Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 27 OCTOBER 1982

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

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Orders in Council under the Metropolitan Transit Authority Act 1976-1979 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982

Statement of Income and Expenditure for the year ended 30 June 1982 and Balance Sheet as at 30 June 1982 of the Coal Mine Workers' Pensions Fund.

PRIVILEGE

Land Sale Practices, Russell Island

Mr WRIGHT (Rockhampton—Leader of the Opposition) (11.1 a.m.): I rise on a matter of privilege. Yesterday, in response to a question to the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General concerning the iniquitous and unscrupulous practice being used in real estate sales, the Minister requested me to furnish further information on the subject.

The relevant details are as follows. The land at Russell Island was owned by Mr Alastair Drysdale. On the 9th of this month Mr Drysdale wrote to solicitors Carter Capner and Co., and part of his correspondence is as follows—

"(1) Sunday, 29th August 1982.——"

Dr EDWARDS: I rise to a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition said that he was rising on a point of privilege. I do not know how this relates to a matter of privilege. The rules of the Parliament must be obeyed. If it is a matter on which documents need to be tabled so that the Minister can investigate them, I move—

"That the documents referred to by the honourable member for Rockhampton be laid on the table."

Motion agreed to.

Mr WRIGHT: I intended to table the documents so there is no problem with that. I believe the relevance of the documents needs to be elucidated. This morning I sought advice on this matter and it was suggested that this was the best way to do it for the convenience of the House, but should the House desire that the documents be simply tabled, I am willing to do that.

Whereupon the honourable member laid the documents on the table.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Amendment of Traffic Acts Amendment Bill

Mr Davis (21 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will amend legislation dealing with persons found to be driving with a blood alcohol content in excess of .05 per cent.

Therapy Services for Disabled Children, Gold Coast Area

From Mr Jennings (456 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will provide regular therapy services for disabled children living on the Gold Coast.

Housing Commission Rentals

From Mr Mackenroth (69 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will review the rent tied to wages system.

Rent Increases, Inala

From Mr Mackenroth (1 420 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will give special consideration to Inala in relation to rent increases in the community.

Housing Commission Rentals

From Mr Mackenroth (2 094 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will abandon the Queensland Housing Commission's new system of assessing rents and introduce a system of maximum ceiling rents at market level.

Petitions received.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

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

1. ### High-visibility Orange Bicycle Pennants

Mr Gygar asked the Minister for Transport—

(1) How many children were killed or injured while riding bicycles in each of the last five years for which statistics are available?

(2) Is he aware of New Zealand laws which require bicycles to display high-visibility orange pennants to ensure that they are easily seen?

(3) Does he believe that such pennants would help reduce the road toll, and will he consider their introduction in Queensland?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) The following statistics relate to children between the ages of five and 12 years. No child under five years of age was killed or sustained injury as a result of a pedal cycle accident.

Year	Killed	Injured
1976–77	8	130
1977–78	10	132
1978–79	6	140
1979–80	2	143
1980–81	9	153

I am aware of New Zealand laws which require bicycles to display high-visibility orange pennants and I will have inquiries made to ascertain whether these devices have had any measurable effect on reducing bicycle accidents in New Zealand.

2. Townsville Hospital Development Scheme

Dr Scott-Young asked the Minister for Health—

With reference to a recent letter from his department requesting hospitals boards to review their major projects in the light of the present economic climate—

Will stage two of the Townsville Hospital development scheme be halted or modified?

Answer:—

Hospitals boards must share with the Health Department in shouldering responsibility for capital works programs. The Townsville program is of the order of $64m. For this reason, it is essential that, before further decisions are made, the board examines priorities, programs, etc., in order that the matter of future capital works can be considered.

3. Independent Small Business Traders Association

Dr Scott-Young asked the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General—

(1) Will he confirm the existence of an organisation established in Rockhampton known as the Independent Small Business Traders Association?

(2) Is the new Leader of the Opposition, Mr Wright, the founder of that organisation?

(3) Does Mr Wright retain involvement with the organisation as trustee of the association?

(4) Did Mr Wright solicit funds from small business to be paid into the association's bank account for which he is trustee?

(5) Have those funds been accounted for to the satisfaction of contributors through an audited statement of the association's affairs?

(6) If no audited statement has been produced, will he, on behalf of small businessmen who were persuaded to contribute to the organisation, order an investigation into the affairs of the association by the Commissioner for Corporate Affairs to locate the missing funds?

Answer:—

(1 to 6) There is no organisation known as the Independent Small Business Traders Association registered or incorporated under any Act administered by me. The Commissioner for Corporate Affairs therefore has no power to conduct any investigations of the nature sought.

4. Advertisement in "Queensland Country Life"; Register of Foreign Land Ownership

Mr Akers asked the Minister for Lands and Forestry—

(1) Has his attention been drawn to an advertisement in the "Queensland Country Life" of 21 October enticing rural property owners to sell their land in West Germany through the unnamed firm by advertising it in the West German Press?

(2) Will he take whatever action possible to prevent such undesirable advertisements being inserted in this widely-read rural newspaper until the register of foreign ownership of land is established?

(3) When is it intended to introduce legislation to establish the register of foreign ownership of land?

Answer:—

(1) Yes, I have seen the advertisement.

(2) No, I am not aware of any action that I can legally take.

(3) This matter is receiving consideration.

5. Length of Prime Movers with Trailers

Mr Akers asked the Minister for Transport—

(1) Has his attention been drawn to an article in "Cattleman" of 20 October which relates to discussions supposedly held between the Minister for Main Roads and livestock carriers at Richmond in September?

(2) Is he aware of the statements allegedly attributed to that Minister in relation to the overall length of prime movers with trailers in which he is reported as saying that "regulations relating to length were the responsibility of the Minister for Transport, Mr Lane—whose chief allegiance was to the Queensland Government Railway Department" and that "Mr Lane would therefore be unlikely to be sympathetic to any request for an increase in excess of 17m."?

(3) Which Minister has responsibility for determining the minimum and maximum lengths of prime movers with trailers?

(4) Will he clarify the other parts of this report?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) The Queensland Traffic Regulations prescribe that the maximum length of an articulated vehicle shall be 17 metres. This dimension may only be exceeded with the prior written permission of the District Superintendent of Traffic.

Maximum vehicle dimensions are contained in the national code defining vehicle construction, equipment and performance standards which have been endorsed by the Australian Transport Advisory Council and recommended to Commonwealth and State Governments for inclusion in their legislation in the interests of uniformity.

The maximum length of 17 metres was determined following research into the operational safety aspects of articulated vehicles, having particular regard to their swept-path requirements and their ability to negotiate the existing road system.

I am reluctant to believe that my colleague the Honourable Minister for Main Roads, Local Government and Police would have made the remarks allegedly attributed to him in the "Cattleman" newspaper of 20 October. I say that, firstly, because such a statement would be misleading. As honourable members know, my recent drastic reorganisation of the Department of Transport, including the appointment of a new Assistant Commissioner for Transport from the road transport industry, is evidence that I have no prejudice for rail as opposed to road transport. And, secondly, because all decisions of Government are collectively taken, with each Minister carrying equal responsibility for them.

6. Bridge on Mt Samson Road near Samford Bowling Club

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

(1) Has his attention been drawn to the extremely dangerous situation that exists at the one-lane bridge on the Mt Samson Road near the Samford Bowling Club and, in particular, to recent accidents involving horse-riders?

(2) What is the Main Roads Department's program for replacing this bridge?

(3) Will he give urgent instructions to provide interim safety measures?

(4) Will he also arrange for the repositioning of fences so that horse-riders can bypass the bridge?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) There are warning signs and a "Give Way" sign already in existence at this bridge as safety measures. However, departmental officers will give urgent consideration to improving current measures and will certainly investigate the possibility of repositioning of fences to permit horse-riders to bypass the bridge

Provision has been made in the current four-year planning program for a commencement of construction of works which will result in the bypassing of this bridge.

7. Warning Devices at Rail Crossings, Isis Electorate

Mr Powell asked the Minister for Transport—

With reference to his answer to a question of mine on 19 October concerning rail crossings at Hervey Bay—

Will he present a list of rail crossings without warning devices within the Hervey Bay Town Council, Maryborough City Council, Woocoo Shire Council, Isis Shire Council, Woongarra Shire Council and Bundaberg City Council areas together with their comparative priorities for the provision of warning devices?

