Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 6 MAY 1981

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

WEDNESDAY, 6 MAY 1981

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

PAPER

The following paper was laid on the table:—

Regulation under the Workers' Compensation Act 1916–1980.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

Questions submitted on notice by members were answered as follows:—

1. LINEAR ACCELERATOR MACHINES, ROYAL BRISBANE HOSPITAL

Mr Stephan asked the Minister for Health—

With reference to the linear accelerator machines situated in the radiological section of the Royal Brisbane Hospital, is consideration being given for the provision of extra machines to overcome the workload presently being experienced by the existing machines working to 10 p.m. each day?

Answer:—

I have been advised by the manager of the North Brisbane Hospitals Board, who is also the secretary of the Queensland Radium Institute, as follows in regard to linear accelerators situated in the Radium Section, Royal Brisbane Hospital—

"A new machine was installed in 1979. One obsolete machine was replaced in 1980 and it is proposed to replace another machine in the near future.

"The linear accelerators are quite capable of working 16 hours per day and the maximum use is made of the existing machines for the treatment of patients."

2. CAMPING WITHIN FRASER ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

Mr Powell asked the Minister for Tourism, National Parks, Sport and The Arts—

(1) Does he have any plans to limit camping within the national park on Fraser Island?

(2) If there is any plan for limitation, how is it planned to administer these limitations?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) The National Parks and Wildlife Service has limited camping at the main "A" road camp.

I might mention that I will be visiting Fraser Island with the honourable member in the near future, and I look forward to discussing the situation with him with a view to working out the most agreeable solution for all those who want to camp on Fraser Island. I think it would probably be best if I waited until after that visit before making a statement.

3. VISITORS INFORMATION CENTRES AND PICNIC AREAS, STATE FORESTS

Mr Powell asked the Minister for Lands and Forestry—

(1) How many visitor information centres does his department maintain?

(2) Where are they located?

(3) How many picnic areas are maintained by his department?

(4) Where are they located?

(5) How many personnel are involved directly in visitor control within State forests?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) The only complete information centre is at Central Camp on Fraser Island. However, all forest offices throughout the State of Queensland do have recreation brochures available and do dispense recreation information to the public.

(3) 51.

(4) Brisbane and Beerburrum—10; Warwick District—2; Yarraman District—6; Murgon District—3; Gympie District—10; Maryborough District—8; Rockhampton District—3; Monto District—2; North Queensland District—7.

(5) Fraser Island and the Brisbane area are the only two places in Queensland where full-time recreation personnel are employed. In six other districts in Queensland visitor control is exercised only during times of high visitation, for example Easter and long week-ends. It is estimated that in a year approximately 400 man-days would be involved throughout the State in visitor control. This does not include maintenance and cleaning staff.

4. PRE-EMPLOYMENT COURSES IN TAFE COLLEGES

Mr Powell asked the Minister for Education—

(1) Is he satisfied that the pre-employment courses undertaken at TAFE colleges are successful?

(2) If so, is he aware that some CES officers are discriminating against graduates of the pre-employment courses in favour of people who have been unemployed for a period of time and even though those unemployed people have made no effort to better themselves, on the grounds that employers cannot get the subsidy for graduate students whereas they can for long-time unemployed people?

Answer:—

(1) I am fully satisfied that all pre-employment courses offered through colleges of TAFE are successful.

(2) I understand that the Commonwealth employment authorities do have a policy of providing job opportunities, in the first instance, to those people who have been unemployed for lengthy periods. Notwithstanding this, I understand that the great majority of students, who undertook pre-employment courses during 1980 have already been successful in gaining employment.

5. DEPARTMENT OF NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Mr Jones asked the Minister for Northern Development and Maritime Services—

(1) How many officers and staff are employed with the Department of Northern Development for 1979-80 and currently?

(2) What are the designations and number of staff in each individual office and their specific classification or category?

(3) Since the present Minister's appointment, what increases have been made in staff numbers?

(4) What forms, guide-lines or statutory provisions are presently in force to produce the on-line requirements of this department?

(5) What allocations have been provided to fund the department for 1980-81 and what is the allocation anticipated in 1981-82?

Answer:—

(1 to 5) The honourable member should be aware of the existence of the Northern Development Office in Cairns. There is as well a Government office situated in Townsville. Both these offices are staffed with full-time personnel able to provide assistance should persons in Northern Queensland be seeking help in respect of matters concerning the State Government.

It is my opinion that the Northern Development portfolio does not call for the establishment of a large bureaucratic structure. I envisage the Minister's responsibilities as being to:—

Provide advice and information to Government on the needs of North Queensland.

Provide liaison between this Government, local government authorities and commercial and industrial organisations in North Queensland.

Provide assistance where required with the interface between Government and development proposals for North Queensland.

In my pursuance of these objectives it is my wish to ensure that the people of North Queensland have a better opportunity to present specific cases to Government.

As I travel throughout North Queensland I discuss with the organisations mentioned their views, thus enabling me to determine the best method of performing my ministerial duties. It is expected the finance required to allow me to carry out those duties will be provided in the forthcoming Budget.

6. GOLD LOTTO

Mr Jones asked the Deputy Premier and Treasurer—

(1) What is the anticipated number of outlets assigned to the metropolitan area, provincial cities and rural towns in the projected distribution of agencies for the game of Gold Lotto?

(2) Will the criteria used include all casket agencies and, if not, what method of selection will be adopted for public access to and participation in this new mode of gaming?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) All agency inspections have been completed and appointments will be decided next week. Inspections have established whether or not a potential agent has the space and is in the best location for lotto business.

Initially, 600 agents are to be appointed and the break-up of this number is approximately 240 in and around Brisbane, with the balance being outside the metropolitan area. Almost entirely the lotto agents will be drawn from casket agents. The number of lotto agents may increase as a result of follow-up inspections to be made after the game is launched.

In some country areas, agents will be appointed as subscriber agents (or sub-agents or authorised agents). Also, subscriber agents will be appointed in isolated areas and will handle lotto business by mail direct to the casket office.

I might add that apart from one or two, there has been a very keen, very expectant and very willing response towards lotto from the owners of shop premises that have been inspected.

7. YELLOWCAKE RAILWAY CONSIGNMENT

Mr Akers asked the Minister for Transport—

(1) Is he aware of Press reports of a consignment of uranium yellowcake in the railway system en route from Mary Kathleen apparently to Brisbane for export?

(2) What quantity of yellowcake is involved?

(3) Where is it being held at present?

(4) What is the nature of the containers in which it is held?

(5) Where is the yellowcake consigned to?

(6) How long has it been in the railway system?

Answer:—

(1 to 6) I am advised by the Commissioner for Railways that eight containers of uranium yellowcake, consigned to Southern Shipping Lines, Hamilton Container Complex, were despatched from Mt Isa on 3 April 1981, and arrived at Mayne on 6 April 1981.

As the ship by which the uranium yellowcake was scheduled to be exported from Brisbane on 8 April 1981 did not call at Brisbane, the consignment is being held on a siding at Mayne under police protection awaiting shipment on 8 May 1981.

In instances of dislocation of a shipping schedule, it has always been the practice for consignments of uranium yellowcake to be held at Mayne at the request of the police for safety reasons.

The uranium yellowcake is loaded in sealed 44-gallon steel drums conveyed in loaded steel containers.

8. ROAD TRAINS, MT MOLLOY–MAREEBA AND DIMBULAH–MAREEBA ROADS

Mr Tenni asked the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police—

(1) Has a decision been reached to allow road trains to use the Mt Molloy–Mareeba and Dimbulah–Mareeba roads?

(2) Have any conditions been laid down as to the size and/or condition of the road trains?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) The Main Roads Department has been reviewing the routes in Queensland on which road trains should be permitted. This review is nearing completion and I have discussed its results with departmental officers. The review proposes that road-train combinations involving one dog trailer be permitted between Mareeba and Mt Molloy and Mareeba and Dimbulah. It is intended that these proposals be submitted to Cabinet within the next few months in an overall report recommending revised permit conditions, inspection procedures and administration arrangements.

9. ILLEGAL IMPORT OF ANIMALS AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS

Mr Blake asked the Minister for Primary Industries—

With reference to my question on 12 March asking if the standard of quarantine inspection services were satisfactory and his answer that the animal quarantine services provided by the Queensland Department of Primary Industries compare favourably with those of other States—

(1) Do Press reports that hamsters and gerbils representing a possible rabies threat and believed to have been smuggled into Brisbane from Hong Kong and the Philippines correctly indicate that Brisbane or Queensland was the point of illegal entry?

(2) Have quarantine investigations revealed the method of concealment and the volume of illegal entry of these potentially serious disease carriers?

(3) In view of the serious implications of introduction of serious human and animal diseases, what consultation has taken place federally by the State to improve quarantine inspection services found wanting in this particular instance?

Answer:—

(1) This matter is still under investigation.

(2) These matters are also under investigation with a view to taking legal action when appropriate evidence is obtained.

(3) Animal quarantine is administered by officers of my department on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Health. In events such as this, there is considerable consultation and co-operation between officers of my department and Commonwealth departments such as Health, Customs and Police.

10. BUNDABERG POLICE STRENGTH

Mr Blake asked the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police—

(1) Has the Bundaberg police staffing review by the planning and research branch of the Police Department referred to by him on 26 April been completed and considered and, if so, with what result regarding increased police staffing for Bundaberg?

(2) If the Bundaberg review has not been completed and considered with regard to increased police staffing, when is such completion and consideration expected?

Answer:—

(1 & 2) The review of the staffing situation at Bundaberg has been completed by the planning and research branch of the Police Department. This review will be considered by the department's priority committee in the near future when recommendations will be submitted to the Police Commissioner for his consideration.

11. LONG LINE GUTTERS

Mr Frawley asked the Minister for Employment and Labour Relations—

Have any complaints been made to the Consumer Affairs Bureau regarding the activities of Long Line Gutters of P.O. Box 211, Mount Gravatt?

Answer:—

As the honourable member will appreciate, to give a bald statement in relation to his question may give rise to a misleading interpretation as to the ethics, quality of products or services offered by this trader. As the honourable member is aware, I have stated I will not hesitate to name firms in this House and will continue this policy. However, the action of naming of firms is one not to be taken lightly and I will only do so where evidence suggests this is in the best interests of consumers.

12. PETRIE ELECTRIC RAIL SERVICE

Mr Frawley asked the Minister for Transport—

Will the proposed Federal reduction in finance to this State adversely affect the construction of the proposed electric railway to Petrie by 1984?

Answer:—

I am advised by the Commissioner for Railways that preliminary works have commenced on electrification of the railway to Petrie and, with the good progress being made with the total suburban electrification program, it is anticipated that electrification to Petrie will be completed by mid-1983.

We are committed to the completion of the Brisbane suburban electrification program and major contracts for electric cars, power supply, overhead wiring and signalling for the total program have already been awarded.

The Queensland Government is mindful of the contribution electrification will make to the easing of road-traffic congestion and liquid fuel conservation, and notwithstanding the actions of the Federal Government in curtailing the allocation of funds to the States, I can assure the honourable member that this Government will see the suburban electrification program through.

13. LOCKYER VALLEY WATER SURVEY

Mr Fitzgerald asked the Minister for Water Resources and Aboriginal and Island Affairs—

When is the report of the water survey into underground and surface water in the Lockyer Valley to be released?

Answer:—

A report on the survey of the water resources of the Lockyer Valley is now not likely to be released until late this year. Most of the investigation work has been completed but the information has yet to be assembled into a report. The intrusion of more urgent planning work within the Queensland Water Resources Commission is delaying this report on what is basically a long-term study to identify options for further, more detailed studies.

14. ROUNDABOUT, MURPHY AND ELLISON ROADS, ASPLEY

Mrs Nelson asked the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police—

(1) Is he aware of the dangerous condition of the small roundabout at the intersection of Murphy and Ellison Roads, Aspley?

(2) Is he aware that the design, approved by his department and constructed by the Brisbane City Council, prevents the use of this intersection by trucks and other heavy transport vehicles thereby forcing them to use small suburban side streets with consequent danger and nuisance to both the drivers and local citizens?

(3) Will he request his department to investigate this serious design deficiency as a matter of urgency?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) As neither Murphy Road nor Ellison Road is declared under the Main Roads Act, the design of the roundabout at the intersection of these two roads was not subject to approval by the Main Roads Department. The matter is one which is solely within the jurisdiction of the Brisbane City Council.

15. McDOWALL STATE SCHOOL

Mrs Nelson asked the Minister for Education—

(1) Is he aware of the acute shortage of class-room accommodation at the McDowall State School?

(2) In view of the rapid growth in population in the McDowall area, when can the school expect the construction of a new permanent class-room block to commence?

Answer:—

(1) I am aware of the need for additional class-room accommodation at McDowall State School to cater for the current enrolment. Accordingly, a request has been made to the Department of Works for the supply of additional teaching spaces as soon as possible.

(2) To meet the anticipated enrolment for 1982, additional class-rooms will be provided. However, no assurance can be given regarding the type of building to be provided as this will depend upon the demand for additional class-rooms on a Statewide basis together with the availability of funds for capital works.

16. NATIONAL CODE OF SEWERAGE STANDARDISATION

Mrs Nelson asked the Minister for Water Resources and Aboriginal and Island Affairs—

(1) Is he aware of problems in the plumbing industry because of the delay by the Queensland Government in introducing the sewerage standardisation amendments to bring Queensland into line with the rest of Australia?

(2) When will the national code of sewerage standardisation amendments be presented to the Parliament?

Answer:—

(1) I assume that the honourable member's question refers to the proposal to amend the standard sewerage by-laws to incorporate appropriate provisions from the Australian model plumbing code—sanitary drainage. I am aware that concern has been expressed at the delays in finalising these amendments. The delays have been caused mainly by the way in which the code was written, which is unsuitable for administration as by-laws, thus requiring complete redrafting into by-law form. In addition, it has been necessary to correct errors in the code to clarify some sections and to make other changes resulting from the latest amendments to the code. I am advised, however, that to enable advantage to be taken of certain savings by using the code, the joint committee established pursuant to the standard sewerage by-laws and acting under powers embodied in those by-laws has authorised use of certain sections of the code. The by-laws, however, do not permit the joint committee to authorise the balance of the code.

(2) A draft Bill to amend the Sewerage and Water Supply Act has been prepared and this provides for the repeal of the existing standard sewerage by-laws and their replacement by a new set of by-laws, which include the provisions of the Australian model plumbing code—sanitary drainage modified as indicated in answer (1). The Bill will be presented to Parliament as soon as it has been finalised and it is expected that this will be in the next session.

17. BLOCKSIDGE & FERGUSON LTD

Mr Hooper asked the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General—

(1) Is he aware that Blocksidge & Ferguson Ltd were convicted on 1 February 1980 for allowing their premises to be used for the purposes of prostitution?

(2) Is Norman Bruce Blocksidge the managing director of this company and is he the public officer of this company under the provisions of the Companies Act?

(3) Is the said Norman Bruce Blocksidge one and the same person as Norman Bruce Blocksidge who is a member of the auctioneers and agents committee?

(4) If so, does he consider Mr Blocksidge a fit and proper person to sit on such committee or is he disqualified under the provisions of the Act?

(5) Will he take all appropriate action to have Mr Blocksidge removed from the committee as soon as possible?

(6) Will he have Blocksidge & Ferguson Ltd, and Mr Norman Blocksidge, show cause why their auctioneers and real estate licences should not be cancelled on the grounds they are not fit and proper persons, under the Act, to hold such licences?

Answer:—

(1) Yes.

(2) Records held in the Office of the Commissioner for Corporate Affairs indicate that Norman Bruce Blocksidge is the managing director of Blocksidge & Ferguson Limited. The office of public officer is not defined under the Companies Act.

(3) Yes.

(4 to 6) On the information available, the conviction recorded against the company (of which Mr Blocksidge is a director) would appear neither to warrant nor to give grounds for the cancellation of licences under the Auctioneers and Agents Act or for the vacating of Mr Blocksidge's membership on the Auctioneers and Agents Committee.

18. PENSIONER UNITS, SKYLARK STREET, INALA

Mr Hooper asked the Minister for Works and Housing—

Following on his inspection and approval of the site in Skylark Street, Inala for pensioner units and bearing in mind the urgent need for this type of accommodation, what stage has the Queensland Housing Commission reached in the preparation of plans for this project?

Answer:—

After the informal discussions on site with council officers, the commission applied for road closure, a necessary preliminary to proceedings, and received two legitimate objections. Redesign has since satisfied objectors, and the commission now awaits formal gazettal of road closure. When this is done, it will approach the council for rezoning from partly local business and partly residential A to residential B, with a view to use of the site for family or other medium-density usage.

19. YEPPOON COURT HOUSE

Mr Hartwig asked the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General—

With reference to a Cabinet meeting held in Yeppoon on 19 June 1979, and a statement made following that meeting that the Queensland Cabinet has today (19 June 1979) approved a new Court House for Yeppoon, as numerous appeals have been made to his department since that date, and the Yeppoon Court House is still the oldest in Queensland, what action has been taken to implement that Cabinet decision?

Answer:—

Plans for a new court-house at Yeppoon were approved by my department, and the Department of Works was requested to include construction of this facility in the forward-planning program of capital works.

Funds available to construct court-houses are strictly limited, and my department has been advised that the construction of the Yeppoon Court House will be subject to the availability of funds.

