a speech therapist, despite the fact that people very often see a speech therapist doing only simple things. A fairly high level of education is called for because speech therapists have to understand what they are doing and why they are doing it. The programme of work which they follow, the advice they give to their patients and the other resources on which they need to draw from time to time in diagnostic areas and so on really calls for a tertiary level of education, so I would not be inclined to discount the T.E. score.

Mr. Jones: I merely raised the matter for notation.

Sir WILLIAM KNOX: It will not be overlooked.

Clause 18, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 19 to 37, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 38—Procedural provisions re by-laws—

Hon. Sir WILLIAM KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Health): I move the following amendment—

“On page 16, omit all words comprising lines 41 to 48, both inclusive, and on page 17 all words comprising lines 1 to 10, both inclusive, and insert in lieu thereof the following words:—

‘38. Procedural provisions re by-laws.

(1) Section 28A of the Acts Interpretation Act 1954-1977 shall apply with

respect to by-laws made for the purposes of this Act and, for the purposes of such application, that section shall be read and construed as if references to regulations were references to by-laws made for the purposes of this Act.

‘(2) Every by-law made under this Act shall, upon its publication in the Gazette, be judicially noticed.’”

Mr. D'ARCY (Woodridge) (3.25 p.m.): The Opposition has no objection to the amendment. It is a machinery amendment. It is fortunate that the Government realised the error now and thus avoided the need to introduce another amending Bill.

Amendment (Sir William Knox) agreed to.

Clause 38, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

THIRD READING

Bill, on motion of Sir William Knox, by leave, read a third time.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. Sir WILLIAM KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Health) (3.29 p.m.): I move—

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

In the introduction of this Bill I gave an outline of the major provisions of the proposed legislation and indicated that it was similar to other registration Acts which are administered by my department.

The role of the occupational therapist is a most important one, and it was obvious during the introductory debate that honourable members are very much aware of this. Occupational therapy is a health profession whose primary purpose is assisting individuals to achieve or maintain their capacities to function in daily living activities with as much independence as possible. This is a very broad area and is the reason why the practice of occupational therapy has not been defined.

The honourable member for Woodridge referred to the grandfather clause and to the qualifications of overseas applicants. I explained the reason why the Bill contains the grandfather clause and would point out that any applicant under this provision must satisfy the board that she is competent to practise occupational therapy. I was pleased to hear the honourable members for Mt. Isa and Townsville support this provision.

With regard to overseas applicants, they will be required either to have a qualification equal to or higher than the Queensland degree or to have a qualification and to have undergone additional educational training. I am certain that the board will ensure that only properly qualified and competent persons are registered.

The honourable member for Mt. Isa raised the issue of the possible overlapping of the physiotherapy and occupational therapy professions. If there is such overlapping I feel that the two professions should get together and work this out between them.

The honourable member for Lockyer gave a very informed speech on the assistance which can be afforded by occupational therapists to children with minimal cerebral dysfunction and the honourable member for Townsville gave some of the history of the practice of occupational therapy. I thank both members for their contributions to the debate.

I advise honourable members that I will be moving an amendment in Committee to clause 38 of the Bill which relates to the procedural provisions with regard to by-laws. The amendment will have the effect of extending the provisions of the Acts Interpretation Act 1977 concerning the tabling of regulations to by-laws made under this Act.

I am sure the Bill has the support of honourable members and I commend it to the House.

Mr. D'ARCY (Woodridge) (3.31 p.m.): This Bill is identical with the Bill that was introduced to register speech therapists in Queensland. This Bill simply registers occupational therapists.

I do not intend to reiterate the situation regarding boards. There are, however, fewer occupational therapists than speech therapists in Queensland. About 170 will be registered, and five of those will form part of the board of seven members. One must question the wisdom of that provision.

I see the reason for registering occupational therapists. The Opposition agrees with it. As I said at the introductory stage, occupational therapists have a wider range of skills that can be used in Queensland, not only in schools for the handicapped and hospitals but also in the school system. Young people in particular, as well as people who have been involved in accidents and are in hospitals, have a greater need for occupational therapists.

A most important function of the Government is getting back into the work-force people who are recuperating from illness or accident. Returning to work gives them a sense of achievement and usefulness in the community.

Just as the Bills to register speech therapists and chiropractors will give greater purpose to those callings, so this Bill will similarly affect the paramedical field in Queensland.

The Opposition supports the Bill.

The Minister had no comments on the machinery amendment that he mentioned. It refers to exactly the same by-laws that he mentioned in respect of the previous Bill. The Opposition has no objection to the amendment and will not be speaking to it.

Motion (Sir William Knox) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

(Mr. Row, Hinchinbrook, in the chair)

Clauses 1 to 37, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Clause 38—Procedural provisions re by-laws—

Hon. Sir WILLIAM KNOX (Nundah—Minister for Health): I move the following amendment—

“On page 17, omit all words comprising lines 9 to 26, both inclusive, and insert in lieu thereof the following words—

‘38. Procedural provisions re by-laws. (1) Section 28A of the Acts Interpretation Act 1954–1977 shall apply with respect to by-laws made for the purposes of this Act and, for the purposes of such application, that section shall be read and construed as if references to regulations were references to by-laws made for the purposes of this Act.

‘(2) Every by-law made under this Act shall, upon its publication in the Gazette, be judicially noticed.’”

Mr. D'ARCY (Woodridge) (3.35 p.m.): The Opposition supports the amendment.