Answer:—

I am arranging for a list of all the crossings in the local authority areas mentioned to be extracted and forwarded to the honourable member. I am sure the honourable member will appreciate that because of the very low priority rating of some of the rail crossings within the areas named they have not yet reached the stage where they are listed. To do so, taking into account the amount of money that is available for these works, would require a considerable amount of time and in the circumstances this cannot be deemed warranted. However, I have arranged for details of those which have a priority to be put in order and forwarded to the honourable member as soon as possible.

8. Marketing and Pricing of Milk

Mr Yewdale asked the Minister for Primary Industries—

With reference to his ministerial responsibility in respect of the pasteurisation and marketing of milk—

(1) Is the wholesale and retail price of milk controlled by the Government and, if so, will he provide a comprehensive description of the method of marketing and pricing of this product?

(2) What machinery is available to the consuming public should they wish to air a grievance in respect of this product and its cost at retail level?

Answer:—

(1) In accordance with the Milk Supply Act 1977-1981, the Queensland Milk Board with my approval, may, by order fix and declare retail (maximum and minimum) and wholesale prices for milk, cream or other dairy products. At present, milk prices orders apply in eight areas of the State covering all major cities and towns. These milk prices orders pertain only to white milk; flavoured and modified milk and cream are not price controlled. Additionally, to provide an essential element of orderly marketing of milk in this State, the Milk Pasteurisation Tribunal determines franchise boundaries for the marketing of pasteurised milk and pasteurised cream.

(2) I would suggest that any inquiry or grievance from the consuming public should be directed to the Queensland Milk Board, as it is the statutory body responsible for the orderly marketing and pricing of milk in this State.

9. Monitoring by Local Authorities of Noise Levels

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

With reference to the Noise Abatement Act which has application throughout Queensland—

(1) How many local authorities in Queensland have acquired instruments for the purpose of measuring noise levels?

(2) Has the Government initiated any discussions with councils with the objective of suggesting or recommending suitable monitoring equipment?

(3) What method of noise monitoring is being used by local governments should they not have suitable effective equipment?

Answer:—

The administration of the Noise Abatement Act 1978-1982 is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Environment, Valuation and Administrative Services, and I would acordingly suggest the honourable member address his question to that Minister.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Economic Forecast by Department of Commercial and Industrial Development

Mr WRIGHT: I ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer: Is he aware that in the annual report of the Department of Commercial and Industrial Development, under the heading, "Prospects for the Economy", reference is made to Queensland's business confidence being dampened and that reports are becoming more widespread of deferred, reduced and cancelled investment plans in this State? As the Department of Commercial and Industrial Development report states that Queensland continues to remain dependent on overseas income and related public and private capital expenditure, and as it is forecast that the export performance of Queensland mining and mineral processing and primary industries looks bleak for 1982-83, does the Treasurer agree with this economic forecast by the Department of Commercial and Industrial Development that the Queensland economy is in the worst shape it has been in for years?

Dr EDWARDS: I do not agree with the inference that has been drawn by the honourable gentleman. The spokesman on economic matters is the Treasurer. I have made my forecast for the economy in Queensland very clear. I share the concern expressed by the Leader of the Opposition about the downturn in some projects. On the other hand, the projects that have not gone ahead were long-term projects that would not have had a great deal of impact on the development of employment opportunities last year. All the projects that the Government was committed to in mining and other areas will continue to progress.

My colleague the Honourable Minister for Employment and Labour Relations was in the honourable member's home city last night. I saw headlines in this morning's "Bulletin", stating that he suggests nearly 4 000 jobs will be created as a result of activities in that area.

I believe that the Department of Commercial and Industrial Development was saying that there has been a downturn in interest, and in the future, of some of the long-term projects. My belief and that of the Government is very clear, as was obvious in the economic report in the Budget papers. We believe that the economy of Queensland, although it is being affected by the overall economic downturn throughout Australia and the rest of the world is not being affected to the same degree as the rest of Australia. In the next few months, no doubt, some announcements will be made that will bring back to Queensland some of the projects that have been lengthened in their development.

Last year, of all the jobs created in Australia, 49 per cent were created in Queensland. That is indicative of the growth that is occurring here.

I hope that the Leader of the Opposition will agree with me when I say that I do not think it is wise for anybody to be talking about downturns in the economy. I think he will. If we are prepared to talk, as the Federal Government and many people concerned about a downturn in the economy have done——

Mr Wilson interjected.

Dr EDWARDS: The honourable member for Townsville South must be the greatest pessimist in Queensland. There is no doubt that he will be unemployed following the next election. However, that is his problem.

The Leader of the Opposition would agree with me that a co-operative effort between the Government, business and the trade union movement is needed to make sure that the present difficulties—nobody denies that business is difficult at the moment—are overcome and to get this country moving again. The time is not ripe for pessimism or for downgrading of the economy. Times are difficult, but business has always had to overcome difficulties in order to thrive. I am optimistic about the future; many other Queenslanders are optimistic about the future. We must all work hard to make sure that we get the best from the economy.

Mr Wilson interjected.

Dr EDWARDS: The honourable member for Townsville South has contributed more to unemployment than has any other member. He was the most outspoken member in favour of the introduction of the 38-hour week and for improved conditions for the trade union movement. Even the trade union movement recognises the need for restraint. I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition will kick the honourable member for Townsville South in the shins for giving me an opportunity to say more than I needed to say.

The economy is difficult and business is difficult, but Queenslanders have the fortitude and the capacity to get on top. I am prepared to work hard, as every other Queenslander is. I call upon the Leader of the Opposition—and I know that he will—to prevent pessimism and adopt an optimistic outlook in Queensland.

Job Creation Capital Works Program

Mr WRIGHT: I refer the Deputy Premier and Treasurer to page 12 of his Budget Speech in which he said that the Consolidated Revenue Fund could provide only $8m for the Special Projects Fund to finance its Job Creation Capital Works Program. The Treasurer said—

> "The Government sees such a massive shortfall in its capital program as quite untenable and potentially catastrophic to development and employment in the State and has concluded that, if employment is to be maintained and essential works undertaken, a further $90 million at least must be found.
>
> ... the Government has had to look elsewhere to fund its capital works program and is therefore moving to quickly finalise long term funding arrangements for major infrastructure developments.
>
> These negotiations are currently in progress and when concluded will enable $90 million to be utilised in 1982-83
>
> The Budget has been prepared on this basis."

I now ask: As it is now more than one month since the Budget was brought down, have the arrangements necessary to release that money been finalised? With whom have the negotiations been conducted? Will he provide Parliament with details of those funding arrangements? As he said that the Budget had been prepared on the basis of the $90m becoming available, if the money has not been forthcoming, what effect will that have on the Government's job creation program?

Dr EDWARDS: It is true, as the Leader of the Opposition indicated, that the Budget papers contain those statements. The reason for those statements was that, when the Budget papers were being prepared, the final negotiations on some infrastructure loan arrangements had not been completed. They have almost been completed, and I will be happy to provide to the Leader of the Opposition the information that can be made public. I do not believe that some of the confidential information should be made public. I am quite happy to provide the other information to him, as I have always done to Opposition Treasury spokesman.

The money will be made available in the next few weeks. The Government has proceeded with planning in any case so that it can expend the money. I assure the honourable member that the negotiations have almost been completed, that the documentation will be signed in the very near future, and that the money will be paid into the Treasury so that it can be spent in that way.

The $98m is special projects money in addition to the normal capital works program outlined in the Budget. It is part of the Government's overall program to spend something like $1,000m in the capital investment program to provide employment opportunities. This Government, above every other Government in Australia, has made a great effort to stimulate employment opportunities in industry. That has not occurred under the Governments in New South Wales and Victoria. They have cut back on their capital works programs as a result of their very tight budgetary positions and their inability to provide special projects money.

Sir William Knox interjected.

Dr EDWARDS: As the Minister said, they are taking money out of trust funds to pay the accounts of the various departments that need funds. The contracts are in order, and I shall provide the Leader of the Opposition with the details in due course.