20. BILOELA RAILWAY STATION

Mr Hartwig asked the Minister for Transport—

With reference to a rare visit to the Callide Electorate by the former Minister for Transport, Hon. K. B. Tomkins, in 1977, when he was accompanied by Mr Frank Simmonds and other transport officials and during which he gave approval for the construction of a new railway station at Biloela, what action has been taken to provide the new railway station?

Answer:—

The provision of a new railway station at Biloela will receive consideration in conjunction with a number of other projects in the future allocation of finance available to the Railway Department for capital works.

21. SIR EDWARD LYONS

Mr Hartwig asked the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police—

(1) What is Sir Edward Lyons' correct age?

(2) What is the term of appointment of the new TAB?

(3) Will the compulsion of retiring at the age of 70 years as applies to hospital, electricity and other boards be enforced?

(4) Does he agree with a statement made in a newspaper on the week-end of 2 May by Sir Robert Sparkes that the position of Chairman of the TAB was one of insignificance?

Answer:—

(1) I understand that Sir Edward Lyons is 66 years of age. However, his age is not relevant to the appointment that has been made of Sir Edward as TAB Chairman under the current Act.

(2) The term of the new board commences on 30 June 1981. Members of such board will continue to hold office until an appointment of members is made under the Racing and Betting Act 1980–1981.

(3) I would refer the honourable member to the recent amendment of the Racing and Betting Act 1980, which received royal assent on 29 April 1980. This amendment clearly states that a maximum extension of one year may be granted. Prior to that amendment, which I brought forward, further extensions could have been given under the 1980 Act.

(4) If Sir Robert Sparkes was correctly quoted, I am sure that he was referring to relative significance. The position of chairman is important to me and, I am sure, to the racing industry. I am also sure that Sir Edward Lyons will fill the position with distinction.

22. FATAL ACCIDENT, BALD HILLS–BURPENGARY BY-PASS

Mr Kruger asked the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police—

In respect to the accident which occurred on the Bald Hills–Burpengary by-pass near Anzac Avenue at approximately between six and seven p.m. on 13 March which claimed the lives of two people—

(1) In which lane was the mechanically defective vehicle stopped?

(2) Did a police car park near the vehicle and was the blue flashing light on or were the police car headlights turned on?

(3) Were triangles or warning devices placed on the road by the driver of either the broken down vehicle or by the police attending the accident?

(4) Is it possible for a member of Parliament to obtain reports from any department or police on such an accident?

Answer:—

(1) The mechanically defective truck was stationary in the right lane of the two southbound lanes.

(2) A police car parked immediately behind the truck, and the headlights, blue flashing light and amber hazard lights of the police car were operating.

(3) A portable warning sign was on the road approximately 30 m behind and north of the police car. In addition, a uniformed police officer with a torch was standing approximately a further 50 m north of the warning sign.

(4) The scheme operated (vide the provisions of section 34 of the Traffic Act) entitles a person who or whose property has been involved in an accident, or the agent, servant or other representative of that person, or any insured or other person having a bona fide interest in the accident, to be supplied with information as to the facts relating to that accident. Such information is supplied by the Department of Transport upon the payment of the prescribed fee.

Only one person died as a result of this accident.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

ESTABLISHMENT OF CASINOS

Mr CASEY: I direct my first question to the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. Knowing his adaptability towards policies and priorities, especially under National Party persuasion, I ask: Does he recall that on 7 November last year, in Mt Isa, he stated that the Minister for Local Government, by suggesting that casinos would be built on the Gold Coast and in North Queensland, not only was behaving irresponsibly but also must have been dreaming or having another Gold Coast nightmare? At what stage since that date did the National Party majority, including the "irresponsible" Minister for Local Government, as claimed by the Deputy Premier, convince him that he was neither dreaming nor having a nightmare?

Mr HINZE: I rise to a point of order. If I heard the Leader of the Opposition correctly, he referred to me as irresponsible.

Mr CASEY: No. I quoted something reported in "The North-West Star" as having been said by the Deputy Premier concerning you. You should listen at question-time.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr CASEY: I am sure that the Treasurer recalls the statement that he made. He referred to the Minister for Local Government as being irresponsible and said that he was either dreaming or having a Gold Coast nightmare. I ask: At what time did the Deputy Premier decide that the Minister for Local Government was not dreaming or having a nightmare, and when did the majority of the National Party change the Deputy Premier's stance against casinos and convince him that he needed to change his ideas?

Dr EDWARDS: Although I really should not be amazed at statements made by the Leader of the Opposition, I am absolutely amazed at this question.

Mr Casey: You made the statement in Mt Isa.

Dr EDWARDS: On no occasion did I say that the Minister was irresponsible. In fact, I am very proud to admit that on numerous occasions I have said that the Leader of the Opposition is irresponsible. I say it again this morning.

As to the Press report—what I said was that at no stage had a meeting of the casino committee been held and that if such a statement had been made by anybody that statement was irresponsible. I did not refer at all to the Minister for Local Government or to any other honourable member.

As usual, the Leader of the Opposition has a facile grin on his face and is looking up at the Press gallery. I wonder whether I should even bother to answer the question. However, I repeat that at no time did I make such a statement about the Minister for Local Government. What I said was that if someone had stated that the casino committee had held a meeting such a statement was untrue and irresponsible. I do not deny that I made that statement.

The Leader of the Opposition refers to a change of mind on the part of the Government. Both parties adopted the policy that they would investigate the siting and development of casinos in Queensland.

Mr Casey: What a lot of rot.

Dr EDWARDS: The Leader of the Opposition does not even know his own party's policy, let alone the Government's policy.

My personal view is quite clear, and I make no apology for it. At least I am prepared to express my personal view, which is something that the Leader of the Opposition has never done. Everybody knows my personal view, and I am sure that the Premier's personal view coincides with mine.

As to my party's policy—my party has made a statement in relation to casinos. I have told my members that they will have a free vote on the casino issue, because I believe they are entitled to hold personal views in relation to it. My view, however, is that the establishment of casinos has been adopted as a policy decision by the Government, and I stand by that decision; I will support it. Both Government parties went to the people on this issue and the people endorsed their view on this issue as well as many other views on policies.

FREE HOSPITAL SYSTEM

Mr CASEY: In directing a further question to the Deputy Premier and Treasurer, I refer to the despicable attempt made by the Liberal and National Parties to destroy Queensland's free hospital system.

Honourable Members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Casey interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind the Leader of the Opposition that this is question-time. I should imagine that he would be aware of that. If he has a question to ask of a Minister, he shall ask it forthwith.

Mr CASEY: I am sorry, Mr Speaker; I was provoked by Government back-benchers.

I refer again to the efforts of the Liberal and National Parties to destroy Queensland's free hospital system and the announcement this morning by National Party Senator Collard that he would not support any united Queensland stand in the Senate against such moves. I now ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer and Leader of the Liberal Party in Queensland: Will he undertake the strongest possible appeals to Liberal Senators from Queensland to oppose any Federal Government measures on health-funding arrangements that may threaten our free hospitals, even though such opposition is likely to be interpreted as a vote of no confidence in the Fraser Government?

Dr EDWARDS: As I understand the statement by Senator Collard, he said that it would be difficult for the Liberal and National Party Senators from Queensland to oppose a money Bill. He made that very clear. I should have thought that the honourable member would have applauded that rather than despised it, because I understand that is Labor's policy as well as the policy of many members on this side of the House. The honourable member's attempt to try to twist the matter this morning is typical of his attitude. If what I thought I heard is correct, the Senator went on further to say that he would always support anything that was to the advantage of Queensland, not to its disadvantage. As a result of that statement I have no doubt that Senator Collard, when he hears the full story, will support Queensland's concern about the base amount of money made available to this State under this arrangement.

I will take some time of the House trying to clarify this matter for the Leader of the Opposition, who has not understood it. The honourable member asked a question about Liberal senators. The Premier and I have invited members of the Senate and the House of Representatives from the Liberal and National Parties to our offices at 9 o'clock on Monday morning to discuss with them the hospital scheme in this State and the effects of one aspect of the policy to which I will refer in a moment.

I repeat what I said yesterday in this House, namely, that the Queensland Government, and the Government parties in the State, are totally supportive of many aspects of the attempts by the Federal Government to rationalise and improve the health scheme in Queensland. I repeat that we are in a mess because of the indictable offence of the Whitlam Government in 1974 in relation to the Medibank hospital agreement and the Medibank arrangements. The Medibank story in Queensland will go down as the saddest day in the history of this State. It destroyed the patient/doctor relationship in the State. It effectively removed the doctors' interest in patients because it destroyed the system under which doctors were accustomed

to work with their patients. It placed unbelievable suspicion on the medical profession. It was a socialist scheme based not on the patients' interests but on control by the State—by the Labor Party.

The National-Liberal Government in Queensland accepted the hospital agreement because it meant money for the State to run the hospital system, but it did not agree with the system. As the Premier has said on numerous occasions, it was a regrettable step that we had to take. We had no option because of the financial binds that the Labor Government put upon us.

We welcome some aspects of the scheme. We welcome the tax deductibility and the encouragement of people to take private insurance. We believe also in the availability of free choice in a public hospital system, and it is that part of the proposal with which we do not agree. We deplore the base system on which the financial arrangements are set. The $143m for the State is unacceptable to Queensland. If members of the Labor Party would get off their tails and identify themselves with the Government in an effort to improve the base, we might get some semblance of order in Queensland. Unfortunately they do not understand it and they are talking a lot of political rubbish.

Their efforts should be deplored just as much as they should have been in 1974. If we can get the base raised to a reasonable level so that the people of Queensland will not be disadvantaged in financial terms, we will accept fully the Fraser package on the health scheme. I make no apology for accepting such a scheme. However, I again pledge, as the Premier and I have already done, that the free hospital scheme will continue despite what Labor has done and said. If anybody destroyed Queensland's free hospital scheme, it was the Labor Party, through Medibank.

JAPANESE SUGAR AGREEMENT

Mr CASEY: I ask the Premier: Since the Japanese trading companies Mitsui and Mitsubishi have reduced their sugar purchases from Australia by 300 000 t a year within only a fortnight of his return from Japan, and in view of his assurance that the industry could be confident of its long-term contracts, what steps does he plan to take, on a Government basis, to protect this vital area of primary industry exports in circumstances where the Japanese trading houses appear to be more eager to accept alternative supplies from Communist Cuba and racist South Africa?

Mr BJELKE-PETERSEN: The Leader of the Opposition is quite wrong in suggesting that those companies want to buy more sugar from the Communist countries. As I understand the position, that is not true. They want to keep their options open.

The previous agreement was very much in our favour. It resulted in their paying, subsequent to the drop in the price of sugar, very large sums of money that would not have been necessary had there not been an agreement. On this occasion they determined not to get caught as they claim they were caught last year in having to pay a high price for sugar when they could have purchased it elsewhere at a lower price.

A lot of negotiations are being undertaken by the industry and particularly by Mr Camm, the chairman of the board. I am sure that we will ultimately arrive at as satisfactory an arrangement as we can under the circumstances. Sugar prices are lower than they were previously and it is a difficult time to negotiate sugar agreements in those circumstances on an open market. It is an ongoing discussion and negotiation. I repeat that I believe we will get as satisfactory an arrangement as we can in the circumstances. We have done so with all other agreements round the world. This is perhaps the one instance in which there is great difficulty in reaching a final solution. I believe that we will get the best that is possible under all the circumstances.

RELIEF ASSISTANCE TO DESTITUTE PERSONS

Mr KRUGER: I ask the Minister for Welfare: Is relief assistance to destitute persons still available through police stations? If not, is it available elsewhere and what are the maximum benefits available?

Mr WHITE: Relief assistance is available through the offices of my Department of Children's Services as well as through certain police stations. As regards the amount available at the moment, I am afraid I do not have the exact figure but I will be happy to provide it to the honourable member.

APPOINTMENT OF SIR WALLACE RAE TO DEPARTMENT OF ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDERS ADVANCEMENT

Mr KRUGER: In asking a question of the Minister for Water Resources and Aboriginal and Island Affairs, I direct his attention to the article in Monday's "Courier-Mail" headlined "Dr Llew is turning defeat into victory" and the reference in that report to the fact that the Premier had dropped a plan to give Sir Wallace Rae a "jobs for the boys" post in his Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement Department after the Deputy Premier had objected to it.

Is it a fact that far from the plan being dropped on the insistence of the Deputy Premier, the newsletter of the Minister's department, volume 6, No. 2, page 3, reports that Sir Wallace has actually begun his responsibilities as an adviser in the department's pastoral activities and already visited

Woorabinda, Foleyvale and Zamia Creek, with similar visits scheduled soon to northern centres?

Does this mean that instead of having this solitary victory over the National Party, Dr Edwards—despite "The Courier-Mail's" help—remains an all-the-way, 100 per cent loser?

Mr TOMKINS: Because he mumbles, I could not hear a lot of the honourable member's question. He was obviously referring to the appointment of Sir Wallace Rae as a cattle adviser in the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement. It is true that he is now carrying out this job, which is to report on properties, stock and that type of thing. None of it is new to him, because he did it prior to the Second World War. He is attacking the job with great gusto. I believe it is an extremely good appointment and that he will do a very good job.

ROSBA

Mrs KYBURZ: I ask the Minister for Education: Is he aware of the difficulties created by the school-based assessment system, ROSBA, and the fact that in some high schools there are very few staff members who feel competent with and confident about its implementation?

Mr GUNN: I have had very few complaints about ROSBA. If the honourable member has some specific case she would like to bring forward, I would be only too pleased to listen to her.

Mrs KYBURZ: I now ask the Minister for Education: What are the inbuilt safeguards in the ROSBA system against pupil victimisation?

Mr GUNN: I have never heard of any victimisation under this system. I believe it is the best system we have ever had, but, once again, if the honourable member knows of any students she considers have been victimised I will be only too pleased to listen to her.

Mrs KYBURZ: I have a further question for the Minister for Education: Which officers in his department have moved around the high schools explaining the ROSBA system to staff, parents and pupils in an attempt to explain this school-based assessment system to those concerned? If no officers have done this, and indeed if he has not had it done, why not?

Mr GUNN: I can only say that these officers are always available. Some teachers consider that this system is beyond them, but that is hard to understand. I made it quite clear to my regional officers that if they so desire, officers would be available to explain and program this ROSBA system, and that offer still holds.

DONATION OF PRIZE-MONEY BY GOVERNMENT TO TROTTING CARNIVAL

Mr FOURAS: In asking a question of the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police in his capacity as Minister in charge of racing, I refer to his promise to donate some hundreds of thousands of dollars of Government funds as prize-money for a trotting carnival for the progeny of horses sired in Queensland. I ask: How can he possibly justify such a decision in the light of the current cut-back of some $130m in real terms from the Federal Treasury?

Mr HINZE: It is quite obvious that the correspondents who wrote that article took what I said out of context. What has actually happened is that the harness racing industry in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland has proposed to the Governments in those States that they should support the running of what the industry refers to as sires produce stakes in those States. This has taken on exceptionally strongly in America and it is being followed in Australia. I said to the industry that it should get its act together and be prepared to make a contribution. If the honourable member gets the correct side of the story he will see that the industry itself will make a sizeable contribution to any project that I will be putting before Cabinet. Of course, Cabinet will consider the proposal.

I believe that one of the racing writers erroneously referred not to the actual prize-money but purely to the breeding side of the industry. The industry in this State needs a fillip, a shot in the arm. I am surprised that the honourable member would compare the state of this industry with the recent cut-backs that we believe we will have to accept from the Commonwealth Government. We have to look at all industries. From where I sit on this occasion, I believe that any investment in the racing industry is money well spent.

PRIORITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE

Mr FOURAS: In asking a question of the Deputy Premier and Treasurer, I refer to Queensland's razor gang, which he euphemistically calls the Priorities Review Committee. I ask: Is this the same body that conducted the 1976 investigation into the number of note pads and pencils used by Government departments? What has this committee done during the last four years? How does it operate and what are the estimated savings resulting from its existence?

Dr EDWARDS: The Priorities Review Committee was set up by the Government under the Premier's Department. It came under the administration of the Premier. It has been a most successful committee in that it has reported to the Government on staff requirements, the expenditure of money on motor vehicles and so forth. Other tasks have been allocated to it. I have no idea

whether it was allocated the task of looking at the cost of pencils and rubbers, but I doubt whether these men, with their capacity, would bother to spend time on such a matter.

The Government has a fine record in its expenditure programs and its control and accountability in those areas. This committee is not new, as the Leader of the Opposition suggested earlier. It has been in operation for a long period. The Government has asked it to look at the matter of statutory authorities and submit a report to Cabinet for further consideration.

REVIEW OF ADOPTION OF CHILDREN ACT

Mr FOURAS: In asking a question of the Minister for Welfare Services, I refer to the statement in Parliament by his predecessor, Mr Doumany, on 12 April 1979, more than two years ago, in which he said—

> "The Adoption of Children Act in general is being reviewed."

I note that the Minister also has now announced a similar review. I simply ask: Why has this review taken such an inordinate length of time?

Mr WHITE: I acknowledge the work done by my predecessor, the Attorney-General, in this. As honourable members opposite would know, we are now in the position to amend the current legislation.