Amendment (Sir William Knox) agreed to.

Clause 38, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

THIRD READING

Bill, on motion of Sir William Knox, by leave, read a third time.

SAWMILLS LICENSING ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. N. T. E. HEWITT (Auburn—Minister for Lands, Forestry and Water Resources) (3.38 p.m.): I move—

“That a Bill be introduced to amend the Sawmills Licensing Act 1936–1976 in certain particulars.”

In introducing this Bill, I would remind honourable members that the Sawmills Licensing Act was assented to in 1936. The purpose of the Act was to provide legislative authority to exercise some control over sawmilling capacity in relation to available log supplies. At this juncture I would point out to honourable members that there is nothing complex about the provisions of the proposed Bill.

This Bill is to provide for the expression of maximum productive capacity as a gross volume figure and to substitute this for the previously used net volume figures. I point out to honourable members that the term “maximum productive capacity” is the volume of logs which may be processed by a sawmill in any quarter as endorsed on the licence document. Gross measurement of logs was introduced throughout Queensland

as part of a general effort by the department to simplify procedures, increase efficiency and reduce costs to both the department and to the timber industry in the harvesting of timber.

Prior to the implementation of the gross measure system, forest hardwood and scrubwood logs from Crown forests were measured and charged under a net volume basis, which required the forest officer to examine each individual log and calculate a volume allowance for any related defects. A gross volume log price is now used, which provides for the average defect found to occur in similar logs, as determined from departmental records of logs cut over a number of years. This system has now been in operation for several years and is supported by the sawmilling industry.

It is also considered expedient to delete subsections 3 to 7 of section 9 of the Sawmills Licensing Act, which were inserted by the Sawmills Licensing Act Amendment Act of 1965 and introduced to provide amongst other things for the expression of maximum productive capacity as a quarterly rather than daily volume and included provision to ensure that capacity granted was realistic and related to the performance of the specific mill. These particular subsections provided the basis and machinery required to institute the conversion and served only to provide transitional arrangements.

With the deletion of subsection 6 of section 9, which dealt with the issue of substitute licence documents, the opportunity has also been taken to formalise the current administrative procedure to issue a duplicate copy of a licence or certificate of exemption document in place of one that has been lost or destroyed. A fee for this purpose is provided for in regulation 15 of the Sawmills Licensing Regulations of 1965; however, no provision exists in the Act at present to actually issue a replacement document.

I commend the Bill for favourable consideration.

Mr. BURNS (Lytton) (3.41 p.m.): As the Minister said, the Act was introduced originally in 1936 by the Forgan Smith Labor Government in an effort to limit the maximum production capacity and the approved sites for individual mills because of problems being experienced by mills at that time.

In looking through the history of the Act, I see that it has been amended only twice before. In 1965, the definition of a sawmill was amended to include plants processing logs into products such as wood-wool, chipboard, woodpulp, pulpwood chips and wood fibreboard, and to exclude mills employed solely in dressing, planing, moulding or resawing of timber. In 1976, maximum penalties for offences against the Act were doubled.

In discussing sawmills, one comes to the question of decentralisation, because the

forestry industry is one of the most decentralised industries in the State and for many years sawmills have provided employment in country towns.

Mr. Moore: You cannot grow timber in Queen Street, anyway.

Mr. BURNS: That is correct, but the trend is going to be the other way. The fact is that the number of licensed mills decreased by 14 last year to 399. Of these, 316 were general purpose mills, 58 were other than general purpose mills, and 25 were portable mills. What is happening is that as we run out of millable hardwood timber for the bigger mills, more softwood plantations are being established, and they are being developed closer to the bigger cities. So the little sawmills scattered throughout the country are disappearing and the new pulp mills and other mills are being established closer to cities. In fact, the new trend in the sawmilling industry is working against decentralisation. In essence, it is centralising activities more in the Maryborough, Beerburrough and Gympie areas, and later it will do the same in the Ingham area when softwood plantations become established. The trend is away from little country towns and small country sawmills.

As the Minister was introducing the Bill, I was thinking that since the abandonment of regular auction sales in 1975, all natural-grown Crown log timber has been sold non-competitively on an allocation system. The system that has been operating for some time was mentioned in the last annual report of the Forestry Department, which said—

“Whilst savings in the cost of marketing timber have accrued to the Department from gross measure, equally importantly the system has allowed the deployment of staff to other important areas . . .”

I should like to know what has been saved and how much additional money has come to the department as a result of the introduction of the gross measuring system, where the staff has been deployed, and whether timber has become any cheaper to the mills. I believe that we must try to distribute the total receipts from royalties in such a way that different sawmills in different areas are able to compete in the market-place. Not only the species but also the log quality and the distance from the market itself must be taken into account. Other timber characteristics must be taken into account, too. So the question I should like to pose to the Minister is this: In what way do royalties charged relate to the cost of growing timber? In what way do they relate to the market price of the end product? I know that is not really pertinent to the Bill now before the Committee, but it is part and parcel of the industry.

In moving to the gross volume method, we are now changing the legislation relating to sawmills, and, as I said before, the fall-off in the available hardwood millable timber will mean an increase in the number of softwood plantations. That, in itself, will cause

a decrease in activities in country areas. More money should be available to the Forestry Department as the availability of staff increases as a result of this change.