Queensland's Economy

Mr WRIGHT: In directing a question to the Deputy Premier and Treasurer I refer to a comment made by a former Treasurer, Sir Gordon Chalk, that the health of the housing and construction industry was a barometer of the State's economy. I ask: Is the Minister aware that housing loan approvals and housing construction have slumped by 37 per cent in the last 12 months? Is he aware that State Government stamp duty receipts for the first two months of this financial year are only $44m compared with $46.3m for the previous year, a reduction of some 12 per cent in real terms? Furthermore, is the Treasurer aware that the revenue level of $44m for the first two months of this financial year is below the Budget estimates of revenue enunciated by the Treasurer just a few weeks ago in his State Budget? Finally, is this not a further decline in the state of the Queensland economy which has evidenced a 33⅓ per cent increase in the level of unemployment for the last 12 months, from 55 300 to 74 600, which incidentally is above the national increase for the same period of unemployment?

Dr EDWARDS: The Leader of the Opposition has taken the Budget papers out of context. Stamp duty and other receipts are not tabulated on a monthly or two-monthly basis; they are tabulated on an annual basis.

Mr Wright interjected.

Dr EDWARDS: It is all very well for the Leader of the Opposition to say that. If that is the case—and it is not because it can vary from time to time—the Budget would be done on a daily basis.

Although the Leader of the Opposition is correct when he says that stamp duty receipts are not as high as they were last year, it must be remembered that the Budget Estimates did not allow for the expansion of the stamp duty revenue that was anticipated in previous years.

Early this year the Government became aware that there was a downturn in housing approvals, not only in Queensland but throughout the whole of Australia. The downturn in Queensland was far less than the downturn in any other State in Australia.

Mr Burns interjected.

Dr EDWARDS: The member for Lytton always has a lot to say by way of interjection but very little to say anywhere else, except at quiet meetings at which he organises various factors.

Mr Burns: You're getting very dirty for a little worm.

Dr EDWARDS: We all know the standards of the member for Lytton. I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition would dissociate himself from that type of comment.

Mr Burns: I didn't do my planning when my mate was at his mother's funeral.

Dr. EDWARDS: The comments made by the member for Lytton are typical of the type of character that he portrays in this Assembly. That type of character is unnecessary in the Parliament. Obviously the member for Lytton is not the Leader of the Opposition because he was not interested in important matters. That is why he is sitting where he is, and he will be there for a long time.

I challenge any member of the Opposition, including the member for Lytton, to produce figures that indicate that there has not been a downturn in the building industry in the whole of Australia. When that downturn became evident, the Queensland Government adopted a plan of action. Within a month or two of that action the Government was able to release funds totalling $100m into the housing industry. At least 1 000 houses have already been approved under that scheme. If my figures are correct, approximately 3 000 houses will be approved by the end of February. The Government is hopeful that 90 per cent of those houses will be new houses so that there is stimulation of the building industry.

I share the concern expressed by the Leader of the Opposition about the building industry. It is correct that the building industry is an indicator of the economy in general. Activity in the building industry affects employment in that industry, in the plumbing industry, in the electrical industry, in the furniture industry and in many other industries. The building industry is an indicator that the economy is on the downturn. That is why the Government increased by 76 per cent the amount of funds available to the Housing Commission this year for housing purposes. The Government has been reluctant to reduce building society interest rates. It has tried to stimulate the amount of funds going into building societies. Although it is to the disadvantage of borrowers, it will provide more funds to building societies to enable them to stimulate the economy.

The Government is doing all that it can. I am hopeful that it can release further funds over the next six months to stimulate the building industry as much as possible.

Gold Coast Casino

Mr HARTWIG: In directing a question to the Deputy Premier and Treasurer, I draw his attention to an article that apeared in "The Courier-Mail" of 26 October under the headline, "Malaysian backer for casino on Coast". The report states that on Monday State Cabinet had agreed that a Malaysian group, World Resorts Pty Ltd, which will operate the Townsville casino, would be accepted as a backer for the proposed Gold Coast gambling casino. I ask: For what reason was Federal Hotels Ltd, which now operates the only four casinos in Australia, refused permission to operate the Gold Coast casino? As World Resorts Pty Ltd, which is reported to be a Malaysian group, has been given the green light by Cabinet, what steps will be taken to keep out the undesirables who are so evident these days in Asian gambling? Will the Treasurer inform the House who are the major personalities associated with World Resorts Pty Ltd? Was the management of casinos in Queensland by that Malyasian group discussed with the Singapore Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kwan Yew, during his recent visit to Queensland?

Dr EDWARDS: Firstly, in answer to the last part of the honourable member's question—on no occasion did the Premier and I raise with the Prime Minister of Singapore, or did he raise with us, the matter of casinos in Queensland. As the honourable member is aware, the Genting group is in Malaysia. There is no connection between Malaysia and Singapore in regard to the operation of casinos. I am sure that the Premier will confirm what I have said on that aspect.

As to the two casinos—I do not think it is wise for me to make too much comment on the Government's reasons for arriving at a certain decision.

In answer to the honourable member's question concerning Federal Hotels—I am on record as saying—I am prepared to repeat it—that the Government did not want to see the operation of casinos in Australia placed in the hands of one monopoly.

Mr Davis interjected.

Dr EDWARDS: The honourable member does not know what he is talking about.

The Government indicated to Jupiter's that it would like that organisation to consider the appointment of its own operators, who will have to be approved by the Government. Those operators will have to abide by the Act. They will be employed by the board of Jupiter's rather than by a company coming in under contract, as was the arrangement. The Jupiter's board agreed to that suggestion and, as a result of that, Federal Hotels withdrew its investment in the casino. The move is a good one and will prove to be so after the introduction of the necessary legislation.

The honourable member for Brisbane Central referred to the operation of casinos by one particular company. That is not the case at all. If the honourable member possesses the ability to understand what has been said, he will realise that the operation of the casino will be subject to a board and will not be conducted by people from the Genting group or any other firm. It has been stated that Genting will be paid a small retainer to give advice on hotel arrangements and on some casino operations. However, it will not be the operator of the Gold Coast casino. The operator will be Jupiter's board, and it will engage employees who will be licensed and approved by the Government. They will be able to remain in employment only for as long as they hold the necessary licence.

Mr D'Arcy: Who are they?

Dr EDWARDS: At this stage, I do not know. It is a bit difficult to employ someone three years before the building is constructed. I should think that the honourable member for Woodridge would realise that it would be foolish to employ a man now when he will not be taking control of the casino for three years.

Mr D'Arcy: It would not have been the case if it had been Federal Hotels.

Dr EDWARDS: That is not correct. Federal Hotels, in its submission, was not prepared to nominate the name of the manager until nearer to the date of completion of construction.

Mr D'Arcy interjected.

Dr EDWARDS: The honourable member for Woodridge does not understand the situation. The Government is not prepared to license a company to conduct a casino. The individual employees of the company will be licensed. Therefore, those persons could not be named even if Federal Hotels were granted the licence.

Mr D'Arcy: You are clutching at straws.

Dr EDWARDS: I am not clutching at straws. It is a vital factor. Indeed, if a company were licensed, it could change the people operating and managing the casino from day to day, and the Government would not tolerate that position. It will license an individual and he will be able to manage the casino only while he holds a licence. Until he fulfils his obligations, he will not be able to take up the position of manager.

Mr Warburton: It has changed.

Dr EDWARDS: It has not changed.

Mr Warburton: The corporate structure.

Dr EDWARDS: I am delighted to hear the Deputy Leader of the Opposition say that the corporate structure has changed. Of course it has changed. If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition thinks that a company can put $160m of solid funds into an operation at a time when there is only a possibility that it will get a licence, he is sadly mistaken. It is not possible to put that sort of money into an operation when the company is making application for a licence.

My statement at the beginning was that the corporate structure in relation to public involvement and company involvement had to be maintained, and that has been the case. At all times, the Government has made it clear that the corporate structure would be approved by the Government after every form of investigation had been carried out. It would be impossible for a company to retain the same shareholdings for eternity, and I am sure that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition understands that.

The honourable member for Callide can rest assured that the casino legislation that will be introduced into this Parliament in the next few days will be the tightest legislation in the world.

Mr D'Arcy: Ha, ha!