I take this opportunity to advise the House that advertisements will be placed inviting submissions from the public generally so that a review can be undertaken. I think the honourable member would acknowledge that the whole issue of adoption is one of great sensitivity. It is one of some controversy and consequently I think it is right and proper of the Government to go quietly and slowly in enacting new legislation. For that reason we have to look at issues such as consent, the appropriate procedures, the absolute discretion of the director—whether that is right and proper or whether there should be referrals to a tribunal—and matters of that nature. However, they are the three mainline issues that immediately spring to mind.

I acknowledge that the Government would have liked to move a little more quickly than it has, but the wheels are in motion and I certainly look forward to submissions not only from members opposite but also from the House generally and members of the public who are interested in this important matter.

FACILITIES FOR DISABLED PERSONS

Mr LESTER: I ask the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police: Am I right in assuming that he has in mind in this International Year of Disabled Persons an ultra-important action to help heart-attack victims and other disabled people? Could the Minister advise me what he intends to do?

Mr HINZE: I have to commend the honourable member for the enormous job that he has done in this State for those who have to spend some hours in wheelchairs and the fact that he brought to the notice of this Parliament and the State of Queensland the plight of such persons who suffer some form of heart attack and as a result find themselves blocked in a room. I have given serious consideration to the representations of the honourable member and I am pleased to say that entirely through his efforts the Government will take the necessary action to remedy the position and bring forward legislation.

FEDERAL FUNDING CUTS

Mr BURNS: I ask the Premier: Does he realise the sense of déjà vu that the people in the community feel—that is, that they have seen it all before—which is obvious when one looks back to 1978 and the triennial charade, after each election, when he and his fellow Premiers travel to Canberra and the public is given the consistent statement about squeezes very shortly after an election? I read the newspapers last night, and I ask the Premier to comment on when the Government is going to stop blaming Canberra and start taking note——

Mr JENNINGS: I rise to a point of order. Is this a question, or is the member debating the issue?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member for Lytton to proceed with his question.

Mr BURNS: When I have finished asking the question, I will tell the honourable member the name of the main street in Southport. It may help him to make up his mind where Queensland is.

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

Mr BURNS: I ask the Premier: Is he aware that people in this State are becoming sick and tired of the triennial charade, after each election, of blaming Canberra for all the cut-backs in rail electrification, road construction, hospitals and other works? When will the Government begin using the assets and great natural resources of Queensland for the benefit of all Queenslanders, not just for the benefit of a privileged few?

Mr BJELKE-PETERSEN: I think that the honourable member will agree that Queenslanders expect the Government to stand up for Queensland. I do not know whether the honourable member is implying that he supports the general attitude emanating from

Canberra, but I am sure that the people would expect the Government to stand up for Queensland. On this occasion, I believe that the Government had every justification for saying what it did say. In my opinion, the attitude adopted by the Government was quite mild, fair and reasonable, because there was a considerable cut-back in the amount the Government considered Queensland was entitled to. If the Federal Government had said, "We will take so much less in tax from the people in compensation for what State Governments will not receive", perhaps the Queensland Government could have accepted that. However, the Government is well aware that the Federal Government will receive additional revenue and income and the States will not. One could approach the question from a number of angles, and I am aware that the Government ought to do something more in relation to utilising its own resources to the best advantage. I say to the honourable member that the Government is looking very seriously at the whole question. I should like to tell him more, but I cannot.

ELECTRICITY CHARGES FOR PROPOSED ALUMINA SMELTERS

Mr BURNS: I ask the Minister for Mines and Energy: Is the Queensland Government the only State Government that refuses to make public its electricity power charges for proposed alumina smelters? As the New South Wales Government has revealed that it will charge 1.825c net kWh and the Victorian Government is reported to be charging 1.78c kWh for electricity to such smelters, will he table a list of preferential charges to industry for electricity in Queensland?

Mr I. J. GIBBS: It is true that at present Queensland is the only State that has not revealed its charges for electricity to such projects. The Government has always regarded agreements relating to electricity charges as private, between the Government and consumers. All I can say to the honourable member is that the Government is very happy with the present situation. It has done what it had to do to encourage industries to come to this State, and the people of this State are not subsidising those industries in any way in charges and costs. Now that the other State Governments have revealed what their charges are, the Government is very well satisfied, and I reiterate that the charges are a private matter between the Government and the companies concerned.

FORM OF QUESTION

Mr McLEAN having asked a question without notice——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! As recently as a few days ago, I made reference to lengthy questions asked without notice by members. It is almost impossible for a Minister to answer a question that would fully occupy a foolscap page. I suggest to the honourable member that he put his question on notice. It is very difficult for a Minister to absorb all the information related by the honourable member.

Mr McLEAN: I shall put the question on notice, Mr Speaker.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

THE SCENIC RIM

Mr BOOTH (Warwick) (12 noon): Today I want to talk about the Scenic Rim, which encompasses a group of mountains, 15 national parks and approximately 10 environmental parks. Not so long ago the Minister asked the public to take part in discussions on the management of the area. I do not intend to say anything detrimental about the Scenic Rim, or to abuse the concept applying to it, because that concept offers the State, and particularly to the areas involved, the greatest potential in Queensland for tourist development. However, I have some comments to make about the park management, particularly as my belief is that in that aspect we may be getting off the rails to some extent. Some people believe that national parks should be wilderness areas and to that end they would prefer to keep out as many people as possible.

Mr R. J. Gibbs: They ought to put a few people like you in there.

Mr BOOTH: It would not be a bad idea if we put a few people there to manage them. I do not think the honourable member who interjected would be suitable to be put in charge of national parks.

Mr R. J. Gibbs interjected.

Mr BOOTH: If I did not have limited time I would accept all the honourable member's interjections, but I have many matters to raise.

The Minister asked people to take part in management discussions. He also asked the local councils to make a contribution on management. Two of the councils involved are the Glengallan and Allora Shire Councils. The major portion of the Scenic Rim is in the Warwick electorate, although four or five other electorates are involved. I am vitally interested in this park, not only because of its tourist potential, but also because I believe it should be used by many people. I want it made available to the greatest possible number of people. In this area alone, I am a little at variance with the National Parks and Wildlife people. I intend to quote from the annual report of the National Parks and Wildlife Service and, in doing so, I point out that many of the things contained in it are good ideas.

Mr Moore: The first thing to be done is to engage in a snake-killing safari.

Mr BOOTH: I do not agree with that. People who walk in national parks have to accept the risk that snakes may be there.

I now quote part of what the National Parks and Wildlife Service had to say about the Scenic Rim—

> "The initial stages of this project have been quite far-reaching. Preliminary discussions have been held with bushwalking clubs and other interested organizations, including the Lamington Natural History Association and the Joint Tourist Committee for Boonah, Beaudesert and Moreton Shires. The Department of Forestry has nominated a liaison officer to assist with the Scenic Rim exercise, and the Department and the Service have agreed to co-ordinate planning efforts in this region."

I am quite happy with all of that. If I may say so, I have nothing to bitch about in relation to it. However, I am a little worried that unless we watch what is going on the general public may be forgotten. The Scenic Rim should be accessible to the general public, rather than just to bushwalkers who have the expertise and physical stamina to walk for two, three or 10 days. If the Scenic Rim is to become in reality a park that can be used by the people, access to it must be made as easy as possible so that people may enjoy it for one or two hours, or whatever time they wish.

Some people say that litter would be brought into the area if people were able to get into it easily. That is a possibility, but it has been proven throughout the world—and indeed in Australia—that litter can be kept under control in national parks to a reasonable extent—I use the word "reasonable" although it is not a good word—and that the parks can be used for a number of years. We must make easy access available.

Mr Underwood: We need a lot more parks in South-east Queensland to take the pressure off the present ones.

Mr BOOTH: I agree, but if we can make easy access available, some of the pressure will be taken off. That might be a good idea. When a person has to walk, drive or sneak through somebody else's property, that is not the best type of access.

I am not sure that all of the areas in this national park link up completely. They are very close to doing so. I am not opposed to acquiring land so that they can be linked up completely. However, there is very little evidence to suggest any advantage in acquiring land adjacent to the Scenic Rim, such as in the foothills or the area that is being used for grazing, etc. There is little to suggest that that would be in the best interests of the State or of the concept or project.

Mr Underwood: That is not completely right. We need to protect the complete ecosystem if we are to preserve national parks.

Mr BOOTH: I am not suggesting that. I am suggesting that nothing would be gained by going too far from the foothills. It is good to retain wilderness areas wherever possible. There are three different types of area—rain forest, scrub, and plain forest. It is preferable to retain all of them as wilderness areas; but, if it means taking land further away and keeping people as far away from the areas as possible, without their being able to visit them, I am opposed to the willy-nilly resumption of land.

No doubt someone will say I am suggesting that the shire councils should be able to find the money to provide access roads into the scenic areas. I know that the councils do not have the money to do that and that it might not be done for some time. I agree with the honourable member for Ipswich West that if we want more national parks—and he and I believe that we do—and if we want access to them, we must build roads into them.

Three of the areas in which we definitely need better access roads are Emu Creek, to take us into its headwaters and on to the Scenic Rim, the Swanfels area and the Inveramsay area in the Allora Shire. We will have to face up to the provision of these roads. We must have access into these areas if we are to enjoy them to the utmost.

The Scenic Rim concept is probably the biggest ever attempted in national parks or environmental parks in this part of Australia. It stretches from the Mistake Range to Wilson's Peak and then to the coast. The people in the area adjacent to the coast and in its hinterland will be able to enjoy that park. The Darling Downs will become increasingly popular. It has the potential for tourism. In it, people can enjoy the inland parts of the State. There is increasing activity in the inland areas. Not all people wish to go to the seaside. I am not being derogatory to the people who do, but some people like to walk in the bush.

Therefore, my plea this morning on the management issue is that we look carefully at making access to these areas as easy as possible. I am not opposed to the acquisition of more land to lengthen the Scenic Rim, but I do not believe there is anything to be gained by acquiring large areas in the foothills. After all, because the land has been grazed and the timber has been removed, it is no longer a wilderness area. We should consider making access to the area as easy as possible so that visitors do not have to drive through private property. It is probably easier to gain access to the rim from the Darling Downs side.

(Time expired.)

FREE HOSPITAL SYSTEM

Dr LOCKWOOD (Toowoomba North) (12.10 p.m.): I want to address myself to the continuing debate about the free hospital system in Queensland. Liberal parliamentarians back the concern expressed in the community that the free hospital system in Queensland be maintained.

In this Parliament on 11 March 1981 I said quite succinctly that the report of the Commission of Inquiry Into the Efficiency and Administration of Hospitals, also known as the Jamison report, set out quite clearly how hospital costs could be curtailed. But I am afraid the Fraser Government has used only part of what was said on page 1 of that report to implement its cost-cutting scheme, and that was the statement that for the year 1978-79 cost savings to the tune of $964m could have been made.

The Fraser Government took note of only that part of the sentence and deliberately ignored the opening part of the sentence which stated—

> "If all States in Australia had achieved the same average bed-day costs as Queensland and the same average bed use as Victoria in 1978-79, then the spending by recognised public hospitals that year—which totalled $2664 million—would have been reduced by $964 million."

The Fraser Government has pinned its entire money-saving thrust on the last part of the sentence and has completely ignored the admitted economies that could be made by pursuing the excellent and efficient administration that has been practised in Queensland and, to a lesser extent, in Victoria.

It is established Liberal policy that the free hospital system be maintained in Queensland, and that policy has the backing of all Liberal members of this Parliament. I invite the people of this State to watch the performance of our leader, Dr Llew Edwards, and the Minister for Health, Mr Brian Austin, to ensure that this Liberal policy is fully backed by this Government. We will be fighting to see that that policy is in fact recognised by all members of Federal Parliament.

The Fraser-Anthony Government has challenged the Queensland policy of free public hospitals and has used the Commission of Inquiry into the Efficiency and Administration of Hospitals, the Jamison report, as a lever against Queensland, but in doing so it is using one edge of the sword and completely ignoring the other. The Federal Government has completely ignored the aspect of efficiency. If all the States had equalled Queensland's efficiency, I believe we could have achieved all the economies the Fraser Government wished and more. I estimate that if Queensland's efficiency had been equalled by the other States a saving of over $1,000m could have been effected in 1981-82. The Federal Government has chosen to implement a policy of per capita funding in block grants, but has gone about it in a very devious way.

The Fraser-Anthony Government will not take steps to see that all States lift the efficiency of their administration in the interests of economy. It has taken notice of only parts of the Jamison report. By cutting this State's share of the personal income tax pool from 39.8 to 37.8 per cent, Queensland's share of that pool for the coming year will drop by $82m. By hard bargaining, the Queensland Treasurer and Premier have gained an extra $11m.

Fraser has in fact completely ignored the cost-sharing agreements and the history of them. He is rewarding the expensive States and punishing the efficient ones. He has perpetuated rather than solved the problems that were highlighted in the Jamison report. Queensland would have benefitted under the proposal for a block scheme grant on a per capita basis, but now look at what Fraser has done. He has rewarded the southern States and Western Australia.

Let us see how he has done that, and why. Based on the budgeted per capita payments to the States in 1980-81 under the 50/50 Commonwealth and States cost-sharing scheme, Queensland would have been allocated $78.20 per capita for public hospitals, whereas Western Australia was budgeted to receive $113.33. The all-Australian average was $88.22. So even before the razor gang lashed out, Queensland was exactly $10 per capita per annum worse off than the Australian average and $35 behind Western Australia, which shares many of our problems such as decentralisation and vast distances, although I will freely admit that its problems are greater than ours in that regard.

How has it come about that Western Australia can do so well? I think we can say that a lot of that success has been due to the Western Australian senators forming a bloc vote on the matter of air transport and the problems that affected their State. As such, the bloc vote has terrified the Fraser administration.

The Fraser administration, in handling this health matter, has been more than generous to Western Australia. It has not been implementing a policy of economic democracy; it has bent all the rules of economic democracy and given money hand over fist to Western Australia because of the fear that Fraser has about a revolt by Western Australian senators and their voting in bloc.

I believe that our Queensland senators can use this same ploy on Mr Fraser to make him re-examine his stated policies and the budget that he will provide for Queensland. Is a bloc revolt from Queensland senators likely? I believe that it is. If one examines this matter, one finds that there are approximately 100 people in the State

in favour of a free hospital scheme for every one who is against it. That is something that Mr Fraser has not taken notice of.

People on all levels of income can see the advantages in having this scheme. They can see the advantages for families when more than one member is sick at the one time and needs treatment. That applies equally at the out-patient and in-patient levels. It applies to anyone with a major illness who will be in hospital for any length of time. It certainly applies to everyone who uses our roads.

We could only benefit if the Fraser Government would get the health scheme back to what it was in the pre-Medibank days. I think that Mr Fraser's problem is that he is using a big stick some 5½ years after the end of the Medibank era. It is too late. There has been a great deal of dithering from the Federal Government. It had not made a proper and positive assessment of the health problem before the Jamison report was presented, and after the report was presented Mr Fraser ignored it.

One matter that the Peacock-Fraser dispute did highlight was that Mr Peacock listened to the wrong people and Mr Fraser listened to no-one. But Mr Fraser will have to listen to the Queensland senators when they find that there are 100 people in favour of a free hospital scheme for every one who is against it. Any Federal politician from this State who goes against the wishes of the people in this regard can well look anxiously at his electoral chances next time.

It has been mooted in some circles that Mr Fraser might be looking for an excuse to ask for a double dissolution. He could have an excuse with this matter. He knows that he will lose control of the Senate on 1 July, but if the Queensland senators vote en bloc on this matter he could well lose control of the Senate before then. Any measure introduced by Mr Fraser that affects Queensland's free hospital scheme, or a monetary or health Bill, could well see him lose control.

If he calls a double dissolution on this issue he cannot look forward to the continued support of Queensland in the Senate and he may well lose a lot of support in the House of Representatives. Mr Fraser has to reconsider and take notice of the Jamison report and he has to take a great deal more notice of his Queensland parliamentarians. I believe in time they will see the light on this issue.

FEDERAL FUNDING CUTS

Mr D'ARCY (Woodridge) (12.20 p.m.): It is very encouraging to hear Government members bleating about the conspiracy with Canberra in which they have just taken part. This Government has been a part of the greatest confidence trick that any Government has ever pulled in Australia's history. We are constantly reminded of Malcolm Fraser's Premiers Conferences when he tightens the belt well before the conference so that the leaks to the media, which rush to his aid to put the case to the Australian public, enable the publishing of headlines at the time of the conference stating that the States have gained some concessions.

There is nothing new in the results of Premiers Conferences. After the 1978 Premiers Conference a newspaper headline read: "Knox forced to pass on the 'squeeze' ". In part the article read—

> "He said last night the effect would be: Less work done on Brisbane's freeways and other roads. A slow-down in the electrification of Brisbane's railways. A reduction in new hospitals. A cut-back in development of new pre-school and community health centres, and difficulties with school dental services. 'Zero growth' for the public service."

We have heard it all before. We have seen the State Governments conned before by the best con man in Australia.

This Government is, and has always been, a part of the conspiracy. It is Mr Fraser's old three-card trick in which the Commonwealth abnegates its responsibilities and keeps the money. The purpose of this fraud is to allow the Fraser Government to give substantial tax cuts before the next election so that it can buy votes. That is something that the Tory Governments of both this State and the Commonwealth have done for many years. Instead, tax cuts should be given now so that Queenslanders will be able to pay for the State's extra responsibilities. The Opposition calls upon the Federal con man, Mr Malcolm Fraser, and his Liberals to immediately implement tax cuts to all Queensland taxpayers so that they can be reimbursed now with some of the money that he has robbed from their budget for education, health, roads and other programs.