Talking of sawmills—we should be looking at the trend towards the importation of a certain amount of timber as well as the trend in building towards the use of substitute material. When we talk of sawmills, we talk also of the forestry industry and the planting of trees as well as building towards a capacity in softwoods and trying to get a capacity in hardwoods so that we can service our own requirements. Already a large quantity of timber comes from northern New South Wales to service our industry. In addition, a large quantity comes in from overseas.

The other day when I was looking into the matter of automation I came across trends in the building industry, the use of substitute materials, new construction methods and changing consumer preference. They all have an effect on sawmills and employment. They all have an effect on the whole of the timber industry.

The use by the Railway Department of concrete sleepers, for example, will make a big difference to a lot of little portable mills and sleeper mills.

Mr. Moore: The only reason for the concrete sleepers is that we are running out of suitable timber.

Mr. BURNS: That may be true, but when these things happen a number of sawmills will disappear and work will disappear. This Bill licenses sawmills and their operations. We ought to be looking at them, because in relation to a small sawmiller I will make the point that the department has acted virtually to put him out of business. That is what this Bill started to do; it was designed to introduce stability into the industry by making people get a bit bigger or get out. That decision goes right back to the 1930s. Concrete sleepers will affect that section of the sawmilling industry.

The other day someone said to me that as society became more affluent and people got a little bit more money in their pocket they turned from polished hardwood or cypress pine floors to carpeting. Others had their houses erected on concrete slabs. That has had a tremendous effect on the sawmilling industry.

Prefabricated roof trusses and the use of plywood or particle board also affect the industry. Of course, they create employment in other sections of the industry. The use of metals and plastic in window-framing—the aluminium windows that replace the old wooden ones—have had an effect on the industry.

I have read the report on timber and timber products, plywood and veneer published in May 1978 by the Industries Assistance Commission. A lot of people express concern about what they believe might eventually become uncontrolled imports from New Zealand. Concern is also expressed about timber imported from Malaysia, New Guinea,

Fiji and Western Samoa. If I were a timber merchant, I would not sell some of the timber that is imported. The problem is that many sawmillers are turning to the hardware side of the industry. In my own electorate of Lytton, a major sawmiller is now virtually a timber merchant. He is selling timber.

Mr. Moore: He's retail.

Mr. BURNS: He has virtually become an importer and retailer of timber.

This brings me to the point that we should give preference to our local timbers. Government departments should have impressed upon them the need to give preference to local timbers. I am pleased to see that in this building the Government tried to lean towards the use of Queensland and Australian timbers. I was annoyed to see the foreign marble erected downstairs instead of marble that is found in the Gladstone area. But at least the Government stuck to our own timbers.

I want to raise a matter to show honourable members how the registration of sawmills can affect local residents. The Minister is aware of it. I refer to the case of Mr. Grummitt, who lives at Auburn Falls, Mundubbera. In February, sawmill licence No. 2912, located on portion 176, parish of Auburn, was transferred to Mr. Grummitt, trading as Home Timber. At the same time, he applied to transfer the sawmill to a new site on portion 4, close to his homestead. The main reason given for the move was to have the mill near the homestead to facilitate its part-time operation.

The application was considered by the Sawmills Licensing Committee, which recommended that the transfer be allowed as conforming generally to the policy relating to local transfer within the one sawmill amalgamation zone. The transfer was approved on 29 May 1978.

It was recognised that the new site would give the mill access to a larger private timber supply which might also be of interest to other mills. However, in view of the small licence capacity involved, and the indication that part-time operation only was intended as a supplement to the owner's grazing activity at a time of recession in the industry, it was considered that the transfer would be unlikely to adversely affect other mills significantly. For this reason the transfer was recommended. Reading directly from the Minister's letter I indicate that this is the bit that annoys me—

“However, strong objections were subsequently made by the Maryborough and Bundaberg District Timber Merchants Association, supported by the Queensland Timber Board, on the grounds that, besides giving the mill access to increased timber supplies, the new site might conceivably become the site for increased capacity or for amalgamation with other licences to the detriment of other mills operating in the district.”

In this instance the private enterprise operators stepped in to stop the little fellow from being enterprising and taking a little initiative. He was a grazier setting up a sawmill. The letter continues—

“Following consideration of these objections it was considered that, in order to remove any misapprehension in the matter, it would be desirable in any future dealing with the license that:

“(1) the new site, Portion 4, Parish of Auburn, be not recognised for purposes of amalgamation;

“(2) no increase in license capacity be permitted.

“These additional provisions were approved on 19th September 1978.”

They were binding on the man concerned.

The licensing people approved the transfer of the mill to the site, but because some of the bigger fellows said that this man might be a threat later on, that he might want to amalgamate or get bigger and use up some of the timber in the area, restrictions were imposed on him.

I do not see how that can be in line with the so-called policy of Government members. If that is their policy they should state it. They should not say that they believe in free enterprise and competition if they don't. If they don't believe in competition and the right of the little man to have a go, let them put it in their policy. They should not stand on the street corner saying that they believe in it, and then do these things by the back-door method.

Mr. N. T. E. Hewitt: Mr. Grummitt is a very generous gentleman.

Mr. BURNS: This has nothing to do with whether he is a generous gentleman or whether he is a supporter of the Minister's party. The facts are that Government members either believe in their policies, or they do not.

The Minister's authority approved the proposal. It was not as if it was rejected in the first place. It was knocked back only after the big fellows said, “We don't want you to give that little fellow a chance. He might amalgamate, get big and prove to be a threat.”