Dr EDWARDS: It is interesting to see the member for Woodridge grin, because some of the private comments that he has made to me indicate that his grin is false. The legislation will be introduced in this Chamber, and the honourable member will have an opportunity to express his feelings on it at that time.

Proposed National Crimes Commission

Mr NEAL: I ask the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police: Can he advise this House of the latest developments concerning the proposed meeting of Police Ministers relative to the setting up of a national crimes commission? Are any other States attending the proposed meeting on 5 November?

Mr HINZE: This morning, I received letters from the Minister for Police in Western Australia, Mr Hassell, and Sir John Olsen in South Australia, indicating their intentions. The present position is that Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia are not attending, and Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania are doubtful. I reiterate what I said yesterday: all States are strongly opposed to the Commonwealth Government's present intention to set up its own National Crimes Commission.

Road Funding

Mr YEWDALE: In asking a question of the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police, I refer to a report in the Rockhampton "Morning Bulletin" of Saturday last that was attributed to the Federal Opposition spokesman on transport, which states—

> " funds for National highways under the Bicentennial roads programme were likely to be billions of dollars short of what was required for the upgrading promised by the Government.
>
> In a statement released in Canberra he said the shortfall in New South Wales alone was over one billion dollars.
>
> Advice from the NSW Government showed the cost up to 1988 would be $1,725-million, yet Federal funds under both the Bicentennial scheme and the existing Roads Grants Act amounted to only $660-million in 1982-83 values.
>
> The shortfall in Australia overall will be astronomical."

Is the Minister prepared to comment on that statement and on how it will affect main roads in Queensland?

Mr HINZE: I am not aware of the actual source of the information available to Mr Morris, but I state very clearly that the Commonwealth legislation is set up for a particular purpose in which all the States as well as the Commonwealth will participate. Consultations will take place continually.

I am aware that about $40m is now in the pipeline for expenditure on roads to 30 June 1983. Under the joint proposal, which I applaud, the State is charged with responsibility to expend those funds before that date. For the year 1983-84, about $93m will be available to Queensland.

The honourable member for Rockhampton North said that there was some discrepancy in the figures. If that is true, the Minister for Transport and I, who will be attending the ATAC conference, will certainly scrutinise the figures available to us to ensure that everything that has been agreed upon between the States and the Commonwealth is adhered to and that the total allocation of funds from that source is available for road construction.

Road Toll in Central Queensland

Mr YEWDALE: In asking a question of the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police, I do not think that I need to draw his attention to the road toll in Queensland and to the concern expressed by most people on that matter; but I refer him to a statement by the Superintendent of Police in Rockhampton that Central Queensland continues to have the highest figures for fatal accidents. I now ask the Minister: Has he given any consideration to, or discussed with his departmental officers, the establishment of a task force of some nature that could move throughout the State, particularly through Central Queensland, in an endeavour to curb the road toll? The Minister would certainly know of the bad roads that radiate from Rockhampton. In view of that, will he give consideration to sending a task force from the metropolitan area, because it is obvious that the Police Force in Rockhampton has its time fully occupied in the normal administration of the city and its surrounds? I ask the Minister to consider my remarks and make some comment.

Mr HINZE: My colleague the Minister for Transport and I are continually looking at various ways of trying to overcome the very serious road toll in the State. As to the setting up of a task force—I advise the House that as recently as yesterday I had discussions with the Commissioner for Main Roads concerning road problems. Agreement has been reached to place more police vehicles on the road.

Immediately after question-time, I will again meet with the Treasurer and the Commissioner for Main Roads, and the question of a task force for the Rockhampton area will be discussed.

Laheys Sawmill, Inglewood

Mr McKECHNIE: I ask the Minister for Lands and Forestry: As the Minister is aware of my concern, and the concern of the Inglewood Shire Council and the residents of Inglewood and district, about plans by the owners of Laheys Sawmill at Inglewood to cease operations in Inglewood, and as he is aware that I have arranged for the manager of the parent

company to talk to the Inglewood Shire Council representatives and employees of the mill on Monday of next week, will he impress upon the parent company the serious concern felt about the pending closure of the mill and see what can be done about it?

Mr GLASSON: Only last week I received a deputation from the honourable member and members of the Inglewood Shire Council. I assured the honourable member that I shared his concern and that I would have talks with the company concerned. It has applied to the Department of Forestry for the amalgamation of two mills, one in Inglewood and one in Goondiwindi. Naturally the Department of Forestry considers the long-term viability of any operation. I think we are all aware of the concern being expressed about the viability of the timber industry in this State today. The Opposition has been casting a shadow of gloom because the timber industry is in trouble, but its problems relate to the viability of the building industry. Timber from other States, New Zealand, the United States and Canada has flooded into an area where there was some activity in the building industry, the State of Queensland.

I will be having discussions with the company. I will express our concern about the application for amalgamation, but at the same time we have to realise the economic situation faced by many timber companies.

New Bridge, Goondiwindi

Mr McKECHNIE: I ask the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police: Has the New South Wales Department of Main Roads responded to the investigation by the Queensland Department of Main Roads into the site of the proposed new bridge over the river at Goondiwindi? As the people of Goondiwindi need to know the site as quickly as possible, when will a decision be made?

Mr HINZE: I informed the honourable member on 21 September 1982 that a report covering alternative locations for the bridge and the bypass at Goondiwindi had been forwarded to the New South Wales Department of Main Roads for consideration and comment. Advice has been received during the past few weeks from that department that some technical aspects of the new bridge relating to its possible effects on flooding have been referred to the New South Wales Water Resources Commission. It is expected that further advice will be received in the near future. Liaison is continuing at high level in order to expedite the decision on the site. All I can say to the honourable member is that everything is proceeding satisfactorily. As soon as I get that further advice from New South Wales, I will pass it on to the honourable member.

Electricity Failures, Taroom Shire

Mr HARPER: I ask the Minister for Mines and Energy: What action can the Minister take to ensure that staffing, equipment and plant levels adopted by the South West Queensland Electricity Board for its operations in the Taroom Shire are adequate to meet requirements in that area, so that it can avoid a repetition of disruptive power failures, as twice occurred recently throughout the shire for periods of 22 and 18 hours respectively, so that faults are more expeditiously corrected and so that the existing situation will not be exacerbated by seasonal summer storms?

Mr I. J. GIBBS: I am aware that some rather severe and lengthy electricity breakdowns occurred in the Taroom Shire, which is in the South West Queensland Electricity Board area. The breakdowns were caused by storms and fires, and the period for which electricity was unavailable was considerable. Many breakdowns are beyond the control of the board. They are very often acts of God It is often difficult to locate the faults because of the rough terrain. Many areas have to be traversed on foot.

I am aware of other difficulties, as the honourable member pointed out, associated with the availability of poles and material on site. Since the matter was brought to the attention of the board, it has increased staff availability in the area and has increased the number of radios to help to overcome any delay in reconnecting electricity supply.

I have prepared some more detail for the honourable member and will forward him a letter in the next day or two. As Minister I shall continue to monitor the situation. I would appreciate it if the honourable member would keep me informed from his end of the organisation in the Taroom Shire to ensure that the intention to minimise future difficulties is carried out and that the problems are monitored on a local basis in an effort to overcome future problems.

Australian Communications Satellite

Mr WARNER: I ask the Premier: Is he aware that the Federal Minister for Communications has before him a proposal from the three major metropolitan television networks asking that the high-powered spot beams of the second HACBFF system of the Australian communications satellite, which were specifically designed so that small, cheap receiving dishes could provide Outback and isolated Australians with television and other special services, such as School of the Air, be switched to national beam and that each be allocated one of those beams for its exclusive use, thus denying people in isolated areas the services that they have been expecting? Has any decision been taken on that matter? If not, will he use his best offices to ensure that the Federal Government decides to retain the second HACBFF in the spot beam so that the satellite can serve its proper function of providing isolated Australians with the entertainment and services enjoyed by the remainder of the community?