The Federal Government's cost-cutting exercise by the razor gang and the forcing of this policy on to the States is clearly designed to support its monetary policy and reduce the role of Government in the management of the economy. The Government's philosophy is that the size of the economic cake is limited and that the public sector should be reduced so that the private sector can expand. The argument is that if there is no public sector cut-back there will be unnecessary competition between the public and private sectors.

In addition, the resources boom will put further pressures on wage increases which may spill over into other sectors of the economy, increasing costs without an increase in productivity. The building industry also could not continue to expand at the rate it is doing without the danger of bottlenecks and wage pressures.

All the above pressures need to be constrained for the Government's monetary policy to work. The Government is relying

on this policy to reduce inflation by limiting the rate of growth of the money supply and increasing interest rates.

Mr Fraser promised that there would be no inflation, no unemployment and that he would not tamper with Medibank. In the future the proposed cuts will allow the Government to cut PAYE income tax, although the effect of that has already been destroyed by the abolition of tax indexation. Obviously the general public did not understand tax indexation but it will now find that it has lost something.

The Government's plan is to change the tax-sharing arrangements from the present 39.87 per cent of income tax to approximately one-fifth of total tax receipts from 1982-83, which will have unfavourable ramifications for Queensland.

Clearly the Federal monetary approach to fighting inflation is not working in the States. The Federal Government's planning can be based only on reasonably full employment, and that is not the case in Australia today. There is no alternative and clearly the Government cannot reinflate the economy without pushing or pressuring the private or public sector.

The pressures of inflation—bottlenecks, excessive wage increases, etc.—will arise only when the economy is operating at, or near, full employment. Although there are pressures in particular industries, that is clearly not the case overall.

Ideas that in some way Government expenditure is constraining the growth of the private sector by pushing it out and pressuring it through competition are wrong. The public sector is a great stimulus to the private sector because it is the largest single purchaser of private goods and services. The present cut-back will undoubtedly affect private industry adversely. The Federal Government has learnt that lesson in the past, and there will be a severe credit squeeze in the private sector.

However, the Federal Government has only given a bit more so that States such as Queensland can continue to finance resource infrastructure development. It is the policy of the ALP that huge multi-national consortiums should be paying their own way. Although it should be a case of "the user pays", the Government of Queensland continues with its sweetheart deals with hugely profitable companies, and ordinary Queenslanders will suffer even more through the cut-back in hospitals, schools and other services.

The Government should be reflating the economy, not deflating it. The rise in production that reflation would bring about would clearly dampen any inflationary pressures, and the Government should be doing everything it can to argue against the economic fallacy on which the Federal Government is basing its policy options. It has not done that so far and, as a result, the people of Queensland will suffer. The Government of this State will lose about $130m.

The Premier says that the Queensland Government has its own razor gang; the Treasurer says that it has not really got a razor gang, that it has the Priorities Review Committee, which has operated successfully for about four years. One wonders what the guide-lines of that committee are. They have not been made known in this Chamber.

We have heard about cuts in supplies of pencils and pads, and so on, and the Treasurer mentioned motor vehicles today. The honourable gentleman did not mention whether the Public Service will be affected, or whether the committee can do anything about the 600 statutory bodies that have been set up in this State by the National-Liberal Government. They must be considered in any investigation of Government expenditure in Queensland. Obviously, the Priorities Review Committee, operating under the Premier's Department, does not have a brief to carry out an investigation in that direction. It is a farce; it is a cosmetic cover-up of an inefficient Government.

If the Deputy Premier and Treasurer was even half fair dinkum, he would begin implementing some of the policies of the Liberal Party and consider appointing a public accounts committee, which the Liberal Premier of South Australia has said has saved his State millions of dollars. One hears from the Deputy Premier and Treasurer of this State only bland statements about the operation of the Government's so-called razor gang.

I would argue that the real political motivation for the Federal Government's cost-cutting exercise is not the amount of money that it will save, because it is pitifully small and amounts to little more than a public relations exercise. The $560m purported to be saved is only 1.5 per cent of the current Federal Government expenditure, and the only areas that are seriously affected are the Federal Public Service, the export-promotion scheme and the States. All the other cost-cutting is largely cosmetic and will have little economic impact.

The real purpose of the razor gang is political, for the Fraser Government wishes to be seen as opting for small Government. It obviously wishes to prepare the ground for a highly visible tax cut just prior to the next Federal election. Tax indexation, which, as I said earlier, was not fully appreciated by the public as a tax cut, has been abolished. In fact, the Australian worker is paying the highest amount of tax. As I said in this Chamber on another occasion, in 1947 PAYE tax from the Australian worker was 46 per cent of total Government income; today it is 66 per cent.

The Federal Government, besides minimally cutting its own expenditure, is prepared to push its responsibilities onto the States without providing financially for the transfer.

The States have to find the income needed to pay for their extra responsibilities. I repeat that the Government of this State has been a party to the conspiracy. The real reason for this underhand move, as a result of which the States get more responsibility but the Commonwealth Government keeps the money, is that Mr Fraser intends to buy votes for the next Federal election by posing as the benevolent tax cutter. In fact, he has lopped only 1.5 per cent off the total Federal Budget, and that percentage is minimal.

It is time that this Government stopped abnegating its responsibilities by blaming Canberra—it has done this for years—and took seriously the matter of a public accounts committee. It is time that this Government abandoned its inefficiencies and extravagances and imposed an economic rental on resource windfalls to the benefit of all Queenslanders.

However, I am sure that the Premier could assure the House that the cost of his helicopter and his 70 journalists who sanitise this Government, and Mr Hinze's trotting prize-money, will not be cut. It will be the people of Queensland who will suffer from the extravagances and inefficiencies of this Government.

(Time expired.)

TOILET DOORS

Mr LESTER (Peak Downs) (12.31 p.m.): Today is a great day for the State of Queensland; the Minister for Local Government (Mr Hinze) has announced that in this the International Year of Disabled Persons paraplegics will be catered for more than ever before. That simply means that the Government is at least making a meaningful contribution to trying to help paraplegics and, as well, people who suffer heart attacks in toilets. It means that people who are on crutches and those who require the aid of a walker are to be helped. As I understand it, toilet doors in new buildings will open outwards or will be constructed in such a way as to enable them to be lifted up over the body of a person who has collapsed in a toilet.

This leads to some interesting possibilities. The matter should not be left at doors opening outwards or being lifted up. Other acceptable alternatives should be looked at. A door could be made to slide both sideways and inwards. It is not practicable to have the door of a toilet sliding sideways so that it covers the entrance to the adjoining toilet. It is, however, possible to have a door that slides sideways and backwards into the toilet.

Mr Vaughan: Sliding doors only slide sideways.

Mr LESTER: If the door were to slide only sideways, it would slide across the front of the adjacent toilet. However, it could be constructed so that it would slide sideways and inwards.

Mr D'Arcy: You hope to catch two people in that way, do you?

Mr LESTER: This is a serious matter, so I hope that the honourable member will adopt a sensible attitude.

Mr Vaughan: It has been a wonderful victory for you.

Mr LESTER: It is a wonderful victory for all the people of Queensland, particularly for disabled persons. I do not want to take the credit; the submission was put to me originally by disabled persons. I was merely the person who brought forward their point of view.

The legislation or new rules will apply to all new buildings. In other words, after a certain date, all new buildings, both public and private, will be covered by the new rules.

Furthermore, one toilet out of every 10 installed in new buildings will be designed specifically to cater for the needs of paraplegics. In motels, one unit of every 20 will be designed to meet the needs of paraplegics.

Mr Vaughan: What about an ordinary house?

Mr LESTER: After a certain date, an ordinary house will have to comply with the new rules. Toilet doors will either have to open outwards or have to slide sideways, or, alternatively, be capable of being lifted up.

Last year alone, approximately 150 people died in toilets because they could not be got out of them. More than half of those deaths occurred in private homes. Something has to be done to overcome the problem. Only a few weeks ago, during a party at Moranbah, a person collapsed in a toilet. Because the door was locked and could not be opened, someone had to get in through the back window to get him out. While doing so he cut himself. That meant another accident to contend with.

Mr McKechnie: In a private home a normal sliding door would be acceptable.

Mr LESTER: It would be. Three options are available. The door does not necessarily have to open out. Let us be sensible and realise that doors which open out can cause problems. For instance, a young child running down a hallway could run into the edge of an open door.

Mr Vaughan interjected.

Mr LESTER: The lock disengages automatically on lift-up doors. Most doors being built these days allow the insertion of a screwdriver to open the lock.

Mr Vaughan: Where do you find a screwdriver?

Mr LESTER: Something must be wrong if the honourable member cannot find a screwdriver.

Mr Innes: A coin will do the job.

Mr LESTER: A coin will work. If someone cannot find a screwdriver or a coin, he must be a bit screwy.

There are approximately 4 000 paraplegics in Queensland who must be catered for and, as I said, 150-odd people die from heart attacks each year in toilets.

This suggestion could well help everyone. Almost everybody at some time suffers an accident as a result of which he has to use crutches or a walker. This makes it virtually impossible to use a normal inward-opening door. We must also ensure that gaps are provided at the top and bottom of toilet doors so that it is easy to see whether someone has collapsed. It is a known fact that people who have collapsed in toilets have not been discovered until it is too late. My comments certainly apply to the toilet doors in Parliament House.

The proposal is winning wide acceptance. Western Australia has taken up the cause and many new motels in America are building units to cater for paraplegics. In the town of Clermont, where I live, the hospital has voluntarily changed the doors so that they swing outwards. The people of Clermont are so obsessed with this idea that in the Australia Day parade, which is a big parade, they had a semi-trailer with a toilet on it, with the door opening outwards. I was in the toilet in a dressing gown. It is all very well for Opposition members to laugh, but the people of Clermont voted 1 100 to 200 for me in the last election, and before I became the member they voted 2 to 1 for the ALP. The people of Clermont are well behind me. On the float we had a person dressed up, with a walker, trying to get out of a toilet in which the door opened inwards. Honourable members should be very interested to know that, as well as getting our point across, we also won the award for the parade.

I'll bet there is no member of this Parliament who does not know someone who has not suffered a problem with a toilet door. While I was laughed at by some people when I first raised this matter, very clearly the little man in the street said that his great uncle or someone else had died in a toilet. He said, "Hell, I know somebody who is a paraplegic", or, "I had to use a walker at one time and I could not get in, so what Vince Lester suggested wasn't bad".

Dr Lockwood: The ambulancemen would praise you for it.

Mr LESTER: Yes. Strong representations have been made from all the ambulance officers in the Peak Downs electorate. They have backed me to the hilt. One ambulance officer in Blackwater joined issue with a newspaper that made fun of my suggestion. That officer quoted a large number of examples of the difficulty they have had getting in to people in this position and how members have been hurt when trying to get in through back windows to assist people. I have not found one doctor who has not supported my suggestion.

(Time expired.)

WILLAWONG LIQUID WASTE TREATMENT PLANT

Mr INNES (Sherwood) (12.41 p.m.): I have heard of members holding their seats, but that phrase has a new connotation following the contribution of the honourable member for Peak Downs. He must be commended for pursuing with such persistence and success what some people might say is a mundane matter. I hope that I do not have to change the doors in my house.

The matter that I refer to received some publicity and raised some controversy a few weeks ago. This is the first occasion on which I have been able to mention it. It is the matter of the Willawong liquid waste treatment plant. Its relevance to me is that it directly impinges upon Blunder Creek, which runs into Oxley Creek. It has given me and my constituents more than one headache because of the lack of effective control by the responsible authority—the Brisbane City Council—in relation to serious residential and environmental intrusions.

The second point is that there was an extraordinary demonstration of the effectiveness of parliamentary committees. It took the standing committee of the House of Representatives to come to this State and reveal to us the deplorable condition of the domestic housekeeping in the city of Brisbane, which is clearly serious and has to be rectified. Evidence was given before that committee—I have not had a chance to peruse it yet, but I am expecting to receive a copy in the near future—that hundreds of thousands of litres of toxic, flammable and other liquids are received by that dump each year.

I want to take the matter a little further. Evidence was given that rumours had been heard of radioactive waste having been dumped there. It was reported in the paper that a witness said that it must have been more than two years ago because he had been the supervisor or engineer there for the previous two years and it was before his time.

On my personal information, that is wrong. I received a complaint of, perhaps, low-grade radioactive waste being taken to that dump last year. I pursued that matter and was informed by a council officer that the wastes, which were radioactive isotopes from the University of Queensland, were taken there and dealt with properly, having regard to the type of waste and the radioactivity involved.

I was told that it was encased in an inert container—I think it was glass plus concrete —and that it was dropped down pipes that were set in the ground after drilling. The

container was fixed and marked and there was certainly no danger of leeching or escape from the area, as I was informed at the time that it was a lawfully conducted dump. On that basis I was prepared to accept that something which could be handled apparently with sufficient safety to be used in laboratories could, after it became waste and although it was somewhat radioactive, be properly dealt with.

I have now transmitted this information to Mr Hodges, the chairman of the House of Representatives standing committee, but it appears on the evidence that was given before that standing committee that the assurances I received, which removed any concern that I had, would now seem to be misplaced. I understand that the evidence was that nobody in that extraordinary place could say where anything had been put, and through a process of digging up, ploughing, moving and bulldozing nobody could say within a few months or weeks what had been put where. My concern was certainly excited when I saw the evidence attributed to the senior person in control of that dump at a time earlier than the personal report I received last year and conveyed to the Brisbane City Council. It would seem that nobody can tell us where anything, including radioactive material, has been placed at the Willawong waste dump, and in this day and age that is just not good enough.

I now wish to address myself briefly to other matters and remind this House of some of the evidence that was given to the committee. I will refer also to an article in the "Telegraph" of that time which stated that about 182 000 litres of chemical waste are accepted each day, and there is also reference to 18 000 litres of hazardous chemicals. I am not sure whether the two figures are used in contradistinction, and will not be sure until I receive the promised information from the standing committee; but, in any event, it is clear that thousands upon thousands of litres of hazardous, flammable or noxious material are accepted by that dump each day. A witness apparently said that the chemicals could not be identified by the depot staff or by the tanker drivers. They include poisons, acids and strong alkalis. They were made up of virtually every chemical composition known to man, yet the dump does not have the facilities, except through a process which takes weeks, to check on the source of material.

I read from an article containing a statement by a senior company staff member—

> " 'Any Brisbane tanker could come into Willawong, and most of the time the drivers do not know what they have on board,' he said."

That is a matter of some concern. It was reinforced by the honourable member for Archerfield, who said in "The Satellite" of 22 April that tanker drivers were not required by law to disclose the contents of their loads of liquid waste. Alderman O'Sullivan also expressed concern about the matter.

If we look at the relevant legislation we find that regulations have been promulgated under the Health Act to deal with this type of problem. Regulation 21, which was promulgated on 18 August 1977, states—

> "21. A Local Authority or person controlling any treatment plant or refuse tip to which industrial refuse is delivered shall—
>
> (i) make adequate provision for the safe and efficient disposal of all hazardous, putrescible, objectionable or liquescent industrial refuse delivered to such plant or refuse tip;"

Regulation 22 states—

> "(1) A person delivering any hazardous, putrescible, objectionable or liquescent industrial refuse to any treatment plant or refuse tip shall, when required by the Local Authority, give to such Local Authority or person in charge of such plant or refuse tip a notification of—
>
> (i) the identity and precise location of each premises from which the refuse has been collected;
>
> (ii) the type of refuse, as classified in Part III of these Regulations;
>
> (iii) the volume and mass of such refuse; and
>
> (iv) the name of the person conveying the refuse to that plant or refuse tip."

Mr Shaw: It can't be enforced.

Mr INNES: The regulations are there, and the obligation is on the local authority. It has the right to demand the origin of the load; otherwise it can refuse to accept it.

Mr Shaw: If a man makes a false statement, it is too late. He drops it in and he is gone.

Mr INNES: The honourable member is asserting that no controls are possible. That I refuse to believe. The right of entry alone is the greatest control we have. All we have to do is say, "You give me documented proof which, if I want to, I can check out; otherwise you will not enter." If the dump was dealing with the same person, and most of these journeys would be repetitive, occasional tests could be run and some checking done on the source of the material.

The other matter refers to an accompanying article in the "Telegraph" that has caused some disquiet. In Victoria it has been said that the amount of toxic liquid produced by paint manufacturers poses a far worse danger for Australia than uranium ever would. Some 3 000 million litres of liquid waste are stockpiled in Victoria alone, unable to be placed anywhere. It is suggested that some of that could be illegally brought to Queensland. A Queensland company, with a new type of technology called "flameless

incineration", is circulating fluoridised bed technology. It set up a pilot plant in this State with Government funds and was asked by Dulux paints in Victoria to do certain testing. It must be remembered that the pilot plant was set up at Cannon Hill for the disposal of meat wastes and associated matters. I am told that the results of that test were comparatively successful.

(Time expired.)