We need competition in the timber industry. In Brisbane, there is a little competition from some of the imported Malaysian rubbish which, when I think about the threat of importing borers, termites and so on, ought to be rejected. We should keep it out of the country. In many other areas large firms in the sawmilling industry are obtaining assistance as pioneer industries. They are having buildings constructed on industrial estates yet, at the same time, they complain in writing when a little fellow tries to get a start.

Hon. N. T. E. HEWITT (Auburn—Minister for Lands, Forestry and Water Resources) (3.54 p.m.), in reply: I have very little to say in reply at this stage. I thank the

honourable member for Lytton for the information concerning my friend Mr. Grummitt. I know quite a lot about the matter and I do not wish to take it any further here today. Mr. Grummitt and I have entered into quite a lot of correspondence. He knows me, and I know him fairly well.

I am particularly concerned about decentralisation of the sawmilling industry. Virtually every town in my electorate has a sawmill; scarcely a town of any size is without one. When things were bad in the cattle industry, I do not suppose that anybody helped more than I did in trying to get licences for people to cut timber on various properties so that they could remain on the land.

I am particularly interested in the decentralisation of the industry. Things have not been easy for the industry in recent times, as the honourable member for Lytton said, because we have a dwindling timber supply. I have received many deputations from people concerned with the cutting of timber for the Railway Department. They are having all sorts of bother because today sawmills are taking timber that they once would not have thought about accepting, and those with an investment in cutting sleeper logs are not able to obtain sufficient timber to enable their business to remain profitable.

It has been said, quite rightly, that people are drifting to the major cities, and this is in part owing to the fact that plantations are being established near those cities. As I said, I have a real interest in the decentralisation of the sawmilling industry, just as I have in anything else that will be of benefit to Queensland.

Mr. Davis: You're just saying that.

Mr. N. T. E. HEWITT: The honourable member for Brisbane Central knows very well that I gave him good service in years gone by. He knows that the people in the sawmilling industry receive the same sort of service.

Motion (Mr. Hewitt) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

Bill presented and, on motion of Mr. Hewitt, read a first time.

PRIMARY PRODUCERS' CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATIONS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. V. B. SULLIVAN (Condamine—Minister for Primary Industries) (3.59 p.m.): I move—

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

As I indicated at the introductory stage, the purpose of the proposed amendment is to ensure that the voting power in co-operative association elections is in the hands of active

members, that is, producers and suppliers. At present the Act confers voting rights on the wives and children of producers and suppliers, and this is not in accordance with the co-operative principle that the affairs of a co-operative should be conducted by supplying members.

As the honourable member for Bundaberg has stated, the existence of these provisions in the Act is not widely known, and there would be very few co-operatives which have applied them, at least in recent times. The honourable member mentioned the position of wives and children who are shareholders in their own right. If they are shareholders and suppliers, their voting rights are not affected.

The honourable member for Somerset quite rightly pointed to the problem caused by producers leaving the industry but retaining their shareholdings. These dry shareholders would have the capacity to control the affairs of some associations. That was the reason for the introduction of the 1974 amendment to the Act, which restricted voting rights to shareholders who are also suppliers. As the honourable member said, the directors of an association should be elected by those active in the industry.

The honourable member for Murrumba expressed concern about the activities of certain salesmen attempting to sell shares in co-operatives. The honourable member said he was referring to secondary co-operatives associated with a primary industry. I am not certain what he means by the term "secondary co-operatives", but he almost certainly is not referring to the primary producer co-operatives with which we are concerned here.

To comply with the Taxation Act, co-operatives are required to adopt a rule which specifically prohibits trading in shares in any public manner whatsoever. Further, no share in a primary producer co-operative may be transferred or sold except with the permission of the directors.

As I said in my introductory speech, the amendment is designed simply to remove an anomaly, and I am pleased that honourable members are in agreement with the proposal.

I thank honourable members for their contributions, and I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr. BLAKE (Bundaberg) (4.1 p.m.): I think that the Opposition's attitude and position were well expressed at the introductory stage of the Bill. We said that if, as the Minister indicated in his introductory speech, the amendment affected only the position of wives and children of suppliers, who in themselves were not suppliers but who obtained their voting rights as a result of the present Act, we would have no objection to it.

We have studied the Bill and accept that it only corrects an anomaly. Previously, suppliers to a co-operative were qualified to

vote, as also were their children over 16 years of age and their wives who were not suppliers.

I think that the honourable member for Somerset referred to these people as dry shareholders. I think that that term has certainly gained credence. I think it originated more within the dairy industry co-operatives. We have never used the term "dry shareholders" to any extent within sugar co-operatives.

My only concern was that the amendment to the Bill might alter the standing of people who at present are shareholders in co-operatives; that it might alter the standing or value of the shares. But, as the Minister has pointed out, in many instances shares in a co-operative cannot be traded. In many cases, shares change with the ownership of the property.

The Opposition is satisfied that the only purpose of the Bill is to correct the anomaly where non-supplying wives and children over 16 years of age are considered to be shareholders and are entitled to vote. We are satisfied with the Minister's assurance that the position of children over 16 years of age and wives who in their own right are supplying share-holders will not be affected. I do not think there is any need to discuss the matter further from the Opposition's point of view.

Hon. V. B. SULLIVAN (Condamine—Minister for Primary Industries) (4.4 p.m.), in reply: I thank the honourable member for Bundaberg for his acceptance, on behalf of the Opposition, of the measures contained in the Bill. As I have indicated, it more or less tidies up something that no longer needs to be in the Bill.

Motion (Mr. Sullivan) agreed to.