Mr BJELKE-PETERSEN: I am aware of the matter raised by the honourable member. I have already communicated with the Prime Minister and alerted him to the fact that people in other areas will make efforts to utilise the facility to which the honourable member refers. The Treasurer has also spoken to the Prime Minister. The Government is aware that action may be taken by people with interests in other areas against the interests of the people in inland areas. I hope that we can influence the Commonwealth Government to utilise the facility, as was intended originally, to give the people in the inland areas the many services to which they are entitled.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Education of Aboriginal and Islander Children

Mr SCOTT (Cook) (12.1 p.m.): This week in Parliament is a significant one in that tomorrow the Estimates of the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement, which have a bearing on a large number of people in Queensland, will be debated. It is a shame that the Minister for Aboriginal and Island Affairs (Mr Tomkins) is now leaving the Chamber. He saw my name on the list of speakers in this debate.

I intend to speak about education in Queensland, particularly in Far North Queensland and the Torres Strait area. I am going to refer to the annual report of the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement for the year ended 30 June 1982. Although that department's Estimates will be debated tomorrow, the annual report was not available to members until this morning. So no-one has a great deal of time in which to have a close look at the report and to analyse it. Not that a great deal of time is needed; the document is not one of any great depth. It is certainly very shallow in its references to education.

Many honourable members may not be aware of the reasons why the annual report of the department would even mention education. Some honourable members, particularly those on the Opposition side, are very conscious of the fact that all education in the Torres Strait area, including the outlying islands, is the responsibility of the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement. Unfortunately, it does not shoulder that responsibility very well.

On looking at the annual report, which is somewhat lean in the presentation of statistics, I notice that the population of the Torres Strait islands is given as 4 000. That figure is alleged to include an estimate for Thursday Island. It does not include Torres Strait Islanders who are normally resident at Thursday Island but are employed

elsewhere. It certainly does not include the very large number of Torres Strait Islanders who, because the services that should be available in the Torres Strait area are not provided, live elsewhere in Australia.

I am speaking about the education of a very large number of people. I am speaking of education in the area of Australia's only international border, that between Australia and Papua New Guinea. I expected that during this year some reference would have been made in this Parliament to the proposed change in the border between Australia and Papua New Guinea. But that has not occurred; neither the Premier nor any senior Minister has referred to the possible imminent change to be made to the border between our country and our northern neighbour.

It is significant that the people of the Torres Strait area are not being provided with the services that they deserve. As I have said, their education is left in the hands of the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement, and it simply should not be in that department's hands.

The author of the report is Mr P. J. Killoran, who is the director of the department and, if the rumours are correct, a would-be politician. In the preamble to the report he states—

> "Aborigines and Islanders in Queensland enjoy similar education opportunities as other citizens and are free to attend any primary or secondary school and thereby graduate to tertiary or other trade or career training establishments.
>
> No schools are maintained exclusively for indigenous children, although on some Aboriginal and Islander reserves they may account for the entire enrolment."

That is the understatement of the year. The people who live in the 13 communities on the outer islands simply have no choice. They can send their primary schoolchildren only to a DAIA school. If they want to exercise a choice, they must move away from their home, either to Thursday Island or to the mainland of Queensland. Unfortunately, many Islanders have done that.

The preamble to the report goes on to say—

> "Indigenous teachers and teacher-aides are employed at some schools to form a bridge between schools and the home."

That is a very significant statement, too. There is not a lot that is true in the report, and we will be debating it here tomorrow afternoon. Mr Killoran is a great one for putting a wonderful gloss and appearance on the activities of his department. What he should know is that there are many competent critics of what he is doing. He has been left in that department for far too long, and I will be saying a lot more about him tomorrow afternoon.

In the limited time available to me today, I must concentrate on one important aspect of Mr Killoran's activities—education. The outer islands have their own schools run by DAIA. Seven of the outer island communities do not have white teachers; six have white teachers, and they are all married men. No common sense is shown in the selection of those teachers. They are not given any real information on the conditions under which they will teach. Often, they do not know a lot about the group of people amongst whom they will live and whose children they will teach. That is a major fault. The Education Department is well served by its teachers and, generally, the teachers in the island schools are extremely competent and educated people.

As I have said, seven of the schools have only Islander teachers and, until very recently, those teachers were given only limited training. They were given training for three months or six months, and it was allegedly some part of a three-year course. Those teachers are totally inadequately trained. They receive a mention in Mr Killoran's publication.

On the outer islands, 601 children are taught by 57 Islander teachers. Mr Killoran said that there is a special teacher-training program for Islander teachers. It began with an initial intake of six teachers and will be expanded to 12 teachers for the second semester of 1982. Without any doubt, if those 57 teachers—they will change; they will not be the same ones—are to be trained, that will involve a 10-year training program on that basis alone, even before the 600 children in the schools are taught by properly trained teachers.

I am not levelling any criticism at the teachers, whether they be black or white, on those islands. They are placed in the schools, allegedly in co-operation with the Education Department. Actually, they are seconded to the department.

Mr Moore: What are you growling about?

Mr SCOTT: Because DAIA is not geared to administer education. It has a totally colonial outlook. There is a manager on Thursday Island with a very limited staff. He has the responsibility of running the councils on the outer islands. He runs them and controls them. He arranges all the stores that go to the islands and the little development that takes place on those islands. He is also responsible for the health arrangements of those 13 island communities. Until recently, the manager of DAIA on Thursday Island controlled the communications. It is only because one telephone has been provided for each island now that there is a small degree of independence from DAIA. The DAIA controls buildings, staff numbers, equipment for all the schools and also the people who go away for training.

That is simply not a good or fair situation, and I make a very strong plea to the Government to change it in the near future. I ask the Government to bear in mind my comment that I am speaking about the education of children whose parents live in a buffer area between Australia and Papua New Guinea.

There is a Torres Strait school with a group principal and four advisory teachers. They do an extremely good job, again because of the calibre of the teachers that the Education Department recruits. But those teachers constantly have to do battle with DAIA to try to improve the facilities at the schools.

Some members of this Chamber have been to the outer islands in Torres Strait. The member for Windsor (Mr Moore), in particular, has been there and seen them. I ask him to stand up at some stage tomorrow afternoon and tell the people how good he thinks the educational facilities are in Torres Strait.

I implore the Government to rebuild the Thursday Island High School. The 600 children from the outer Torres Strait islands will add to the enrolment at that high school during the coming years. Some 220 children are presently enrolled at the Torres Strait High School, and the main buildings of the school were burnt down in 1979.

From correspondence with the Minister and from answers to questions, I am not optimistic that action to replace that school will be taken this year. I would like to have some time to speak about the Treasurer at length and about what he has not done for the State. He says that the State Budget has allocated $1,000m in capital works programs to be carried out by the private sector. I implore the Government to get the private sector up there to build the high school.

(Time expired.)

Racist Comments by Australian Community Relations Commissioner

Mr HARPER (Auburn) (12.11 p.m.): Recently the Federal Government's Community Relations Commissioner, one Mr Grassby by name, was reported as saying that he had been called on to censure a Queensland Cabinet Minister for his bigotry and his racist and discrimatory verbal abuse. Grassby said that under his powers he could decide whether an illegal act had been committed or whether something had been said against community relations. I do not know that I should attempt to emulate the honourable member for Caboolture in describing Grassby as a "rotten little jumped up Riverina rainbow", but certainly I believe that he is a political racist of the first order. The word "rainbow" does paint a word-picture somewhat appropriate!

On the ABC's "Morning Extra" program of 29 September that political racist used the town of Theodore in my electorate as an example of what he regarded as racial discrimination. If time permits I shall deal with the whole of this so-called example, but at least I must quote these words, which are what Grassby said about Theodore—

> "There's no Aboriginal family properly housed in the town at all. Most of the families are living on the edge of a river in a swamp and they get inundated regularly. The conditions are terrible and the Aboriginal people through a co-operative decided that they would try and build houses themselves."

Those are utter racist lies! Those words come from the man who has Federal powers to decide whether something has been said against community relations! What utter racist lies! The only shred of truth is that Theodore Aborigines did move to acquire housing through a co-operative-type association, as has been done by other Aboriginal groups such as the one at Eidsvold. Both associations have purchased housing for their members—of course, thanks largely to Federal funding.

In fact, at the time of Grassby's utterances on 29 September, eight houses in Theodore were owned by the association and a further one was in process of purchase. In addition, three houses in Theodore are rented to Aborigines by the DAIA. So Theodore has 11 or 12 houses to accommodate an Aboriginal community of perhaps 80 people. The statistics show only half that number, but I believe the figures are not entirely accurate—the word has got around that Theodore is not a bad place to live!