LEGISLATIVE CONTROL AND REGISTRATION OF TRAVEL AGENTS

Mr JONES (Cairns) (12.51 p.m.): Today I call for legislative control and registration of travel agents. Recently we have seen the spectacle in Cairns of the misappropriation of funds by persons carrying on business in a travel agency. The obvious methods are still being practised. The agency is operating as a unit run by individuals. It is not subject to company law. Their modus operandi is apparent, that is, they have prospective passengers pay in advance and, in an increasingly vicious circle, they are financing the ticketing of previous customers with day-by-day bookings. Due to the declining profitability of the company and the moneys being eroded by overhead expenses, the agency got to the stage where there was not sufficient cash to pay for the tickets of passengers before the travel dates arrived.

Finally, after complaints over several months, two people were brought before the courts. I understand that the Consumer Affairs Bureau was unable to act and that the Fraud Squad could not act. Perhaps the provisions of section 408 (c) of the Criminal Code, which relate to the misappropriation of funds, may have been applied. The only other alternative offered was for the aggrieved passengers, as complainants, to take civil action against the individual agents or their employees, as defendants.

The defaulters came before the Cairns Magistrates Court on Tuesday, 7 April, and were remanded until 21 August on a charge of dishonestly applying money to their own use. Mr Deputy Speaker, at this point I seek your direction as to whether I can name the individuals or the agency in the public interest and in an attempt to protect those legitimate and respectable travel agents who have been operating in Cairns over longer periods.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Miller): Order! As the honourable member has already informed the House that this matter is before the Magistrates Court I have to rule that it is sub judice.

Mr JONES: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker; I must bow to your ruling that I cannot mention the names of these people. This only goes to show that the complexity of the law compounds the felony and underwrites the need for legislative action.

Cairns residents have been "taken" for various amounts, ranging from hundreds of dollars to in excess of $6,000 in the case of one individual customer, and these are just examples. Travel agents hold a position of trust in the community and they should be accountable. Under existing law in Queensland they are not required to keep books of account, nor are they subject to auditing procedures or to keeping trust accounts. Just as a solicitor, a real estate agent and others are required to be vigilant in relation to the funds entrusted to them, so also is a travel agent required to give scrupulous attention to instructing intending travellers. He ought to be subject to the same provision relating to the safe custody of moneys entrusted to him and to the requirement in law to keep trust accounts.

In this House on 26 March 1981 I asked the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General a question in which I drew attention to these anomalies. In his reply he said that he needed advice and action from the industry in order to initiate legislation. I disagree with that. The risks inherent in this non-compulsory control, and the present haphazard approach to the travel industry, are high and will only encourage sharp practice in the industry and increase conversions of moneys received. The defalcation of entrusted funds, generally meticulously saved for holidays over a lifetime by people such as pensioners, will, if ignored, only encourage exploitation by the unscrupulous travel agent, who will take advantage of vulnerable groups such as migrants, the older travellers and over-enthusiastic young adventurers.

I call for legislative action in the developing tourist industry of Queensland that will bring about control of the activities of travel agents through the licensing of persons carrying on business as travel agents, the regulation of their operations and the creation of a travel agents' registration board and a travel agents' fidelity guarantee fund. In short, I seek a parallel in Queensland to the New South Wales Travel Agents Act 1973, as amended in 1978, to provide a detailed disciplinary framework to ensure proper conduct and the reimbursement to persons who may suffer pecuniary loss through a travel agent's theft or fraudulent appropriation of a client's hard-earned and well-saved funds lodged in good faith in payment for fares, services and/or other travel facilities.

Mr Davis: We have been promised registration since 1969.

Mr JONES: I would not doubt that. Certainly it is warranted in this industry, particularly with the rapid expansion of the tourist industry in North Queensland with the advent of direct international flights by Qantas.

I emphasise that injurious deception by unscrupulous travel agents ought to be remedied. I welcome initiatives to be taken

by the Attorney-General. I seek effective deterrents to eliminate unfair and deceptive trading behaviour that is presently being practised. There is a need for the establishment of administrative machinery to prevent fraudulent conversion of entrusted moneys, fraudulent omission to account for such moneys and fraudulent rendering of materially false accounts. Such legislation would have significant implications for aggrieved travellers. That the situation should be corrected is imperative. On behalf of aggrieved clients I seek redress. More often than not the disappointed traveller is in no position to follow the costly alternative of resorting to the civil courts.

There is a need to remove unreliable travel agents and to enact legislation designed to bring about efficient and reliable management of travel agencies. I believe that foremost should be an obligation to establish and maintain records and trust accounts and to adopt and adhere to proper accounting procedures. This House and this Government have a definite responsibility to introduce such legislation.

In Cairns, the Gold Coast and Victoria people have been ripped off by certain travel agents. In Cairns an agency is still operating while court action against it is pending. That action will not proceed until 21 August. However, that fact is not known by unsuspecting travellers who walk into that travel agency. That means that the principals and employees of that travel agency can continue to rip off their customers. After all, the people involved have three months to abscond. The danger is obvious to those in the know, but the unsuspecting, prospective traveller may fall into a trap. The deposit of moneys for fares, etc., can be a very perilous action. I am saddened that I cannot, because of the Standing Orders of this House, name that company and the people involved.

(Time expired.)

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Miller): Order! Under the provisions of the Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 10 March, the time allotted for Matters of Public Interest has now expired.

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

FREE HOSPITAL SYSTEM AND FUNDING OF HEALTH PROGRAMS

Hon. J. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah—Premier) (2.15 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That—

(1) This Parliament on behalf of the people of Queensland places on record its support for the Queensland free hospital system and resolves to support the preservation of the dual system of health care for Queensland residents commending the principle of tax deductibility for health insurance payments, for decreased health insurance premiums, State responsibility for health and hospital matters and equitable and adequate financial support for the State from the Commonwealth Government.

(2) This House does not accept the suggested base for financial arrangements for Queensland for its health and hospital programs and believes the suggested base discriminates against Queensland's people and therefore calls upon the Federal Government to remedy this position forthwith."

This morning I forwarded to the Prime Minister a few comments relative to this matter. I pointed out that the Queensland free hospital system had been in operation since 1946, that it was run very efficiently and was the pride of most Queenslanders, from one end of the State to the other. I suggested to the Prime Minister that he and his Government surely would not want to be the cause of changing the free hospital system in Queensland, and I pointed out that his proposals tended to indicate that he was quite prepared to see that happen.

I told him that the system works very well, and I also reminded him that there is no charge for services in Queensland hospitals other than for private and intermediate patients who choose to have this service and their own practitioners. Even so, the net cost of services in Queensland is less than that in any other State, including those States that still charge for quite a number of their services. I said to him—

"The best example I have for you is that the budgeted per capita payments to the States from the Commonwealth for 1980-81, which represent the Commonwealth's share of the 50/50 arrangements, were—

Queensland	$78.20
New South Wales	$91.74
Victoria	$78.38
South Australia	$92.46
Western Australia	$113.33
Tasmania	100.05
All Australian Average	$88.22"

I indicated to the Prime Minister that in order to achieve what he wanted to achieve he could well have dropped the Commonwealth's contribution to the States by the $273.7m that he sought to achieve—from $1,512.9m to $1,239.2m—by requiring each State to reduce its net per capita cost in 1981-82 to a level that could have been set at $20 per capita less than the 1980-81 all-Australian average. If he had done that, he would have achieved exactly what he sought to achieve.

I pointed out to the Prime Minister that the Queensland Government is facing a situation in which it has to fund the difference itself. I said that the issues are very serious indeed, not only from a State Budget point of view but also from the point of view of political acceptability. I asked that he

look again at the problem before the Health Ministers conference in Canberra on Friday, and particularly at the issues covered in the letter that I sent. If he could not allow the States complete freedom to adjust to the position, I asked him to apply an across-the-board reimbursement on a cost per capita basis for the Queensland hospital system as a special case. If he cannot do it on an overall basis, he should at least make up the average to Queensland as we have sought.

I concluded by saying—

> "No Government in Queensland, whatever its composition may be, could or would accept a proposal as inequitable as the one you have put before us. I cannot stress too strongly the necessity for the Commonwealth Government to face the facts now and to take steps without delay to redress the position."

That is the proposition that I put to the Prime Minister. I outlined that we could not accept the situation.

It is necessary that we as a Government take a stand on this issue and outline to the Prime Minister in no uncertain terms what we expect him to do. We expect him to be fair and just and we expect him not to treat us unfairly. We do not expect him to give us $3m less than the sum given to Western Australia, the population of which is only half that of Queensland. By and large, we have put a very convincing and fair case to the Prime Minister.

Mr Casey: You are not very convincing now.

Mr BJELKE-PETERSEN: The Leader of the Opposition, of course, would like me to condemn the Federal Government right across the board. Certain suggestions that we have made should be accepted and adopted by the Commonwealth Government.

At the Premiers' Conference in Canberra I indicated that we would invite our Federal members of Parliament and senators to meet Dr Edwards, some of our colleagues and me in my office next Monday morning at 9 o'clock. That meeting will be for the purpose of hearing the views expressed by our Federal members, to voice our opinions and to solicit their support on this very vital issue.

I commend the motion.

Hon. B. D. AUSTIN (Wavell—Minister for Health) (2.22 p.m.): I have much pleasure in seconding the Premier's motion. I am sure that all honourable members and the majority of the people of Queensland would support the philosophy espoused by it. The Queensland Government's philosophy has always been one of placing Queensland first, and I do not intend to relent in placing Queensland first.

One of the ironies of the recent events that led up to the Federal Government's decision was the statement made by the honourable Michael MacKellar in Federal Parliament. In his statement he put forward a very strong case for maintaining the existing system in Queensland. It was probably the strongest case that anyone could put in favour of it. However, it is ironical that, whilst he spoke of supporting the system, he also spoke about dismantling it.

I want to quote from his statement, as follows—

> "Despite the considerable success of these agreements in slowing down the rate of growth in hospital costs the Jamison inquiry was highly critical of them. The inquiry said that the agreements concentrated on reimbursement of expenditure. As a result little account was taken of the relative needs within and between States for hospital and health services, their distribution and their accountability. States with the most expensive and inefficient hospital systems at the commencement of the cost-sharing arrangements received proportionately more funds than States which had attempted to move with the times, to remove wasteful and inefficient services and facilities, and concentrate on services appropriate to the communities they serve.
>
> "As the (Jamison) commission stated:—
>
> > 'The cost sharing agreements have rewarded the expensive and punished the efficient and have perpetuated rather than solved some of the main problems in Australia's health system.' "

Those are strange comments indeed from a man who has acknowledged both in public and in private that Queensland has the most cost-efficient hospital system in Australia. From that statement one would imagine that the Honourable Michael MacKellar did not believe in the policy that he was then proposing.

If I might enlarge on the existing agreement—the Prime Minister said that the Commonwealth Government has reached agreement with all States of Australia over the present 50/50 cost-sharing agreement. That simply is not true; it is an untruth. The Queensland Government has been unable to reach agreement with the Federal Government in the 1979-80 year and in the 1980-81 year. In fact, we stand to lose of the order of $17m.

Some time ago the Federal Government made an arbitrary decision whereby it elected not to fund new or expanded services. I might say that that was a strange decision to make relative to a State like Queensland. All honourable members here today know that Queensland's population last year expanded by 2.01 per cent. That is a significant figure. It represents the highest growth rate of any State in Australia. The Federal Government should not be heard to say that it cannot afford to pay, or it should not pay, its share of the cost for expanded services in an expanding State.

To give honourable members an idea of what the State has to fund because of this policy, I point out that the Queensland Government funds fully the operation of the QEII Jubilee Hospital. I do not know if all honourable members are aware of that. It also funds additional beds at the Southport Hospital and it also funds the additional beds at the Redcliffe Hospital. The Federal Government has persistently and consistently refused to recognise that the needs exist in the community and it has not come to any agreement on the budget for the two years I have mentioned.

Queensland is an expanding State, and its mining and secondary industries particularly are expanding. Wherever the State is expanding, community facilities such as health, hospitals, schools and so on must be expanded.

I cannot comprehend the Federal Government's attitude in this matter. To make matters worse, this inefficiency and inequitable distribution of funds is without doubt perpetuated in the new scheme. The Commonwealth, in its new scheme, does not recognise efficiency or expansion in any way at all. In fact, it sets about to penalise the efficient States. That philosophy was criticised by Jamison, who said exactly that the States that had been efficient had been penalised. Nothing in this new scheme will help materially the States that have been efficient. This State will have to find funds of the order of $64.3m in the coming year to fund those services that the Federal Government will not fund. Western Australia has to find only $24m.

I will now read to honourable members a table which displays some interesting facts and figures. In 1978, payment to the States, in real terms, were of this order: New South Wales, $554.1m; Victoria $358.1m; Queensland $206.3m; Western Australia $170.9m; the Northern Territory $27.9m; South Australia $145.2m; and Tasmania $50.4m. After the new agreement comes into force, the States will be required to find the following amounts: New South Wales $78m; Victoria $61.2m; Queensland $64.3m; Western Australia $24m. I ask honourable members to note the West Australian amount. The Northern Territory has to find $5.4m; South Australia has to find $27.1m; and Tasmania $13m. I draw honourable members' attention to what happens in Western Australia, where gross payments at this stage are $170.9m, and it has to find only $24m.

It is interesting to note that one of the most inefficient States in Australia in hospital costing is Western Australia. I will quote figures later verifying that. As I said, the new scheme does not reward efficiency. If we look at the per capita payments made to the States for 1980-81, we see that Queensland received $78.20, New South Wales $91.74, Victoria $78.30, South Australia $92.46, Western Australia $113.33 (up it comes again), Tasmania $100.5, while the average for Australia was $88.22. Honourable members will note that Queensland receives well below the average per capita payment for hospital care in Australia. That is one of the significant features.

I shall now quote again from the Jamison report. I keep referring back to it because it features quite prominently in Senator Michael MacKellar's speech to Parliament. Jamison said—

> "One of the most telling facts that has emerged from this Inquiry is the variation between the States and within the borders of each State in the cost of providing a bed in a hospital, and in the use of these beds. If all States in Australia had achieved the same average bed-day costs as Queensland and the same average bed use as Victoria in 1978-79, then the spending by recognised public hospitals that year—which totalled $2664 million—would have been reduced by $964 million."

I am no economist, but I do not see how victimising Queensland and reducing its share of the health cost will reduce inefficiencies in other States or reduce the hospital-care costs throughout Australia.

Jamison also recommended—

> "The block grants to be on a population base (per capita) formula adjusted for each State and Territory for age/sex population and Aboriginals. Other factors could also be incorporated in the formula such as a hospital size index or a standard mortality ratio. But the Commission believes the formula should be simple and easy to understand and initially should not include these other factors."

The operating costs in Australia, per capita, are—

State	$
New South Wales	156.70
Victoria	134.76
Queensland	127.95
South Australia	166.11
Western Australia	189.00
Tasmania	165.92

It is quite clear from the information that I have made available to the Parliament today that the Commonwealth Government has completely and totally ignored any of the recommendations of the Jamison inquiry that would have benefited Queensland in any way at all. The Commonwealth Government has continued the iniquities in the existing system. I am not being party political in any way and I do not seek to be. That system was adopted by two Federal Governments of different political persuasions.

I hope that the members of this Parliament do not turn this debate into a State political issue, with one party fighting against the other. We need to make a combined effort. It would be very nice for me to see the Minister in Canberra tomorrow and have the total and unanimous support of this Parliament behind me. It would be

very significant. The Commonwealth Government has absolutely and totally reneged on the Jamison Commission of Inquiry. It has selected the recommendations that suit it and nobody else.

In the very short time to which each member is limited, I should like to address myself to other matters. The first is that the Queensland Government does not oppose, nor does it have any arguments with, the voluntary contribution and the tax deductability of health insurance payments. If that will encourage people to become members of private health funds, the Federal Government is to be commended on having taken that decision. While this Government has been in power, it has always encouraged the operation of the private hospital sector and the public hospital sector. The Government intends to continue with that system because it is the most efficient and effective manner in which the hospital system can operate in this State.

I have run out of time. I have a great deal of pleasure in supporting the motion before the House.

Mr CASEY (Mackay—Leader of the Opposition) (2.34 p.m.): Some of the comments of the Minister for Health absolutely amaze me. At the end he tried to indicate that we should not be playing politics today; that we should not be doing something other than what he or the Premier desires.

I remind the House that this issue did not arise today or yesterday. It arose as a result of information that was placed before the Federal Parliament. I remind the House that three or four weeks prior to that the Minister for Health, through his officers, was leaking information to the media all over Queensland trying to prepare the people for the possibility of a cut-back in finance for our free hospital system.

When this House assembled last Thursday morning I sought leave to move a motion of condemnation of the Liberal and National Parties in Canberra and the decision they had taken. That was right at the time when we became aware of that decision. But what happened? Every member of the National and Liberal Parties refused to grant me leave to move such a motion. Then in answer to questions on that day and even as late as this morning, whom did the Premier and the Deputy Premier endeavour to blame for this fiasco? They endeavoured to blame Gough Whitlam! Six years gone!

We have now had six years of Fraser federalism, and during that time surely the Premier and the Deputy Premier should have been able to correct the system if Labor had done something wrong. It has taken this National/Liberal Party Government six years to suddenly realise that what the Labor Party had been telling them about their Federal colleagues was true. It has taken them six days to wake up to the fact the free hospital system of Queensland is facing a financial crisis. The way they are moving at present I forecast that it will take only six months for the Liberal and National Parties in both Queensland and Australia to destroy our free hospital and health care system that has been so dutifully built up and developed over the years.