COMMITTEE

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

Clauses 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING

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

BAIL BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. W. D. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (4.8 p.m.): I move—

"That a Bill be introduced to consolidate and amend the law relating to bail in or in connection with criminal proceedings and for incidental and other purposes."

The concept of bail is of considerable antiquity, with roots in the legal system of Anglo-Saxon times. A person granted bail

was considered not to be at liberty, but to be entrusted to the custody of his sureties. If he absconded, the sureties were liable to the penalties appropriate to the offence with which the defendant was charged.

With modifications, the practice continued through Norman times. The sheriffs were entrusted with the power to grant or refuse bail and the factors which they were expected to take into consideration in the exercise of their wide discretion are still recognisable today. In the thirteenth century these factors were defined as the importance of the charge, the character of the person and the gravity of the evidence against him.

The first statutory provisions about bail were contained in the Statute of Westminster of 1275, which remained the principal Act on the subject for 550 years. It laid down the classes of persons who were and were not bailable.

By the fifteenth century the power to grant bail had passed largely to justices of the peace and a statute of 1487 provided that this power should not be exercised except by at least two justices.

In 1688 the Bill of Rights laid down that "excessive bail ought not to be required", which provision was later incorporated in the United States Constitution.

Further provisions as to bail were set out in the English Acts of 1826 and 1835. The Indictable Offences Act 1848 was noteworthy so far as present practice is concerned in that it enabled sureties to be dispensed with in certain circumstances. This power was extended by the English Bail Act 1898.

This brief summary of the historical background of bail leads to the provisions and practice which exist today. In Queensland, provisions as to bail are found not only in the Justices Act but also in the Criminal Code and other legislation. In view of the diversity of statutes dealing with bail, the Queensland Law Reform Commission was requested to examine the present system of granting bail in criminal proceedings. The Queensland Law Reform Commission submitted its report, together with a draft Bail Bill, which contained all the provisions regarding bail incorporated in previous legislation.

The Bill introduces the new concept of right to bail and imposes on certain police officers and on courts a duty to grant bail to persons in custody subject to specified grounds on which bail may be refused. It provides guide-lines as to the type of bail that may be granted and as to the conditions that may be attached to bail.

The present recognizance system, which has proved to be ineffective, is replaced in the Bill by the undertaking to be entered into by the defendant and his sureties, if any, requiring the defendant to appear at the appointed time and place and surrender himself into custody. Failure to appear will be a criminal offence on the part of the defendant, although not of the sureties, punishable by imprisonment for two years,

which term will be cumulative on prior-existing State and Federal sentences. Under present legislation, a grant of bail, followed by the release of the defendant, can be reviewed only on a further appearance of the defendant or on his arrest by his surety.

The Bill provides that the Crown or the complainant may apply to the court which granted bail, or to the Supreme Court or a judge thereof, to revoke or vary the bail. The court or judge, if satisfied that the bail should be revoked or varied, may issue a warrant of apprehension to bring the defendant before the court or judge in order to determine the application.

The Bill extends the jurisdiction of courts to grant bail and specifically gives this right to any judge of the Supreme Court in respect of appeals to the Court of Criminal Appeal, including applications for leave to appeal.

The Bill confers on the trial judge the sole discretion to grant bail where the trial of a person has commenced, notwithstanding that the person has been given in charge of the jury. It continues the right of a surety to arrest the principal if he has reasonable cause to believe that the principal will not appear to answer the charge. It also gives to members of the police force power to arrest a principal without warrant if the member believes on reasonable grounds that—

- (i) the defendant is likely to breach or has broken any condition of his undertaking;
- (ii) any surety for the defendant is dead; and
- (iii) for any reason the security is no longer sufficient.

The Bill provides that any court before which a defendant is required to appear may extend bail already granted to him. This means that bail granted to a defendant to ensure his appearance before a court may be extended throughout the whole criminal proceedings in that court. Bail granted upon committal for trial may be extended until the defendant is finally sentenced or discharged. When bail is extended under this provision, there will be no necessity for attendance of sureties for completion of new bail documents unless the sureties have specifically elected not to be bound in respect of any extension.

At present upon committal for trial or sentence, a defendant signs a recognizance requiring his appearance at the criminal sittings of the Supreme (or District) Court at a specific place commencing on a specified date. To comply with the recognizance, he should attend every day of the sittings until his trial is commenced. However, in practice, he is usually notified by the police, on advice from the Crown Prosecutor, of the day his trial will commence and he does not attend until that date. The Bill provides that an undertaking of bail in committal cases will require the defendant to appear at a trial or appeal at a day, time and

place to be notified to him and his sureties, if any, by the Crown Solicitor or a person authorised by him in writing.

Allegations made on an application for bail are often given considerable publicity which might prejudice the fair trial of a defendant. The Bill provides that the court may prohibit publication of evidence taken, information given or representations made in the course of a bail proceeding. Breach of any such order is an offence.

The Bill sets out the conditions for the granting of bail and the sequence in which they should be considered by a court or an authorised member of the police force. It provides for bail on a defendant's own undertaking, either with or without a deposit of money or other security of stated value, bail with sureties, or bail with both security deposit and sureties.

The security is quite distinct from surety, and might be considered appropriate in cases where, for example, a defendant's place of residence is remote from where he was arrested, or where he resides outside the State or is required to travel outside the State.