So much for the nonsense that no Aboriginal family is properly housed in Theodore! Certainly no Aboriginal families are living in swamps at the edge of the river. I defy any stranger to pick those 11 or 12 houses as being occupied by other than Australians—and that is as it should be! In the main these Aborigines, these Australians, are good people—good families and a part of the total Theodore community. There may be some behavioural problems with one or two families, but what total community does not have them?

I censure Community Relations Commissioner Grassby for his bigotry and racist and discriminatory verbal abuse. He should apologise to the people of Theodore and to the people of Queensland. At the same time I call on the Australian Broadcasting Commission to apologise for having given credence to Grassby's allegation of racism. My impression is that people connected with the program, such as producer Ian McNamara, are big enough and honest enough to do so, and I hope that the commission also is big enough to allow them to do so.

At the same time, let me commend the ABC television production "Countrywide", which fairly recently reported on a unique scheme to train young Aborigines, young people who do not have anywhere to go. Those are the people who most need help. Where was this scheme implemented? Nowhere other than at Theodore, on a property called "Woolton" under the guidance of Alwyn Torenbeek. It is a stockmen's course which commenced in 1980 with six students. There have been four successful schools since then attended by a total of 45 boys and four girls. The most recent course finished in July this year. Of those 49 young Aborigines, 40 boys and three girls completed the 10-week, 7-days-a-week course. There is none of that 35-hour week business.

I wonder whether the racist Grassby knows about this course, or does he just not want to give credit where credit is due? About 70 per cent of those young Aboriginal people were placed in imediate employment after completing the course. They have gone to all parts of the State and interstate. Mr Torenbeek recently had a call from one of them. He is working over in the Kimberleys. About 60 per cent of the young people who complete the course appear to remain in constant employment. And this is happening at Theodore! Practical bushmen are helping less fortunate Aborigines from all over Queensland.

The Commonwealth Employment Service first contacted Alwyn Torenbeek, probably because he has run a rough-riding school for a number of years. Funding is provided jointly by the DAIA, the Division of Technical and Further Education and the Commonwealth Employment Service. Incidentally, the Commonwealth Employment Service selects all students and the Division of Technical and Further Education supervises the running of the school. Students receive wages according to their age, and they are looked after as part of the family, so it is not only a job training scheme; it goes much further than that. Not surprisingly, word is also around that this Theodore stockmen's course is achieving worthwhile results. Just like the town of Theodore itself, it is a good thing. That is why organisations such as the Northern Territory Cattle Council and MIM have shown a constructive interest in how it works, and to hell with racist "destructivists" such as Grassby! As I said, wages are paid according to age, and they range from $52 to $92 a week.

Currently, consideration is being given to a more advanced course with the object of training young Aboriginal men as machinery operators. That will involve a lot more specialised work and will mean a much more restricted course as far as numbers are

concerned. Students will have to put in more hours to ensure that they are capable of operating machinery and can be so certified. Some difficulties have to be overcome, but no doubt they will be.

Now let me get back to this "Morning Extra" program and Grassby's racist denunciation of the Queensland Government. On the question of whether the Joh Bjelke-Petersen Government is in breach of the Racial Discrimination Act—during the course of his interview Grassby claimed that the Aboriginal association in Theodore was denied the right to buy allotments from the Housing Commission. The simple fact of the matter is that there is a shortage of town building allotments in Theodore to the extent that at the present time the Banana Shire Council has been asked to prepare plans and estimates for the development of 22 allotments. I will again quote Mr Grassby—

> "Now that's one of the things that's quite clearly contrary to the Racial Discrimination Act and which, in short, is that all Australians of all backgrounds have equal rights and that discrimination on the grounds of colour or race or ethnic background or place of birth is contrary to the law of the land."

That is what we are saying. All Australians should be treated equally, without favouritism being shown when an Aboriginal group wants housing allotments. Aborigines will get the same treatment as is provided to other members of Australian communities. They are given exactly the same opportunity as any other Australian to acquire land. That, too, is as it should be. I agree completely with what Grassby said in that regard. The trouble is that his interpretation of it is politically indoctrinated, and therefore he adopts a racist attitude.

(Time expired.)

Foreign Ownership of Land

Mr PRENTICE (Toowong) (12.21 p.m.): A Government that makes decisions without knowing the facts is foolhardy in the extreme. A Government that refuses to collect the facts in the first place is engaged in kamikaze politics.

In recent months extensive debate has taken place about the foreign ownership of land in this State. It is a matter that has concerned many people, particularly those on the land. This Government has considered the matter at Cabinet level. It has seen, I am advised, draft legislation. It has decided that action must be taken. So far it has taken no action.

The question that Queenslanders should ask is whether all this activity to date will will end up going nowhere. Any proposal to establish the extent of foreign ownership of Queensland land surely reeks of common sense. Not to accept it would represent an almost criminal neglect of good government in this State. Queenslanders have a right to know who owns Queensland. The Parliament must know this information if any decisions in this respect are to be responsibly taken. What could anyone have to fear in this situation?

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not suggest that no information is available in this area, but what little there is sounds a warning that cannot responsibly be ignored.

Figures provided by the Foreign Investment Review Board indicate that last year, in Queensland, foreigners acquired almost 5 420 sq. km of Queensland land at a cost of $21.4m. Since 1 April 1976, foreigners have acquired at least 32 810 sq. km of Queensland land at a cost of $55.1m. For the information of my parliamentary colleagues, I advise that that is almost twice the size of the electorate of Burnett, more than twice the size of the electorate of Condamine and, interestingly, more than 2 187 times the size of the electorate of Toowong. Indeed, it is 1.9 per cent of this State. For all that we know in this Parliament, foreigners could own much more, because only transactions over $350,000 come under the scrutiny of the Foreign Investment Review Board.

The figures I have quoted relate only to the period since 1 April 1976. As everyone in this Parliament is aware, extensive holdings of rural land in Queensland and elsewhere in the nation existed well before that date. We have no record of them. The reality is that we simply do not know the real extent of foreign ownership of land in this State. That is tragic, because the Government can operate only as effectively and responsibly

as the knowledge it possesses. Put simply, access to information is the currency of good government. When it comes to this matter, the Government, sadly, is in a state of appalling ignorance.

Mr R. J. Gibbs: "Where ignorance is bliss, 'Tis folly to be wise." What does that mean?

Mr PRENTICE: The honourable member for Wolston attempts to make light of the topic. I am sure that his constituents would be as much concerned about this matter as are the majority of Queenslanders.

If a person carefully reads the Opposition's notice of motion on the Business Paper, he will find that it is patently absurd. It requires the setting up of a register of all ownership in this State. We effectively have that through the system of registration of titles; but what we need to know is the beneficial ownership of the land, who actually owns it, how much land is involved, how it is being used and the intentions for that land. Above all, the information on beneficial ownership is of great importance.

Many diverse and responsible groups in the community have expressed their serious concern about the erosion of Australian ownership of land. The National Farmers Federation released a policy paper on foreign ownership of rural land in November last year in which, amongst other things, it recommended that foreign interests owning rural land in Australia be required to declare the extent of their foreign ownership annually. The Liberal Party supports a register. The National Party president, Sir Robert Sparkes, has made his position in supporting a register perfectly clear. The Cattlemens Union first raised the issue in 1977 and still supports it. The concept of a register has gained approval from the Queensland Agricultural Policy Working Committee. The Graingrowers Association supports it; so does the RSL. Despite all this, precious little has been done.

Only one significant voice has been raised against it and that is the voice of the Premier. Notwithstanding the Premier's reputation of being an astute political operator, I am bound to say that, on this particular issue, "You are dead wrong, Mr Premier", because the people of Queensland have a right to know and, what is more, they want to know about the ownership of Queensland land. The difficulty is that the problem could be more serious than we could possibly imagine because, quite simply, we do not know; we cannot know. Until some attempt is made to establish a register, we will never know the extent of foreign ownership.

The absurd thing is that no logical reason has been given for not implementing that decision. To suggest that the register will not be set up in 1982-83, as the Lands Minister has done, is simply a cop-out. The processes to obtain this information are readily available and could be implemented almost immediately, and to suggest otherwise is to mislead this Parliament.