It is difficult to imagine a more cynical compromise than the motion moved here this afternoon. Suddenly, in May 1981, the Labor Opposition and the Liberal and National Party members of this House are asked to censure the extremes of Fraser federalism that was unconditionally accepted in its entirety by the Premier and Deputy Premier back in September 1975. The Premier and the Deputy Premier appeared on every public platform in this State in support of Fraser federalism, despite the warnings from the Labor Party about what would happen to Commonwealth-State financial arrangements.

We are being asked to absolve this guilty Premier, who took money from the coffers of this State to support Malcolm Fraser. He placed advertisements in newspapers throughout the length and breadth of the State advocating that the people of Queensland support Fraser federalism. The Premier and every person who stood behind him are guilty of having supported the man who has now brought down measures that will wreck the free hospital system in this State; yet the Premier has the temerity to move the motion that is now before us. Every member of the National and Liberal Parties who supported Fraser not only in 1975 but also in 1977 is guilty. The warning signs were ominous even in 1977 and they got worse in the Federal election campaign in August 1980, when it was obvious to any observer of Commonwealth-State financial arrangements what would happen if Fraser was returned. There are not two Liberal Parties and two National Parties. The members of the Liberal Party and the National Party in this State hold the same views as those held by their colleagues in Canberra. They are one and the same in the way they act, respond and try to deceive the public of Queensland and of Australia.

We are asked here to absolve this very guilty Premier, and all of the people who supported him, of the terrible economic pressures that have now been forced on Queensland because of their love of this perverse form of federalism not just on one occasion, not just on two occasions, but at three different Federal elections since 1975. Despite all the warnings and the many doubts of all the economic advisers of this and other State Governments of Australia, they pressed ahead, through their many statements and advertisements at misappropriated public expense, to promote the cause of Fraser federalism that they now attempt to disown. They seek to condemn Malcolm Fraser without condemning themselves. Like slippery snakes, they are trying to slide out from under.

Mr R. J. Gibbs: Like a North Queensland taipan.

Mr CASEY: Yes, like a North Queensland taipan—or the river rat that is so often depicted in Moir's cartoons in "The Courier-Mail". They are trying to slide out from under today. They want to condemn Malcolm Fraser, yet they do not want to accept the condemnation about themselves that they made every endeavour to support him in election campaigns on three occasions.

From his very first campaign between the curse of Kerr in November 1975 and the Federal election a month later, Malcolm Fraser was determined to dismantle Medibank and to embark on a course of economic measures that would dismantle the accepted system of Commonwealth-State financial relations that had been built up over so many years. The Premier of this State and all the members of the Liberal-National Parties were partners in that particular destruction. They were prepared then, as I am sure they are now, to let our free hospitals smother amid their hates and biases. The Minister for Health stated weeks ago that the free hospital system in Queensland was virtually doomed. He was ready and prepared to accept that because he knew what was going to happen under Fraser federalism. That realisation had only just come upon him.

The free health care and hospital system is part of Queensland's way of life. I am proud to say that it was founded by a Labor Government in this State almost 40 years ago. It was developed by Labor Governments, and it was protected and preserved by Labor Governments in the early 1950s when it was under threat from Malcolm Fraser's predecessor, the man who taught Malcolm Fraser, Sir Robert Menzies. He endeavoured to dismantle Queensland's free hospital system back in the 1950s, and he fell flat on his face because there was then a Labor Government in Queensland that was prepared to take the necessary measures to counter the proposal that he was putting forward.

Within a few months of his election in 1975, Prime Minister Fraser dishonoured his election promise by imposing changes on Medibank, which was previously free. There were no complaints then from the Premier, the Deputy Premier or any Government members about that development. The fact is that the crisis that now exists in Commonwealth-State funding arrangements has been brewing for years. Mr Fraser made no effort to hide the fact that there was going to be a show-down. He clearly indicated to the Premier and to the Deputy Premier at the Premiers Conference last year that they were being given only a 12-months' extension because he, Malcolm Fraser, needed a further 12-months' extension to get past the 1980 election. That was the only reason why that extension was granted to Queensland. The show-down has been coming for a number of years. In fact, it had been coming since 1975, when Malcolm Fraser made quite clear what he was going to do under Fraser federalism.

There are documents from Canberra and letters to the State Premiers and Treasurers that pre-empted this confrontation. The Labor Party, at both Federal and State levels, forecast the problems that would arise. Of course, in forecasting this we were subjected to scorn and ill-judged criticism from the Liberal and National Parties. Every word we have said over the last six years has proved to be correct, and that is admitted in the motion that has been moved by the Premier today. He has made the confession that after six years he now realises that Fraser is bad for Australia; that the Liberal and National Parties are bad for Australia and also for Queensland. This Friday, particularly in this city but generally throughout the length and breadth of Queensland, the Labor Party will take the fight to save our free hospital scheme out to the people, who both use and support it.

The Labor Party endorses the censure that has been expressed here today against Fraser federalism with its centralist evils, but we extend that censure to the Premier and Deputy Premier, who have supported and protected the Commonwealth Government in every corner of this State. Today the Premier is grandstanding in an attempt to fight against policies that only yesterday he applauded. The Premier scorned Opposition criticism of those policies. Already National Party Senator Collard has virtually said that he will not support the Premier. He is not prepared at this stage to go ahead with the measure proposed by the Queensland Liberal and National Parties.

Dr Edwards: That is not correct.

Mr CASEY: If that is not correct, I ask the Deputy Premier what he has done, as Leader of the parliamentary Liberal Party, to force Queensland Liberal Senators to oppose the Federal Government's policies.

I tell all honourable members in this House that every Queensland Labor Senator will oppose any step in the Federal Parliament that might bring about the downfall of Queensland's free hospital scheme. I say that proudly and unequivocally, on behalf of the Labor Party. Neither the Premier nor the Deputy Premier can make such a statement.

Dr Edwards: Wait and see.

Mr CASEY: The Deputy Premier must have changed his mind since this morning, because I asked him that very question and he was unable to answer it. All he did, as is usual, was revert to sarcasm and attempt to downgrade and denigrate people who bring forward issues of great import to the people of Queensland. Everything is catching up with the Deputy Premier, and he will see that if he watches the lobbying that goes on in his corridors.

I ask the Deputy Premier: Where do Liberal Senators stand? Where do Senators Bonner, MacGibbon and Martin, as well as all other Liberal senators, stand on this issue? Has the Deputy Premier implored them to vote against the new health funding arrangements in the Senate, which is where it will count? Have they really been implored to take a stand that can be interpreted as a rejection of Fraser federalism and its policies against Queensland? I will bet that the Deputy Premier has not done that. If the Deputy Premier is to speak in this debate, I ask him to tell the House what the Liberal senators will do. I guarantee that he cannot stand and do as I have done: tell the House exactly what the senators will do.

The Government has taken six years to wake up and six days before the penny started to drop. That is amazing! Now we see the Government slinking into this Chamber in an effort to quickly slip through a pious resolution to be sent to Canberra in an endeavour to pacify the voters of Queensland and to try to show them that this Government is endeavouring to do something about the position. I cannot imagine a more cynical attempt by the political gathering opposite, which has brought this Assembly together for its own convenience so that it can make accusations against those in Canberra. But the accusers will be the people of Queensland. This Government has betrayed the people of Queensland in the matter of free hospitals and now it is attempting to deceive them in this way.

The free hospital scheme in Queensland is a way of life, as is the free health program. Some sections of this motion refer to other measures now being taken by Mr Fraser, but he knows that on at least three occasions he received 100 per cent support from the Government parties for all of his Fraser federalism initiatives. As Malcolm Fraser goes in with his razor gang he is still receiving the 100 per cent support of the Government parties, particularly out on the polls where it matters most.

Medibank was his first target. Now it is the free hospital scheme. What will be next? Second income taxes, both State and Federal, were one of the ultimate aims and objectives of Fraser federalism in September 1975, and they remain so in May 1981.

Last week, the Fraser Government announced its razor gang cuts. They have imposed a charge of at least $70m upon Queenslanders for free hospitals. That money must come from somewhere else in the Budget. Whether it comes from additional fund-raising or from the amount provided for schools or some other part of the public works program, it must come out of the Budget. That is because of the Government's support of Fraser federalism.

What was the answer of the Deputy Premier and Treasurer (Dr Edwards) in the Parliament recently? He said publicly that he would ignore the Canberra decision. That was his first comment. Ignore a decision of a Government that he supports and that he helped to put into office in Canberra? Ignore a decision of that Government which means almost $1.5m a week to the taxpayers of Queensland? It was an idiotic statement made by the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. Yesterday, his sole complaint in this Chamber was not the loss to Queensland of its free health services but that the razor gang, no doubt followed by his own scissors squad, had not taken action earlier.

Dr Edwards: And I stand by it.

Mr CASEY: And that includes, of course, the cuts in relation to the health program.

That shows the type of people who sit on the Government benches. They are political parrots who simply repeat what they are told about the wonderful boom that is supposed to be taking place in Queensland and the marvellous future that the State has because of its mineral and energy resources. They say that, because of those advantages, Queensland is the envy of the world. In spite of that, Queensland is suffering the worst unemployment since the Second World War. More people are now out of work than ever before in that period. Inflation is at its worst, and Canberra refuses to compensate the State properly for it. Centrally charged taxes are at their highest, with less and less in return. Now we see the financial dehydration of our free hospital institutions.

All of these things are ocurring under Liberal/National Party Governments in Canberra and in Queensland; under Liberal and National Party policies, principles and priorities that have been established in Canberra and in Queensland. They are occurring under Liberal and National Party Fraser/Petersen/Edwards federalism in Canberra and Queensland.

Of course, the Premier tries to escape by moving this motion. He is the greatest escapist and excusist since Houdini. Perhaps the Treasurer may be slipping quietly past him now—"stumbling" might be a more appropriate way to describe it. Let him tell the House what alternatives he has to offer. Will the solution be second income taxes? Higher pay-roll taxes? The petrol tax that the honourable member for Roma, as Minister for Transport, was investigating before the last State election? In fact, he had it all set and ready to roll but was not game to bring it forward because it would have become a contentious issue. It was exposed by the Labor Party. Maybe the funds will come from Gold Lotto, about which he was silent before the November election, or from the two casinos.

Incidentally, I indicate to the Deputy Premier and Treasurer that I will send him a copy of the statement that he made to Mr Morley of "The Courier-Mail" in Mt Isa, in which he did call the Minister for Local Government and Main Roads irresponsible and referred distinctly to the fact that he was either dreaming or having a Gold Coast nightmare. He had not denied that

since November last year. However, suddenly, when confronted with his own words in Parliament today, he ducked out from under.

Honourable members are seeing a repetition of that conduct in the House. Government members are becoming turncoats. Members of the National/Liberal Government are the greatest turncoats ever seen in Queensland. The fact is that the Government is in a dilemma in regard to Fraser federalism. Having said that it loved it and lavished praise on it, that there was no alternative to it, it is now locked in with it. Let honourable members opposite squeal; let them yell. As I said, they are completely locked in with Fraser federalism, which is going to bring about the destruction of Queensland's free hospitals.

This cynical motion will not save the Queensland Government from that. Today it blames Fraser and Canberra for this federalism. I am positive that Queenslanders are not so shallow-thinking as not to be able to see through this treacherous camouflage that the Government is using today.

I want to test honourable members on this occasion; I want to find out how they really feel. Therefore, I move the following amendment—

"Add to the motion the following words—

'This House also finds that the Queensland Government stands condemned because of its complete and total support for Fraser federalism in 1975 and again in 1977 and 1980 and its failure to protect the interests of the people of Queensland in Commonwealth-State financial relations during this period.'"

I move that amendment because it states accurately what is happening. It reflects the motion that I tried to move in this Parliament six days ago. It has taken this Government six days to wake up to the facts. The amendment states truthfully what has been happening in Queensland and Australia over the past six years. The ordinary people of Queensland are being torn down into a state of economic depression by the policies of Fraser federalism, policies that are strongly supported by the Queensland Premier and Treasurer and also by every member of the Liberal and National Parties in this House, not on one, not on two but on three separate occasions. Let us see how they feel today on this issue.

Mr UNDERWOOD (Ipswich West) (2.57 p.m.): I have much pleasure in seconding the amendment. This afternoon we are witnessing a disgraceful and damning eleventh-hour bid by this National-Liberal Government—a Government of waste and a Government of misplaced priorities—to salvage some semblance of credibility in the eyes of the Queensland electorate.

To protect itself, the Government has called for an absence of politics from this debate. In view of that, let me state who introduced politics into this issue over the past few days.

A week ago, the Opposition sought to introduce a similar type of debate into the House and it was rejected by the Government. Why? Because of politics. During this debate we have seen an easing up on the Federal Government. Nowhere is there the fire and brimstone that one would expect from a Bjelke-Petersen Government. Why? Because of politics. The Queensland Government has sought to blame the previous Federal Labor Government. Why? Because of politics. So politics are part and parcel of this whole issue now.

The people of Queensland are beginning to see this National-Liberal Queensland Government for what it really is. It is philosophically and politically in total agreement with the callous, inhumane and cynical Liberal-National Country Party Australian Government. By its own admission in this House and in other places, this Queensland Government has been shown to be in agreement with Fraser's federalism policy, a policy that spells disaster for Queensland's public health-care system. That system needs boosting rather than slashing. The Queensland Government is now reaping the destruction the seeds of which it has sown in the past.

At election after election, in 1975, 1977 and 1980, it recommended to the people of Queensland that they support the lies and practices of the Federal Government. I remind the House of the statement made by the Liberal Leader in his 1975 policy speech. He said—

"We will maintain Medibank and ensure that the standard of health services in this country does not decline."

Today we have a motion moved by the Queensland Government in an attempt to save Queensland's health-care system. And what a pathetic little effort it is! What a two-bob-each-way effort it is! Where is the fight, where is the fire we saw during the Medibank debate? Not here—certainly not here.

A close study of the motion will show that the Government wants the best of both worlds. It is not prepared to come out and back Fraser 100 per cent, nor is it prepared to come out and condemn him 100 per cent. In part, the motion reads, ". . . commending the principle of tax deductibility for health insurance payments. . . .". If we maintain our free hospital system, as the Government has for the past few months been telling us we will do, the people of Queensland will not need health insurance. If we are forced to destroy our free hospital system, the Opposition will most certainly support the principle of tax deductibility of health insurance payments. That is the only way for the people of Queensland to get some sort of justice in the health area to ensure that they can afford health insurance cover for themselves and their

families. The motion refers to supporting the concept of decreased health insurance premiums. Nothing could be further from the truth.

It is complete deception on behalf of the mover, the seconder and the Government to try to portray to the people of Queensland that health insurance premiums will drop. I predict that in 12 months' time health insurance premiums will increase by up to 100 per cent. I will examine the record. On the introduction of Medibank 1, a person on an average weekly income, with a family, who was seeking full health care for his family, paid about 1.2 per cent of his average weekly earnings. The figure has now increased some five-fold. I suggest that it will increase much more than that.

Under voluntary health insurance programs there is one big problem that Governments have failed to come to grips with, and that is the integral component of ensuring control over medical and hospital fees. Nowhere in the statements by Senator MacKellar, the Prime Minister, the Federal Treasurer or those of this Government is there to be found anywhere provision for control over hospital and medical fees. I can only say to the people of Queensland, "Don't be misled by this deceit."

In proceeding further, the motion commends State responsibility for health and hospital matters. What an ambiguous statement! Are we really supporting the complete handing over to the States by the Fraser Government of the total health care system? That step would be very retrograde and damaging to every State and on the national level. Are we supporting the previous system whereby the States were responsible for administration and the Commonwealth was responsible for funding, for some administration and for offering guide-lines to maintain a national health policy? I should like to hear what Government speakers have to say about that. Let them not indulge in deceit, misrepresentation and double-takes. Let them give us the honest facts about what the motion is all about.

The main impact on most Queenslanders under this system is that they will be obliged to take out health insurance to avoid the risk of crippling medical and hospital bills. I do not believe the recent statements by the Premier and other Ministers that Queensland can afford to keep its free hospital system at the present level. Only as late as yesterday the Treasurer refused to answer a question. He dodged the issue when I asked him how and where he would find the funds to fill the $70m deficiency he told us about.

Dr Edwards: That is not right.

Mr UNDERWOOD: Where will the Treasurer find it?

Dr Edwards: Wait and see.

Mr UNDERWOOD: We have been waiting too long to see. The Treasurer cannot come up with the goods because a slash was predicted in the initial announcement, and a slash was made at the Premiers conference. An announcement has still to be made by the Committee of Relativities in the Commonwealth Grants Commission. That may not be known until 30 June this year, or even as late as next financial year.

Dr Edwards: That has nothing to do with the total funding.

Mr UNDERWOOD: It has a lot to do with Queensland's total finances.

Dr Edwards: It has not; it is to do with relativities.

Mr UNDERWOOD: Exactly—it is concerned with relativities. Queensland's ability to raise its own funds from coal and other mineral exports, etc., will be looked at particularly. It will look at Queensland and say, "You are doing very nicely out of them, so we will take that amount from your other funding." So Queensland will be short again. I thought that that was what some of the fights earlier this year between this Government and the Federal Government were all about.