Before a person is accepted as a surety, he must satisfy the justice as to the sufficiency of his means and may deposit in the office of the clerk or registrar of the court the amount of his surety in cash. If the undertaking is subsequently forfeited, the amount so deposited is to be applied in satisfaction of his obligation. There is no such provision in existing legislation.

The system of cash bail presently provided by the Justices Act is continued within the Bill. A person released on cash bail will not commit an offence by failing to appear, but his cash bail will be forfeited.

Having gone through the history and the general mechanics of the Bill, I point out that one major area which I would like to bring to the attention of the Chamber is the granting of bail to drug traffickers.

Drug trafficking is one of the most serious offences in our community today, involving, as it does, the pushing of addictive hallucinatory drugs, the usage of which results in human misery and degradation. Because of the large profits obtained, drug traffickers can easily meet the security required by the courts under the present recognisance system and thus obtain their freedom. In a large number of cases the drug trafficker then absconds, and it is very difficult for the police to be able to re-locate such offenders. For the community, it is equally unacceptable to have drug traffickers at large as it is to have, for example, murderers.

For this reason, bail in relation to such major crimes as drug trafficking, treason, murder, piracy or attempted piracy, and crimes such as assault, wounding or unlawfully endangering a person's life whilst committing the act of piracy or attempted piracy with respect to a ship, shall be granted

only by order of a Supreme Court or a judge thereof. By including drug trafficking in the crimes over which the Supreme Court or a judge thereof has the right to grant bail to a defendant, it is considered that the present number of offenders who are avoiding their liability shall be successfully reduced.

Finally, because of the importance of the present Bill, it is my intention that the Bill should be laid before the Assembly for a period of time so that the full ramifications of it may be considered in detail. I would welcome constructive comments on the Bill from the honourable members and from people outside this Chamber who may be interested in the matter.

Mr. R. J. GIBBS (Wolston) (4.18 p.m.): The Opposition welcomes the proposals outlined by the Minister. Naturally, I am loath to commit honourable members on this side of the Chamber to fully supporting them until we have had an opportunity of studying them in depth and seeing exactly what they mean.

From what the Minister said, it appears that at last the Government is adopting a more humane attitude to what can, at times, be a very vexing problem, and I wish to refer briefly to a number of matters that the Minister has drawn to the attention of the Committee.

First, I welcome the Bill because of an incident that occurred in the last week or so. A man named Kenneth Knight was arrested at Goondiwindi because he allegedly looked like Lord Lucan. He was kept in custody for about a week, and I believe that for some time he was locked in the detention centre at Boggo Road. No application for bail was successful. The police evidence on which that man was incarcerated for that period, before being taken back to Goondiwindi for trial, was extremely flimsy. It appears to me that some of the provisions that the Minister proposes to introduce may go a long way towards preventing a situation such as that from occurring again. Knight was arrested on the very minor charge of stealing from the burnt-out shell of a wrecked motor vehicle beside the road, and he was incarcerated for a week and not granted bail on the basis that he happened to have a strange resemblance to Lord Lucan. I think that any honourable member who studied the case and looked at the photographs would agree with me that it is unthinkable that the police should have made such a drastic error. I fail to see how he looks like Lord Lucan in any way.

I certainly welcome the Bill. The Minister referred to drug-trafficking, murder and treason. It appears that in relation to bail the law adopts a number of approaches. Basically, the main tests in establishing the quantum of bail are the nature of the crime charged, the probability of a conviction and the severity of the punishment that may be imposed.

I was particularly happy to hear the Minister refer to drug-trafficking, because it is a problem that is escalating in the community and one that authorities find difficult to keep in check. Perhaps the Minister will consider an extension to cover those persons who are caught in possession of hard drugs. A person in possession of a hard drug such as heroin is as big a menace to society as the actual pusher or trafficker. Any person caught in possession of hard drugs deserves not only the most severe sentence that can be imposed by the court but also incarceration prior to his trial.

The Opposition is inclined to support the Bill. Naturally enough, after I have read it, I will be able to make in-depth comments at the second-reading stage.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER (Archerfield) (4.22 p.m.): I take this opportunity to join with the honourable member for Wolston in welcoming the Bill. I was particularly pleased to hear the Minister say that he will allow the Bill to lie on the table for a certain period so that honourable members can scrutinise it. That is a step in the right direction.

As the Minister has said, bail is a means by which a judge or magistrate sets at liberty a person who has been arrested on or charged with an indictable offence. This person can, at the discretion of a judge or magistrate, be released from custody temporarily pending the hearing of his case before a magistrate or his trial before a judge and jury. Most importantly, release on bail encourages the unhampered preparation of that person's defence. However, if the bailee absconds or fails to appear at his trial, his bail is estreated and the persons who have provided sureties have them forfeited to the Crown. However, the person charged can, by providing a sum of money as some form of bond, be put on bail.

As honourable members know, the purpose of bail pending trial in criminal cases is to avoid inflicting punishment upon an innocent person who may be acquitted at his trial. The amount of bail set by a magistrate is discretionary. I must say that most magistrates use this discretion judiciously. However, I have received complaints from persons who have been charged with minor criminal offences and have had bail set by magistrates at an unrealistic level. No doubt other honourable members have received similar complaints.

I agree with the Minister and my colleague the honourable member for Wolston that if, in serious cases such as drug-trafficking or drug-pushing in heroin or other heavy drugs, bail is set at \$4,000 or \$5,000 the person charged is likely to abscond. In such cases, the bail should be a lot higher. In extremely serious criminal charges, no bail at all should be allowed pending the Magistrates Court hearing to establish whether or not there is a prima facie case.