Firstly, as regards those foreigners holding land at the moment or prior to legislation, if it were to be introduced—probably the simplest approach would be to require that they submit a report within a set period giving the details of all their holdings and the beneficial ownership of the land. That is not dissimilar from what happens on an annual basis in the United States of America. Given reasonable notification by way of advertising, notices, etc., and substantial penalties, there is no reason why that approach should not work.

As regards subsequent acquisitions of land after legislation is introduced—information can be handled effectively through the Valuer-General's Department. Currently, I am advised that on each transfer of land the Valuer-General must be advised. It would be a simple matter for the purchaser to fill out one more form to comply with the needs of a register, and to put that in at the same time. It can be done; it can be done now. It cannot responsibly be deferred.

People on the land are seriously concerned about the extent of foreign land holdings. There is a feeling abroad that land prices are being held artificially high at a difficult time, a time of little return, a time of drought, at a time when, as always, we seek to induce more young Queenslanders to go onto the land.

There is a fear of absentee landlords who fail to work their holdings properly. There is a fear of inadequate attention by these same absentee landlords to weed control, soil conservation and vermin. They are matters of vital importance to the future of those on the land. Those fears can be allayed if the facts are known. There is only one way

in which the facts can be known, that is, to establish the register of ownership of land in this State by foreigners not next year, but now. There is no excuse for deferring the implementation of at least the first part of this proposal immediately and to ignore it is to ignore responsible government.

Queensland's Economy

Mr FOURAS (South Brisbane) (12.30 p.m.): In recent days, in what can only be described as an opportunistic and cynical political ploy, the Deputy Premier and Treasurer (Dr Edwards) strongly attacked the Fraser Government over its economic management. This was obviously only the precursor of moves motivated by the perceived need of the Queensland Government to distance itself from the disastrous policies of the Fraser Government which, in the past, the Queensland Government has strongly supported.

Queensland was Fraser's strongest supporter for his failed new federalism policies. Queensland was Fraser's strongest supporter for his failed monetary policies and balanced-Budget philosophy.

Over and over, the Fraser Government has insisted that inflation must be brought down first before long-term economic growth can be restored. Over and over, the Fraser Government has assured us that it alone could do this. Now, even on the Fraser Government's own criteria, it has failed. Only now are we seeing the Queensland Government distance itself from Fraser's failures.

In a year in which inflation in almost every other Western country has fallen, inflation in Australia has risen from 9 per cent to 12.3 per cent. The CPI increase for the September quarter was 3.5 per cent, compared with 2 per cent for the same quarter last year. We cannot ignore or shrug off inflation of that order.

If Japan can get inflation down to 3 per cent, if West Germany can reduce inflation to 5 per cent, if the United States can reduce inflation to 6 per cent and if Britain can reduce it to 8 per cent, Australia must be able to do the same. Australia's inflation rate of 12.3 per cent is 5.5 per cent above the average of our trading partners, and will seriously affect our ability to compete on world markets. It is vital that a dramatic and drastic change in the Fraser Government's economic policies take place to reverse the sky-rocketing inflation rate. There should be changes in consumer and business confidence and stimulatory policies in capital works and public housing to attack the record, totally unacceptable unemployment levels.

I urge the Queensland Government to support the Hayden plan for economic recovery. That plan, which was announced yesterday in the Federal Parliament, makes a lot of economic sense. That plan includes a 12-month freeze on State and Commonwealth charges, a one-off increase in Commonwealth funding to States for spending on housing and capital works. Queensland needs money for public housing. Queensland has only a quarter of the public housing of South Australia and half that of the other States. The Hayden plan includes a mini-Budget before Parliament rises to stimulate the economy and to create new job opportunities. I would be politically naive if I thought that the Hayden plan would be acceptable to this Government. Economically it is certainly a commonsense plan. The Premier should support a special Premiers' conference to discuss programs to stimulate the economy. If the economy is not to worsen disastrously, a mini-Budget must be brought down before the Federal Parliament rises.

It is not good enough for the Queensland Government to continue its hard sell of Queensland as the boom State. The September unemployment figures show that 7.1 per cent of the workforce, or 74 600 persons, were unemployed in September 1982. That is unacceptable. The projection is that unemployment will be 10 per cent by September next year. We ought to be thinking about changing policies to overcome that problem.

Although the Queensland Government can point to employment growth in this State—the growth in the work-force from 983 100 in September 1981 to 994 200 in September 1982—the increase was only 1.1 per cent. When that is compared with the growth in population of those over 15 years of age during that time, the increase pales into insignificance. It is no good talking about an increase in work opportunities of 1.1 per cent when demand for work in the work-place has increased by 3.4 per cent.

The Queensland Government should not be complacent because Queensland's rate of inflation is slightly lower than that of the nation. An analysis of the September CPI shows that in three vital areas Queensland has fared substantially worse. Those areas are

home prices, local government rates and electricity charges. Those costs, added to sharp increases in the prices of milk, bread, vegetables and other essential items, have contributed to the sharp decline in the community's living standards.

The Government has allowed the prices of basic commodities such as milk and bread to increase out of hand. If the growers cannot obtain good prices for their wheat on the international market, they should not be subsidised in such a way as to make the poor in the community suffer. At least one family out of every five in Australia lives in a state of poverty. The poor people are adversely affected by large price increases in such basic commodities as milk and bread. The Government has allowed the prices of those commodities to increase at a much faster rate than that of inflation.

Of Queensland's 3.4 per cent September CPI increase, electricity contributed 0.82 per cent. That is by far the highest electricity component in any State. Every honourable member would be aware of the trauma that is faced by an increasing number of families when the quarterly electricity account arrives. Over the last four years electricity tariffs have doubled. For those families who live below the poverty level—that is, for one family in five—the electricity bill has become an intolerable burden. All honourable members receive calls for assistance from unemployed persons and families on low incomes or on social security benefits. They are asking for time to pay their electricity bills. While they are saving to pay their bills, their children are doing without lunch money. One-third of the schoolchildren in my area are not given enough money by their parents to buy lunch. It is intolerable that, because of high rentals and high electricity tariffs, some people cannot afford to feed their children.

In the financial year 1981-82 home prices increased by a massive 32 per cent. The CPI for the September quarter shows that in Queensland the figure is escalating at a faster rate than in other States. That is the result of the large influx of southerners and overseas investors who come to Queensland to speculate in property. House and land prices are climbing to a level beyond the reach of the average person. Some people simply cannot afford to buy a house and the deposit gap is widening to such an extent that they will have no hope of buying a home in the future. In Queensland, three families out of four cannot afford to buy a home.

Local government rates have been influenced by severe cut-backs in State subsidies to local authorities. The increase in local authority rates in Queensland during the September quarter is much higher than increases in other States.

In conclusion, I take the Treasurer to task on his assertions about the Government's ability to balance its Budget and his comparison between the economy in Queensland and the difficulties that are experienced by other States. The 1982 Grants Commission papers showed that for the 1980-81 financial year Queensland spent nearly $100 per head less than the average Australian expenditure on the three vital areas of health, welfare and education. In budgeting terms, that means an annual saving in excess of $200m. It is only because of Queensland's continuing disregard for family and children's needs in those three areas, in which the Queensland Government is effecting an annual saving in excess of $200m, that the Treasurer is able to skite about having a balanced Budget.

If he was fair dinkum, he would give subsidies to local communities to provide home nursing care. Welfare groups are collapsing because of a lack of financial assistance. The Treasurer should provide funds for emergency relief for people who are on inadequate incomes and cannot survive. The Queensland Government spends much less on welfare than any other Government. It should provide the resources necessary to enable the poor to be housed and the children to be educated. Queensland's education facilities should at least be equal to those in other States so that Queensland children can maximise their potential. Queensland should provide health care facilities equal to those in other States. Only when the Queensland Government does all that can the Treasurer rightfully compare Queensland with other States. It is absolute nonsense for the Treasurer to say how well this State is doing when it is continually underspending in the socially depressed areas. It is not good enough for the Government to continue to allow the voluntary sector to try to overcome the problems increasingly from its own resources.

(Time expired.)