Let us have the truth about what will really happen. I suggest that this Government will desperately try to maintain a semblance of a free hospital system so that it can, at the next election, say that it did maintain the free hospital system. It will do that by cutting even further the services, staffing, etc., in our hospitals. At this point of time we desperately need increased services and staff in our free hospital system.

The motion will achieve nothing. It will give a nice little pat on the hand to the Government's colleagues in Canberra. Let us have some fire and brimstone from Government speakers. Let them viciously attack their National and Liberal colleagues in Canberra, just as they viciously attacked the Whitlam Government over the introduction of the Medibank scheme.

There are already excessive waiting periods for public patients needing non-urgent surgery. Some are waiting eight months. Sometimes, because of bungling and understaffing in hospitals, they have to face up to another lengthy delay. Sometimes this is because of a failure in clerical methods. The out-patients section and the casualty ward have long queues of people waiting for treatment.

This scheme applies a quasi means test. Only those people who cannot afford to go somewhere else and who have time on their hands will be given treatment. An example of inefficiency is the hardship being suffered by maternity out-patients. These pregnant women wait hour after hour for their regular check-ups. That is a very callous approach. Recently we have witnessed the sad and tragic events at Southport and Ipswich. People have died there because of lack of hospital resources.

The motion will do nothing for the hospitals of Queensland. It is put up by the Government to allow it to opt out. The Government will reduce the already low staff numbers and will reduce services. It is trumpeted by every Government member that Queensland has the most efficient hospital system in Australia. That is because it has the lowest staff numbers.

At the other end of the scale we are told that Western Australia, which has the highest cost, is the most inefficient. But it has the highest staff numbers and the highest staff/patient ratio. Members can draw their own conclusions. There are significant differences between Queensland's staff/patient ratio and those in other States. This is the main reason for the relatively low cost in the Queensland hospital system. Another is the lack of services.

The Government, through its very tight grip on the health-care system, will stop hospitals purchasing expensive equipment and will make them use their present equipment to the fullest extent. Technology in hospitals is very expensive. The Government will be looking to the patients and the ambulancemen to travel vast distances so that the patients can undergo tests, instead of providing more machines throughout the State for the convenience of the people.

There will be less duplication of services, so there will be more instances of ambulancemen and people traipsing between the major places where specialist care is available and the outlying centres. There will be increased delays in receiving treatment. In some cases country hospitals will be forced to close because of the close proximity of other hospitals and because they do not have the financial support of the Government. Teaching hospitals will be downgraded. As honourable members would know, teaching hospitals are more expensive to run than other hospitals. Pressure will be brought to bear on us to downgrade our teaching hospitals. This will mean the centralisation of training facilities for doctors and force country people to train in Brisbane. These are all retrograde steps, but I suggest that the State Government will be forced to implement them if the Federal Government continues in its attempts to destroy our free hospital system, although it would attempt to present what followed as the same thing.

I now turn to the health insurance area. Prior to Medibank I, we had what were basically State-operated health insurance programs, and we seem to be reverting to that system. I would have thought that every member of Parliament would have been sensible enough to see that the current system would not work. The Nimmo report was scathing in its comments on the system and showed that State-operated health insurance schemes were grossly inefficient, overpriced and did not give the coverage they purported to give. Such companies provided a maximum of 70 per cent coverage, despite the multiplicity of tables offered. Under the proposed scheme the maximum coverage will be only 85 per cent, so people will be forced to pay a minimum of 15 per cent of doctors' fees, or at least that is what we have been told to date by the Press.

Because every company will want to be in on the act, the pools will be very small, just as occurred prior to Medibank. Because of the size of the pools, health insurance companies will crash, as we have seen in the past. I might add that ordinary insurance companies did the same. Because of our small population, if we are to run a successful health insurance program we need a nationally based pool in which all people are incorporated. At the moment even ordinary insurance companies are offering low-cost insurance to low-risk people such as young males and couples who do not intend to have children. These people would immediately be eliminated from any new pool set up under a State-based health insurance scheme. That would have the immediate effect of increasing health insurance premiums for people in the higher tables offered by such a scheme. There would be a heavy weighting of high-risk people such as the chronically ill and the aged who would be forced to join a scheme, thus creating the same problems as occurred in the past. This was pointed out in the Nimmo report.

The Government's assertion that there will be cheaper health insurance premiums is absolute rot. Either it is a deception or Government members are incompetent and do not know exactly what will happen. We must add to that the fact that there is no real control over doctors' fees. In the past we found that increases in doctors' fees were the major factor in premium increases under voluntary health insurance schemes.

Dr Edwards: That's not true.

Mr UNDERWOOD: The studies show it. The Deputy Premier should look at some of them. Doctors have already applied for another fee increase. They work on the premise that because their patients are covered by health insurance they will not be hurt financially by any fee increase. Just like Pontius Pilate, they are washing their hands of any responsibility to their patients, saying, "They are covered by health insurance."

Have members ever noticed that when they enter a surgery the first question the girl at the counter asks is, "Are you covered by health insurance?" It has been brought to my attention that around this fair city of Brisbane, and I imagine this occurs all over Queensland, these days either that or this even more direct question is asked: "Do you have in your pocket the $10 or $9.50 the doctor is charging to pay for it now, sir?" If the prospective patient says, "No, I do not have it with me at the moment. I have to go shopping and I need the money for that", he is told,

"I am sorry. The doctor is busy", or, "The doctor is out playing golf", or, "The doctor is out flying his plane." Those who are seeking medical assistance from people who have taken the hippocratic oath are really being asked, "How much money have you got?" Under the free hospital system in Queensland, no matter who the person is or from what walk of life he comes, the first question he is asked is, "What is wrong with you?" Of course, that practice being adopted by medical practitioners is contrary to the hippocratic oath.

I move on to deal with a comment made by the Deputy Premier and Treasurer about a State health tax. I make it quite clear to this House and to the people of Queensland that a Labor Government would not countenance a State health tax. It is quite clear that this wealthy State of ours is able to afford to care for the most important asset of its citizens, which is their health. Queenslanders are providing the Federal Government with about $600m under the oil parity pricing scheme, but the Federal Government has played this dirty, nasty trick where, on the one hand, it has made out that it is giving the people a tax reduction and, on the other hand, it has made people pay a health tax in the form of health insurance. Today we find that the Prime Minister vehemently denies that he ever offered tax reductions. In fact, all we have had lumped on us is another tax in the form of health insurance.

We are told ad nauseam that we are a wealthy State. Of course, we should be looking at our great mineral and coal deposits in this State. The Labor Party believes that we should be properly managing our steaming-coal assets instead of giving them away for virtually nothing. If these steaming-coal assets were properly managed, we would be able to pay not only for our health system but also for our education system. We would be able to provide welfare services for those people who are in trouble because of the very nature of the society in which we live. We could also direct the proceeds from Gold Lotto, which is being introduced, to health care in this State.

Mr Lane: You do not want any more from the Federal people? You are happy with what has been given?

Mr UNDERWOOD: If the Minister had been here for the whole debate he would have heard what has been said. He would have heard us say that we are in favour of national funding for hospitals, because we believe in such a system.

During the last three election campaigns the members of the Liberal and National Parties have been telling us how great Fraser federalism is. Now we are finding out what it is all about. Now that this Government is looking straight down the barrel of federalism, it is in the process of softening up the people of Queensland before it introduces some other form of taxation; so I ask the Minister not to come in here late in the debate and try to put words into my mouth.

Mr Lane: The people of Queensland want to know whether you want any more money from the tax-sharing pool for our hospital system.

Mr UNDERWOOD: Yes, of course we do.

Mr Lane: Spell it out.

Mr UNDERWOOD: Yes!

Mr Lane: Trying to get a straight answer from you is like trying to get water from a dry well.

Mr UNDERWOOD: If the Minister cleaned the wax out of his ears, he would hear what was being said.

I wish to refer to the means test, which is supposed to be the saving grace for the poor and underprivileged people of Queensland. I state that a means test will not work because, by its very nature, it needs to be very particularly categorised and, because of the nature of the categories, some people may qualify on their income level but, through some other quirk in the categories, will not receive anything. Some of those who do qualify are like us—they have their pride and will not use the system. Studies done here and in other places where programs based on a means test have been put into operation have revealed that something like 40 per cent of eligible people do not take advantage of the service rendered. This very large number of people in Queensland will be put in the poor-house and will have to go without life's vital necessity of a proper health care system.

Dr Edwards: Mr Davis had better be the health care spokesman.

Mr UNDERWOOD: The Treasurer has displayed his complete lack of knowledge of the issue. Perhaps he spends too much time these days looking after his own back and trying to protect his position as leader. If he made some sensible statements, I might be able to take them on.

Dr Edwards: You are a lightweight.

Mr UNDERWOOD: I am not as light as the Deputy Premier. The results of the last election show that the Liberal Party lost seats; the Labor Party did not.

The means test, as portrayed to us, is a complete "take" and an absolute "have". The people who most need assistance will not be able to get it and will be forced out by the very nature of the system. They have their pride and they should be applauded for that. Every Australian is entitled to full and proper medical care under an equitable and comprehensive system.

I have been able to cover most of the points that I wished to raise. This is a very important issue and I point out once

again that in recent times this Government has put on a disgraceful display. It has been more interested in protecting its own hide and that of its colleagues in Canberra than going all out, manning every barricade and firing every gun in an effort to protect the health care system of the Queensland people. That system is unique and has been lauded in many places. The Government should be calling for extra funds to boost the system as it now stands. It certainly needs boosting.

I accuse not only the Government in this matter but also the media barons who have supported the push by the Federal Government to unload the cost of health care onto the individual. I particularly refer to a front-page story of the "Telegraph" of 29 April which I quoted in this House last night. The headlines read: "Health rebate ahead", and the article went on to glorify the very thing that this House is now moving to condemn. That is the sort of propaganda—or lack of understanding, if it is not propaganda—that is expounded by the controllers of the media in this State. They are the opinion-makers of this State and they feed the people of Queensland incorrect information.

Only now are the media barons beginning to tell the people the real story. I believe that they should be really getting stuck into it and trying to undo the harm that they have done. They have a responsibility, as the opinion-makers of this State, to set about correcting their wrongs of the past. That, not a responsibility to their shareholders, is the first responsibility of the media in this case. I believe they were looking for a headline and seeking to protect their philosophy on this issue, that is, their support for private health insurance.

I am not afraid, as some other people are, to point out to the newspaper proprietors where they are lacking in their responsibilities, and I hope that they will take on board the comments that I have made in the spirit in which I made them. I made them in good faith and very earnestly, having in mind the welfare of the people of Queensland.

I think I have covered fairly well the points raised in the motion moved by the Premier and pointed out the deception and hollowness of parts of it and the gobblegook in other parts. It is a half-hearted, two-bob each-way, contradictory motion. The Government wants to have Fraser federalism and National-Liberal federalism and, at the same time, incorporate Labor's socialistic free hospital system. It cannot have both systems. It must make up its mind.

Hon. L. R. EDWARDS (Ipswich—Deputy Premier and Treasurer) (3.26 p.m.): I have listened with great interest to the statements by the Leader of the Opposition and the Opposition spokesman on health matters. I have also listened to the amendment moved to the motion put forward by the Government. In moving that amendment, the Opposition has added to the Government's motion and indicated its complete support for it. In fact, it has supported the Government's motion word for word, and I place on record for the people of Queensland that the Government now has the support of the Labor Party——

Mr UNDERWOOD: I rise to a point of order. I pointed out quite clearly to the House the Opposition's disagreement, particularly with the aspect of decreased health insurance.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no valid point of order.

Mr UNDERWOOD: The Deputy Premier is misleading the House. I ask him to withdraw his remarks.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I cannot accept the honourable member's point of order.

Dr EDWARDS: I want to say that I appreciate the Opposition's support of the motion, and that will be recorded in the annals of this Parliament. The Opposition has not been prepared to change the motion in any way. In a cynical political move, it has added to the motion, and I place on record its support of the Government's position.

There are one or two other matters of importance. First, in this motion the Government is not entering into a debate on Fraser federalism or the policies of the Federal Government. The Labor Party, because of its ineptness, has endeavoured to turn the debate into a debate on the Fraser Government. The National-Liberal Government is interested in people, not in the political fight that is going on.

Mr UNDERWOOD: I rise to a point of order. The Deputy Premier is misleading the House. He said that we are not debating Fraser federalism. If honourable members read the second paragraph of the motion, they will see clearly that we are debating Fraser federalism and the financial arrangements of the Federal Government.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! It is a point of order of minimal consequence, and I ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer to continue his speech.

Dr EDWARDS: The House is debating whether there should be a continuation of the free hospital scheme in this State and the support of the Queensland Government and the people of this State for such a scheme. Members are not debating the question of distribution of tax revenue to the State; they are debating the continuation of the free hospital scheme in Queensland. The Government has asked honourable members for their support of that scheme. Indeed, the Labor Party, by its actions, has indicated its support for the motion. Of course, if the Opposition votes in any other way, it will indicate that it has double standards.

As has been said by the Minister for Health and other honourable members who have taken part in the debate, members of the Opposition are completely hypocritical in their attitude. Both Mr Wran and Mr Lowe have placed on record that, if possible, from 1 July they will be initiating a means test and a charge for public hospitals in New South Wales and Tasmania. They are not being critical of the general policy. They are introducing that scheme because it is Labor Party policy in those States, and both the Leader of the Opposition and the honourable member for Ipswich West know that full well. I place on record that if a Labor Government were in office in Queensland, such a health tax would be introduced here.

In the first few years of the operation of the so-called free hospital scheme, the Labor Government imposed a means test. Therefore, the statements made today by honourable members opposite are completely inaccurate. In some of the statements made by the Leader of the Opposition, he has made it clear that he supports the dismantling of Medibank. The criticism that the Government offers of the Federal Government is that it should have dismantled Medibank in 1975. It should have made then the decisions that are being made to-day. If it had made those decisions, certainly it would not have had the large debt that it incurred because of the massive cost of the Medibank program.

The statements made by the member for Ipswich West are a distortion of the facts. He referred to hospital fees. He should know that they are controlled by the Governments of the day and by legislation. They cannot be altered without the authority of the State and Federal Governments. For him to say that private hospitals can lift their fees as they wish indicates his gross lack of knowledge.

The Queensland Government will not allow the free hospital scheme to be altered in any way. We have placed its views in relation to that on record. Today this Parliament will determine the measure of support for our stand. We will not allow a downgrading of the system; we will not be closing country hospitals, as the member for Ipswich West has suggested; we will not be downgrading services; but we will continue to provide funds.

What we are asking the Labor Party to do today is support the Government's motion that the base of the funds made available to this State for the conduct of our hospital system be increased. That is what we are asking the Labor Party to support. The Labor Party, by its ineptitude and inactivity, has shown that it does not even understand the system, and, furthermore, is not prepared to stand up and be counted on this issue.

On a per capita basis, Queensland is being discriminated against. We will not stand idly by and let that happen. On a cost basis, we are being discriminated against. We will not stand idly by and let that happen. Opposition speakers, and indeed the whole Labor Party in general, are being hypocritical on this issue and are totally distorting the facts.

The Government has placed on record time and time again its determination to continue the health scheme as it is at present. It will not be altered. The people of Queensland know that this Government has conducted the State's health scheme for twice as long as the Labor Party conducted it during its term of office from 1946 to 1957. For most of that period the Labor Party imposed a means test for entry into public hospitals.

The Premier's motion is indeed a very correct one for the Government to move, and it is correct for the Government to expect the support of every member of this Parliament for that motion. Any member who votes against it is clearly declaring himself to be against the Queensland free hospital system. Members who support it identify themselves with the Government's policy of continuing to implement our health program. The Government rejects the amendment, but at the same time it appreciates the support that the Labor Party is hinting it gives to the motion by moving an amendment to it.

Mr D'ARCY (Woodridge) (3.33 p.m.): Queenslanders must be shocked by the political stunting of this Government on what is probably one of the most important issues to come before this Parliament in a long time. I am shocked by the way in which the Premier moved the motion. He merely spoke for a few minutes, showed no interest whatever in the debate, and left the House. The Minister for Health told us something that we already knew. The Deputy Premier and Treasurer, who was formerly Minister for Health, spoke for only a few moments. In fact, the Government has shown very little interest in the debate.

Mr AUSTIN: I rise to a point of order. Co-operation was sought to limit speakers to 10 minutes. The Opposition has deliberately not sought to co-operate even on that matter. The comments of the honourable member for Woodridge are totally untrue.

Mr UNDERWOOD: I rise to a point of order. I was not aware of any such arrangement. Initially I thought that members were to be limited to 10 minutes, but when I asked a question concerning such an arrangement I was told that it was off. That was my understanding before the debate started.

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

Mr D'ARCY: I totally reject the point of order taken by the Minister for Health. Neither my leader nor I had been approached. Our executive was not approached by the Government about the

procedure to be followed in this debate. The executive of the Labor Party Caucus was not approached. We knew nothing about the debate until we overheard it from one of the Government Whips. That is the only way we knew it was on. Our leader was on his way to catch the 1.30 p.m. plane to Mackay.

Mrs Kyburz: What?

Mr D'ARCY: We were not told. We were not notified officially that the House would be sitting after lunch.

Mr WHARTON: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member was advised through Mr Warburton.