A person charged with a minor offence and whose bail is set at an unrealistic level has

to spend his time in the lock-up pending the hearing of the charge against him. If that person is subsequently found not guilty, he has been unfairly dealt with; he has spent a certain amount of time in the watch-house or prison for nothing. I should like the Minister to take note of this matter because I believe it could well be corrected. Persons arrested at the week-end (when no magistrate is on duty) for a minor breach of the Criminal Code have to spend the week-end in custody pending their appearance before a magistrate on the following Monday. To use the words of my colleague the honourable member for Wolston, that person is incarcerated over the week-end. I know that that sounds a little like the word "castrated"; one has to be careful not to say it too quickly.

The CHAIRMAN: That is a rather cutting remark.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: It is.

In those circumstances people are treated rather unfairly. The Minister should take cognisance of this serious anomaly. The Minister could consider appointing a duty magistrate in Brisbane over the week-end, or perhaps the Act could be amended to provide that an inspector of police or other high-ranking police officers could grant bail.

Mr. Houston: Or two J.P.s.

Mr. K. J. HOOPER: As my colleague the honourable member for Bulimba said, two J.P.s could be available to grant bail. I will be interested to hear the Minister's reply to my comments.

Hon. W. D. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (4.27 p.m.), in reply: I thank honourable members for their acceptance of the principles in the legislation. Naturally I will expand further on the provisions at the second-reading stage when honourable members have the Bill in their possession.

At this stage I shall comment on a couple of matters that were raised. As to the matter of being able to appeal against the severity of bail—under the present legislation a grant of bail, followed by the release of the defendant, can be reviewed only on a further appearance of the defendant or on his arrest under his surety. The Bill provides that the Crown or the complainant may apply to the court which granted bail, or to the Supreme Court or a judge thereof, to revoke or vary the bail. I think that covers one of the matters raised by the honourable member.

The other matter that has concerned us for some time relates to imprisonment over the week-end, which was referred to by the honourable member. The Bill contains provisions for members of the police force to grant bail under certain circumstances.

I will leave further comment until the second-reading stage.

Motion (Mr. Lickiss) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

Bill presented and, on motion of Mr. Lickiss, read a first time.

CROWN PROCEEDINGS BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. W. D. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (4.30 p.m.): I move—

“That a Bill be introduced to consolidate and amend the law relating to proceedings by or against the Crown and the recovery of certain debts due to the Crown and for related purposes.”

This Bill deals with proceedings by and against the Crown. At present, any person who has a claim or demand against the Government is required to petition the Governor for the appointment of a nominal defendant. The appointment of a nominal defendant has to be notified in the Government Gazette.

In practice, this procedure provided by the Claims Against Government Act has operated satisfactorily. It is, however, subject to a few defects. One defect is that the process of petition, appointment of a nominal defendant and gazettal, appears to be a quite unnecessary, wasteful and expensive step. Another defect is that the appointed nominal defendant may die before the determination of the action. In this event, a further appointment becomes necessary. Another disadvantage, particularly in cases where urgent relief such as an injunction is sought, is that it is not practicable or possible to follow the statutory procedure for appointing a nominal defendant because of the delay involved.

This Bill proposes to repeal the Claims Against Government Act. It provides for proceedings against the Crown to be brought against it under the name of the State of Queensland. There will be no necessity to appoint a nominal defendant. In any proceedings against the Crown, it is proposed that documents be served upon the Crown Solicitor.

The Bill also proposes to simplify the procedure for enforcement of claims by the Crown and the recovery of moneys due to the Crown. The existing procedure is contained in the Costs in Crown Suits Act and the Crown Remedies Act.

It is proposed that orders forfeiting recognisances or undertakings as to bail be furnished to the Registrar of the Supreme Court or District Court or the clerk of the court, as the case may be, for enforcement. In the case of sureties it is proposed that the amount due be levied by execution against his goods and chattels. This is similar to the existing procedure. With respect to forfeited recognisances, it is

proposed to confer a power to order imprisonment of the principal in the event that the amount due is not paid.

Section 5 of the Crown Remedies Act authorises the court to order satisfaction to be entered upon a judgment for the amount of an estreated recognisance. It is established by authority that there is no discretion in the court to refuse the Crown's application to have the recognisance estreated. The law in this regard is considered to be too rigid. It is proposed, therefore, to confer on the court power to vary or rescind the order forfeiting the recognisance or undertaking as to bail where it is shown, having regard to all the circumstances, it would be against the interests of justice to require the person indebted to pay the amount ordered to be paid.

This Bill modernises the procedure for suing the Crown and simplifies the procedure for enforcement of claims by the Crown. I commend the Bill to the Committee.

Mr. R. J. GIBBS (Wolston) (4.34 p.m.): I will be very brief. What the Minister has basically said is that this Bill relates to the modernisation and streamlining of sections of the Act relating to proceedings against the Crown and by the Crown, and the priority of Crown debts. As I said in an earlier debate this afternoon, whilst it appears at this stage that the Opposition will give tacit support to the Minister's proposals, we want to see the Bill and read in depth exactly what it contains. We will then make any necessary comments during the second reading.

Mr. W. D. HEWITT (Greenslopes) (4.35 p.m.): I am interested in this provision, which will facilitate proceedings against the Crown, because of a case with which I have been closely associated for a number of years. I am sure the Committee would be interested to hear about it. Some years ago a ward of the State, who was in the custody of an officer of the Department of Children's Services while being taken to receive dental treatment, broke out of custody, selected a house at random in the Coorparoo district, and set fire to it. The house was burnt down. It was established that he had recognisable tendencies towards arson. On a previous occasion he had been involved in setting fire to a school in Sandgate.

Obviously the people involved were very greatly distressed by the occurrence. They had recourse to the previous member for Greenslopes, the late Keith Hooper, and latterly to me. By very protracted processes, the State ultimately set up a nominal defendant, Mr. Cedric Johnson, the Under Secretary of the Department of Children's Services, and there the matter rests. It has been so protracted that the solicitor acting on behalf of my constituents has had to take a writ out against the Government to avoid losing their rights by virtue of the Statute of Limitations. Six years have elapsed and,

if that writ had not been taken out, all rights of recourse would have been lost. As I say, the matter has been protracted. The Crown appears intent on contesting the claim, although I have asked that an *ex gratia* settlement be made.

Mr. Moore: It should happen.

Mr. W. D. HEWITT: Indeed it should. There is a well-established precedent in British law showing that when a man broke away from custody in Britain and damaged a number of sporting boats, in fact the Crown did accept liability for the person who was in charge, and a settlement was made. Apparently, the Government is going to insist on all the processes being taken to their long, agonised end. I can assure the Committee that the people involved are aged and unwell, and it is a matter of continuing distress to them. But what distresses me also is that the solicitor acting on their behalf advises me that in other States a solicitor acting in such circumstances would be given access to certain records and documentation of the State. I am advised that, for reasons that I do not understand, the Queensland Government denies access to such documentation here.

If the Bill we are presently considering will facilitate this matter in any way at all, then I will totally support it. But the fact is that, on occasions, people in the charge of the State inflict damage on property, and indeed they injure or kill innocent people. Under those circumstances, the State should understand its obligations, responsibilities and liabilities. I do not think it is useful for people to have to enter into prolonged and distressing litigation. I hope that the Minister will take this case very much in mind when he further debates the proposed amendments. I would hope that some remedy can be found for this case which has been prolonged for far too long, with very agonising and dire consequences to the people I represent.

Hon. W. D. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (4.38 p.m.), in reply: I thank both honourable members for their approval of the principles of the Bill. Of course, this Bill should be read in conjunction with the Bail Bill, because they relate one to the other. I am pleased that we have been able to proceed to the stage where I can present both Bills so that they will be open for public perusal.

In regard to the matter raised by the honourable member for Greenslopes, I would be pleased to have the details of that particular case, as seen through the eyes of the honourable member, with a view to having certain matters examined.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: We have had some correspondence on it.

Mr. LICKISS: I know, but I would like to know the latter details of it. As honourable members know, the Crown Law Office handles

all the cases for the Crown, and there are many of them. Whilst I have a hazy recollection of the honourable member's raising this matter with me, I would like him to give me a refresher on the particulars of it so that I know precisely what the current situation is. I undertake to have the case examined.

I hope this amendment will eliminate a lot of the tedious work and administration that had to be done in the past to appoint the Nominal Defendant and to enable service to be made on the Crown Solicitor when the Crown had to be served.

I commend honourable members for their approval of the principle of the Bill. I will cover any other matters that have been raised during the second-reading debate.

Motion (Mr. Lickiss) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

Bill presented and, on motion of Mr. Lickiss, read a first time.

REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. W. D. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (4.43 p.m.): I move—

“That a Bill be introduced to amend the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Act 1962–1978 in certain particulars.”

The object of this Bill is to enable a computer system to be introduced for the registration of births, deaths and marriages. The registration of all births, deaths and marriages will be made in Brisbane by the Registrar-General.

Computer-produced register pages of births and deaths will be supplied to country registries. This will enable certificates to be issued in country centres. Every district registrar will retain his existing registers of births, deaths and marriages. He will continue to issue certified copies of the entries in those registers. Provision will be made for certificates or documents to be lodged with either the Registrar-General or a district registrar. A by-product of the computer processing will be that an acknowledgement of birth can be produced for dispatch to the parents. It will be in a form which will reduce significantly the necessity to obtain birth certificates for such purposes as proof of age for schools and sporting teams. The cost of presenting such notices to parents would be little more than the postage charges involved.

The only proposed amendment which does not relate to computerisation concerns the noting of a change of name by deed poll.

It is proposed to make it clear that there is no limitation on the number of times a change of name by deed poll may be noted in the appropriate registers. It is considered this is the intent of the present legislation. It is proposed, however, to clarify the situation.

This Bill will ensure that the service to the public with respect to registration of births, deaths and marriages will be improved.

I commend the Bill to the Committee.

Mr. R. J. GIBBS (Wolston) (4.45 p.m.): The Bill introduced by the Minister has the full support of the Opposition. A couple of days ago I spoke with a number of officers about this matter. Apparently the Bill provides for an updating in this area. I know that over the years there have been problems for some people in trying to locate and be furnished with copies of birth certificates. I hope that computerisation of the records will speed up the process of supplying copies of certificates when applications are made. The Opposition welcomes the amendment.

Hon. W. D. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (4.46 p.m.), in reply: I thank the honourable member for his agreement with the proposal. The purpose of the Bill is to improve both the system and the service. I am sure that it will meet the community's expectations.

Motion (Mr. Lickiss) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

Bill presented and, on motion of Mr. Lickiss, read a first time.

The House adjourned at 4.48 p.m.