Mr CASEY: I rise to a point of order. The only advice that Mr Warburton was given by the Leader of the House was that Parliament would be sitting after lunch. No information whatsoever was transmitted to Mr Warburton about the Government's intentions. No information was transmitted to any Opposition member officially of the Government's intention this afternoon. Once again the Minister for Health and all Government members are trying to mislead the House deliberately.

Mr MOORE: I rise to a point of order to clarify the matter. On the allegation that no information was given to the Opposition, I, as Government Deputy Whip, tried to seek out the Opposition Whip. I could not find him so I gave the information to Mr Yewdale and to the Leader of the Opposition, in another place, and to several other members. Deny that!

Mr CASEY: I rise to a point of order. I do deny it. I have not seen the Government Deputy Whip other than when he suddenly stood up in the House now. He has not even been here during the debate.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I think we should dispense with these useless points of order. I call on the honourable member for Woodridge to continue his speech.

Mr D'ARCY: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I had discussions with my leader when he arrived back here. It is a fact that the Government did not make any deals with members on this side of the House. The Government has something to be ashamed of. It should be ashamed not only of the way it has conducted this debate but also of the whole health issue!

I was shocked to read today's paper in which this appeared—

> " 'Soft line by Premiers' costs $12m
>
> "The Queensland Government has missed out on an extra $12 million disbursement because state premiers did not argue hard enough with the Federal Government on Monday."

That was written by Max Hawkins in Canberra. The article continued—

> "Senior government sources today said the Primer Minister, Mr Fraser, and Treasurer, Mr Howard, had been authorised by the Treasury to offer states an extra $68.5 million if presented with strong cases by the premiers.
>
> "This news is certain to provoke furious responses from the premiers, including Mr Bjelke-Petersen.
>
> "In Queensland's case the extra allocation would have amounted to close to $12 million, on top of the $1196 million granted from income tax revenue."

Critics of the Premier included Senator Maunsell and Liberal Federal member John Hodges. At the present moment it is hard to believe that the people in Canberra and Brisbane are members of the same party. We are made to wonder what is going on.

The Government made a fool of itself in bringing this debate on this afternoon. Despite what Dr Edwards had to say—and he has scuttled out of the House—another article is headed—

> "NP man hits Queensland Hospitals".

The article continues—

> "Queensland had the worst hospitals in Australia because of the free hospital system, a Queensland National Party Senator said today."

Senator Collard said—

> "People in the know that I have spoken to say that it is pretty well known that Queensland has the worst hospital system in Australia.
>
> "The free hospital system has meant overcrowding and poor services."

Our Health Minister said today that we had the best hospitals in Australia. I wonder who is telling lies. The Health Minister said that Senator Collard was probably looking for reasons not to support Queensland in the Senate. Yesterday, the Premier said that he was calling Queensland senators and MHRs together, but Senator Collard said that he had received no invitation. I wonder what is going on in the National Party in Queensland.

Mrs Kyburz: Who is he?

Mr D'ARCY: Senator Collard is a National Party Senator from Queensland. No-one has heard of him! Senator Bonner said that he would adopt a similar attitude. He said that he would first negotiate in the party room with Ministers. There is no chance of the senators getting together.

The problem confronting Queensland's free hospital system has always faced Queensland under this Government. The Minister virtually knew that he lied in the Parliament to-day by saying what he did.

Mr AUSTIN: I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks offensive and untrue. I have never lied in this Parliament. I ask the honourable member to withdraw them.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member for Woodridge to withdraw his comments.

Mr D'ARCY: I withdraw, Mr Speaker, and I will go on to prove that the Minister either does not know what he is talking about or that he has not been in that portfolio long enough to understand Queensland's free hospital system.

Mr Lane: Are you in favour of it or against it? That is all you need to say.

Mr D'ARCY: I know what the honourable member would like me to say.

The Minister does not understand the difference between cost efficiency and lowest costs. We have the lowest costs, and that is what he is arguing today. He said that our hospitals cost less, per capita, than any other hospitals in Australia. Of course they do. That is why the Government is in this muddle.

Where is Dr Edwards, who signed the Medibank agreement? The Premier said that he should not have signed it. The agreement was signed so that the Government could perpetuate what it is talking about today. Government members say that we get less than Western Australia. They know why. It is because Dr Edwards put his name to the agreement. He signed it. He signed it to get a quick quid.

Dr EDWARDS: I rise to a point of order. I did not sign the agreement. The agreement was signed by the Prime Minister of the day, Mr Whitlam, and the Premier of the day, Mr Bjelke-Petersen.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member to accept the Treasurer's denial.

Mr D'ARCY: I accept it. He certainly accepted the recommendation so as to perpetuate what he is saying today that we should not accept.

About eight years ago the Labor Party was complaining. We pointed out that, if Queensland did not accept an additional amount of money for its hospital system on a per capita basis, we would get a raw deal; in other words, we would perpetuate the poor services in this State. I return to what is occurring in Queensland, that is, cost efficiency against lowest cost. That is where the Minister is confused and does not understand.

Mr AUSTIN: I rise to a point of order. I am not confused at all. The honourable member is confused. What he says is untrue and I ask that he withdraw it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The statement made by the honourable member is claimed by the Minister to be untrue. I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr D'ARCY: Oh, Mr Speaker, if it is offensive to him I will withdraw it but——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have made a recommendation to the honourable member. Either he accepts it or he does not. It is his choice.

Mr D'ARCY: I will accept anything the Minister says. Obviously I have to, under your ruling, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is reflecting on the Chair. He had better say what he wants to say very quickly. He will proceed with his speech.

Mr D'ARCY: The fact is that in Queensland we have the lowest nurse/patient ratio in Australia. We spend less on our services. This so-called cost efficiency means fewer services.

Mr Moore: It doesn't.

Mr D'ARCY: Of course it does.

We give fewer services to the public. The honourable member should visit a hospital in another State and find out what is going on.

We do not have the services available in some of our hospitals. Certainly we have some great, efficient central services—and nobody denies that—and our staff do a tremendous job, but they labour under this Government. They labour under the inefficiencies and the extravagances of the Government. The inability of the Government to do reasonable deals with Canberra has cost our health programs a great deal. What is worse is that the Minister read figures from the other States and said that we get the lowest amount of money. Then he cried in his milk.

The point is that the Government has perpetuated and compounded the problem. The problem has got worse and worse since Dr Edwards became the Minister, even if he did not put his name to the agreement. We should have been arguing for more but today, as a political stunt, the Government says it will now do something about it. It will cry to the people of Queensland and to the people of Australia. The Government has been sitting there and copping it for the past six years. It makes me sick to witness the political stunting that has gone on today, particularly when the Premier could have done a better deal in Canberra. According to his own people, he will not be supported by them.

The Premier has not only put up with Fraser federalism: he has advocated it. It cannot be denied that the Minister for Health and the rest of the Government have

supported most of these cost-cutting programs. One wonders how this "medimuddle"—and that is what we should be debating today—has actually occurred. It worries the Opposition that, because things have been so bad under the Liberal and National Parties both here and in Canberra, we could not believe them. We have had nothing but broken promises. The Government is full of absolute rottenness——

Mr Hinze interjected.

Mr D'ARCY: The people of Queensland are sick of broken promises. If the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police told us to go out in the rain, we would have to go out and check if it was raining.

The hospital system is an absolute disgrace. Let us look at this "medimuddle" Mr Fraser has created. This is the fifth set of changes the national health scheme has undergone. The latest change has removed the last vestiges of the wonderful Medibank system introduced by a Labor Government. But the last vestige of Mr Fraser's "medimuddle" is still alive and well.

It must be remembered that, when Fraser first set out to do something about the Medibank system, he introduced a couple of changes that could have been regarded as reasonably cost efficient; but in the 1978 Budget the Government reversed its policy. It abolished the Medibank levy and introduced a medical benefit of 40 per cent of the scheduled fee, which meant a maximum benefit to contributors of $20. This actually lightened the burden on the individual at considerable cost to the Federal Budget. It makes one wonder where the Government got its economies from. However, when one looks at the amounts foisted on the Premiers this time it makes one wonder even more about the so-called economies. Then in the mini-Budget of May 1979 the Government reverted to its original policy decision and changed the medical benefit to the amount by which the scheduled fee on any one item exceeded $20. This saved $210m a year.

One would expect from all the talk in Canberra about the "user pays" principle and from the reduction in the Commonwealth contribution to hospital costs that the effects of the latest changes would be to continue the revision of the Government's policy of pushing health costs out of the Federal Budget and on to the individual. Not so. It appears, as I see it, that the net effect of the changes will be to increase the drain on the Federal Budget. The Government has saved $250m under the new hospital funding arrangements and a further $35m from other measures; but its decision to increase private hospital subsidies and to take over the nursing home benefits will cost $140m. Mr Fraser and Mr Howard amaze me. But here is the killer: The Government's decision to make health insurance contributions tax deductible will, according to economic experts, cost about $600m. One wonders where Australia will find that amount of money.

The Government has effectively abolished the free hospital care system in most States. The Minister for Health earlier denied that he had said anything of the sort, but the other day he said that the Federal Government had brutally and deliberately set about wrecking Queensland's free hospital system.

Mr Austin: I meant every word I said.

Mr D'ARCY: That is what the Minister said here today; but, when we consider what is actually occurring, the effective abolition of free hospital care can be seen as a step towards "user pays". Making insurance contributions tax deductible is not following the principle of "user pays". It increases the health fund pay-out on a doctor's bill from 75 to 85 per cent. It appears that the doctors will be the only ones who will benefit under this system. Nor is the Government increasing the private hospital subsidy. In any case, that has nothing to do with the rationale of the "user pays" principle. What the Government is really doing is forcing itself to take over health insurance. One does not discourage the over-use of doctors by forcing people to be insured any more than one discourages arson by forcing people to insure their homes. The changes will do nothing to discourage the over-use of doctors——

Mr Moore: Oh!

Mr D'ARCY: Of course they will not; nor will they discourage the insured from staying too long in hospital. In any case, those decisions are more in the hands of doctors than patients.

The Fraser Government would rather transfer the financial responsibility for hospitals to the States than increase the efficiency of those wasteful institutions. Why does it keep changing the direction of its health policy? It is because it allows extraneous political considerations to intrude, just as this Government is doing today by moving this motion and having its leaders speak so uninterestingly about the proposal.

The policy reversal in the 1978 Budget occurred because the Federal Government was trying to fiddle the Consumer Price Index; we all know that. At that time the Consumer Price Index was a vital part of the inflation program. The latest reversal to allow health insurance premiums as a taxation rebate has occurred in order to bury the real question that the Government has been worried about, and that is the removal of tax indexation. That is behind everything that is occurring today with the great "medimuddle". The Queensland Government must amaze Queenslanders with this political stunt. When we look at the hospital-funding system and the hospital cost-efficiency system, it is a fact that we provide fewer services.

I think the Fraser Government realises that this is a fraud. This Government knew it was a fraud. It has been part of the conspiracy surrounding the total "medi-muddle".

Mr AKERS (Pine Rivers) (3.51 p.m.): The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has, typically, just had 20c each way. That is the way in which the ALP seems to operate in this place. He supports the motion but he does not want to be seen supporting it. He was totally awry in the whole basis of his speech. He has totally misunderstood the original Medibank agreement that this Government was forced into by the Whitlam Government, which led to the complete demise of reasonable hospital systems in the States. The basis of that agreement was that the Commonwealth would provide 50 per cent of approved expenditure by the State. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has based his speech on the point that it was an open cheque. So his first argument was totally wrong.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition based his other argument on a Press leak from Canberra. In a situation as tense as this, it must be obvious that a Press leak that seemed to imply that the States could have received more money by arguing more strongly, thereby denigrating the Premier and Deputy Premier of this State, was a political ploy from Canberra. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition based his whole argument on that Press release. He must be totally naive to believe such a leak in the first place, and even more naive to use it as the basis of an argument to advance in this place. So both the bases of his speech were totally false.

I strongly support the stand taken by the Queensland Health Minister against this shameful treatment of the taxpayers of Queensland that is being meted out by the Federal Government in an effort to downgrade health services in this State. The motion that one would hope the Opposition will support, after its spurious amendment is dealt with, points out that the people of Queensland generally support the proposals of the Federal Government but do not accept the suggested base for the financial arrangements for Queensland, and that is what the motion is all about. This suggested financial arrangement for the financing of Queensland's health and hospital programs totally discriminates against Queenslanders. If the ALP Opposition in this Parliament does the right thing by Queenslanders, our Health Minister will go to the Health Ministers conference in Canberra with the full support of this House. I believe that he will have the support of most people in Queensland.

The motion that the Premier moved clearly sets out the opinion of the Liberal Party and, I believe, of the majority of people in Queensland. The Federal Government's decision to cut back on Queensland's base is founded on the inefficient hospital systems in the other States. Obviously, the theory is that if those other systems are inefficient, ours must be inefficient as well. Therefore ours must be cut down with them.

That is bad enough, but they did not stop at that point. They went further and reduced Queensland's allocation by nearly twice as much as the reductions of the other States. The Minister for Health has quoted those figures and explained their effect very clearly. These actions of the Federal Government encourage inefficiency. Queensland has to find the shortfall of $64.3m and Western Australia, with half the population, has to find only $24m, one-third of that of Queensland. However, the cost per hospital bed in Western Australia is $189 per head of population. In Queensland it is $127.

If anybody says that because Queensland has a larger population it can therefore reduce its costs per bed, then look at the figures for New South Wales—$156 per head of population. However, that State has to find a shortfall of only $78m, marginally more than Queensland. Victoria, with its large population, has a cost of $134 per head and it has to find a shortfall of $61m. That is less than the figure for Queensland, and Victoria has a much larger population.

In moving the amendment that he has put forward today, the Leader of the Opposition has either shown a lack of perception or is deliberately attempting to mislead Queenslanders. His amendment endeavours to alter this motion to one condemning anything done by a Liberal-National Party Government. That shows the Opposition's party-political attitude and its total lack of care for the needs of Queenslanders. The motion moved by the Government today is not a move to unseat the Federal Liberal-National Party Government; in fact, on the contrary, it is one that is an attempt to save that Government.

Queensland is essential to the survival of the Federal Government. Over the years it has been proved that Queenslanders have the deciding vote on the election of the Federal Government. The Queensland vote is essential to the Fraser/Anthony Government and they must take some notice of it. Federal members and senators must be informed of the feelings of Queenslanders and the members of this House on this subject.

We in Queensland want our efficient, effective, free hospital system to continue. Pensioners, fixed-income and low-income voters in Queensland will let Federal members know that just as clearly as this House will let them know.

Hon. C. A. WHARTON (Burnett—Leader of the House): I move—

"That the question be now put."

Question put; and the House divided—

AYES, 45

Ahern	Lee
Akers	Lester
Austin	Lockwood
Bird	McKechnie
Bjelke-Petersen	Menzel
Borbidge	Miller
Doumany	Moore
Edwards	Muntz
Elliott	Nelson
Fitzgerald	Prentice
Frawley	Row
Gibbs, I. J.	Scassola
Greenwood	Stephan
Gunn	Tenni
Harper	Tomkins
Hewitt	Turner
Hinze	Warner
Innes	Wharton
Jennings	White
Katter	
Kaus	
Knox	*Tellers:*
Kyburz	Neal
Lane	Powell

NOES, 23

Blake	Prest
Burns	Shaw
Casey	Smith
D'Arcy	Underwood
Eaton	Vaughan
Fouras	Warburton
Gibbs, R. J.	Wright
Hooper	Yewdale
Jones	
Kruger	
Mackenroth	*Tellers:*
McLean	Davis
Milliner	Hansen

PAIR:

Sullivan	Scott
Glasson	Wilson

Resolved in the affirmative.

Hon. C. A. WHARTON (Burnett—Leader of the House) (4.5 p.m.): Mr Speaker, I claim closure on the amendment and on the original question.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I presume that some query will be raised in relation to this procedure. In the limited time that I have been Speaker of the House, constant reference has been made to a rigid adherence to the Westminster system. For the benefit of members who may be concerned by the comments made by the Leader of the House, I inform them that this is the Westminster system in operation.

Question—That the words proposed to be added (Mr Casey's amendment) be so added—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 23

Blake	Prest
Burns	Shaw
Casey	Smith
D'Arcy	Underwood
Eaton	Vaughan
Fouras	Warburton
Gibbs, R. J.	Wright
Hooper	Yewdale
Jones	
Kruger	
Mackenroth	*Tellers:*
McLean	Davis
Milliner	Hansen

NOES, 45

Ahern	Lee
Akers	Lester
Austin	Lockwood
Bird	McKechnie
Bjelke-Petersen	Menzel
Borbidge	Miller
Doumany	Moore
Edwards	Muntz
Elliott	Nelson
Fitzgerald	Prentice
Frawley	Row
Gibbs, I. J.	Scassola
Greenwood	Stephan
Gunn	Tenni
Harper	Tomkins
Hewitt	Turner
Hinze	Warner
Innes	Wharton
Jennings	White
Katter	
Kaus	
Knox	*Tellers:*
Kyburz	Neal
Lane	Powell

PAIRS:

Scott	Sullivan
Wilson	Glasson

Resolved in the negative.

Motion (Mr Bjelke-Petersen) agreed to.

The House adjourned at 4.15 p.m.