The Australian Flag

Mr LESTER (Peak Downs) (12.40 p.m.): I call on all Queenslanders to get together in a real effort to save the design of the Australian flag.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr LESTER: Here go the members of the ALP. They do not like anything that maintains our traditional ties with the monarchy. The moment that I began speaking about this important matter, they started their gibber.

Some influential people in Australia wish to redesign the Australian flag, and it is a fact of life that they include prominent members of the ALP. That is absolute hypocrisy. At the top of all the ALP's election material is an imprint of the Australian flag; yet one finds that they are trying to do away with the traditional design of the Australian flag.

Quite frankly, I cannot work out why so many groups of people wish to redesign a flag when they do not know the significance of the design of the present flag.

Mr Hartwig: You redesigned the Queensland number-plates, didn't you?

Mr LESTER: Of course I redesigned the Queensland number-plates, but they did not have any links with royalty. The rubbishy old black and white number-plate was not reflective and, because of that, people were killed on the roads at night when vehicles collided with the rear of vehicles in front. The present Queensland number plate is reflective. It also carries a message. However, that is different from links with royalty and the traditions behind the present Australian flag.

Why change the design of a flag that has served us well? Why change something that has been designed in a way that is functional and practical and teaches us something about our history? Why change a design that was well researched?

In 1899, 30 000 people took part in a competition to design an Australian flag to coincide with the opening of the Commonwealth Parliament in 1901. Why ridicule those people who, in those early days, spent so much time in designing our flag? These days, many people say that we should retain our old buildings and all of our links with the past; yet here they are trying to break a real link with the past.

The Australian flag was designed in such a way that the State flags can tie in with it. Is there anything wrong with that? After all, that is what our great Australian nation is all about. The Australian States tie in with the Commonwealth and are part of the monarchy that binds us together.

For those honourable members who do not seem to know the significance of the design of the Australian flag, I shall explain it briefly. The Union Jack in the corner of the Australian flag is the symbol of our nation's link with the monarchy, and I do not think that that is anything to be ashamed of; in fact, I am terribly proud of it, as I think most Queenslanders are.

The Southern Cross is the insignia of the great south land, and surely to goodness no-one would say that Australia is not the great south land. Members of the ALP continually criticise Queensland and Australia and are so negative in their attitude that, had a Labor Government been in office, Queensland would not have staged the Commonwealth Games. But that is the way members of the Labor Party are; that is the way they think, and that is the way they act. Because they do not amount to a great deal, I will proceed to ignore them. Of course, the stars on the flag represent the States and Territories.

So what could be substituted for something that is so functional? The flag shows that Australia is a great south land, that it has ties with the monarchy and that it consists of States and Territories. All those thoughts are beautifully collected together on a flag that will never date and will always retain a link with the past.

The proposed alternatives do not match the significance of the Australian flag. The significance of the Eureka flag just does not compare with the Australian flag and makes one wonder what the heck Eureka was all about. I do not even understand why the Eureka flag was so named, because that is a link with a past era of which we are not very proud. I wonder where the people who are suggesting a change are trying to take us.

Another idea was to call it the Oz flag. Some elements of Australian society are not proud enough of this country to call it by its correct name. They have tried to abbreviate the name of Australia, the nation in which we live. Goodness me, will there never be an end to the shortening of names, which is a total cheapening of ourselves? Oz flag—I have never heard the like! If we have not sufficient pride to call it the Australian flag, we do not deserve to be Australians. No alternative that I have seen in any way matches the present flag.

I now ask honourable members to look back for a few moments and think of the soldiers who died in the two world wars and in Korea and Vietnam. They died for the Australian flag and for the nation's link with the monarchy. Those soldiers did not want to be there. They were there because of a sense of duty to their country and so that the people of Australia could continue to enjoy a high standard of living. I am sure that some of the revolutionaries tend to forget what our soldiers did for the nation. One wonders what those revolutionaries would do if the nation had another military call-up. Probably they would begin running, and continue to run.

Mr Blake: Don't forget the ones who survived.

Mr LESTER: That is a very good interjection from the honourable member for Bundaberg. The RSL is adamant that the Australian flag should be retained. In spite of my recent comments on this matter, I have had strong representations from the RSL.

Australians are feeling very proud at the moment. Certainly it was great to be Australians when we saw our athletes receiving their Commonwealth Games medals under the Australia flag. That bound people together and made them feel great. One should keep in mind also the great display of the Australian flag on opening day of the Commonwealth Games. Every Australian family is talking about the magnificence of that spectacle, which, of course, centred on the Australian flag that came up so beautifully through the work of the schoolchildren.

I say to those who represent multi-cultural groups that those people have come to Australia to live and should be able to accept Australia as it is and be part of it. If they are not happy to accept us as Australians, they should go back to where they came from, because they were not forced to come here in the first place.

In my opinion, this is the first subtle move in a series of moves designed to end the monarchial system and make Australia a republic. Members of this Assembly must not under any circumstances allow it to succeed. It is all very well for people to say that it does not really matter, but all movements of significance have to begin somewhere. Honourable members will recall the street marches that the Government resisted so successfully.

(Time expired.)

Sex Education Courses

Dr LOCKWOOD (Toowoomba North) (12.50 p.m.): I believe that this Parliament must lay down clear guide-lines before sex education can commence in State schools. All attempts to introduce a course without clear guide-lines must be resisted as strongly as they have been in the past. I propose that a parliamentary select committee be appointed to examine submitted material and then report to Parliament. The committee should recommend to Government that it fund only approved courses. The Government would have the responsibility to see that the courses were implemented according to the guide-lines.

The type of program I envisage is similar to that run by the Family Life Movement, formerly known as the Father/Son and Mother/Daughter Associations. The Family Life Movement would be an ideal body to prepare and present sex education to schools, because it involves the family in what is primarily a family responsibility. I believe, however, that the State should fund the full cost of the program as a service to families, our youth and society.

I do not believe that sex education courses should be devised and developed just to be dumped on teachers. Our teachers already have a very heavy work-load preparing and planning their classes, and marking essays, assignments and examinations. I do not believe that they can cope with yet another segment of education. I also point out that teachers themselves do not want this program because most of them have not been trained to teach it.

To those who deny that there is sex education in State high schools, firstly, there is reproductive physiology as part of biology; secondly, there is the basic facts of life and hygiene course for girls in home economics classes—these classes are run by State-registered nurses from the Health Department; thirdly, there is a unit of sex education within physical education courses, and finally, there are oblique references to sex in some State high school courses on human relationships. If schools are to receive a televised broadcast, that program should, first of all, be approved by Parliament, and then pre-broadcast for parental viewing out of school hours to give parents the opportunity to approve or disapprove of it and advise the school if they wished their child to be excused from that program.

I want to refer the House to an excellent film shown on television. It was prepared by the Education Department of the Australian Broadcasting Commission—from memory it was introduced by Ted Latta—and was titled, "Close-up on Starting". Perhaps some of the children in the public gallery saw that film this year or at some time in the past.

Mr Jones: Was that approved by Parliament?

Dr LOCKWOOD: No, it was not approved by Parliament, but it was a very good film of the type that I believe this Parliament can and would approve of. The film made a diagrammatic explanation of the location of reproductive organs. It presented a very well-prepared view and understanding of embryology that was equivalent to the type of training I had as a second-year medical student at the University of Queensland. The film portrayed, in real life and in movement, things that when I was a medical student I could see only in still photographs. It was part of a series titled "Close-up on Health", which was first screened in 1977. The pre-viewing brought very few objections from parents. It was shown again this year, and I am not aware of a single objection. The film was very informative. It was very strongly pro-life without making that its aim or intention.

That type of film gives children a respect for early human life. It helps them to understand what was said in this Chamber on another occasion, namely, that early human life is not just a blob of jelly; it can be clearly identified as a new human being in the very early stages of development.

Some private schools in Queensland run their own sex education courses. The courses are factual. Those schools have an advantage that is not available in State schools of accepted Judaeo-Christian morality. The teachers can comment on that, because each teacher in a church school is selected by the school. Usually those teachers have a very close affinity with the religion of the school, and their morality and Christian outlook is exactly the same as that of the school.

Last week, the "Telegraph" ran an article headed, "Sex Course Success". The course director, Mr John Browning said—

> "It works well in a Christian school, but I think the biggest difficulty in introducing a similar course into state schools will be deciding how to present the material—whether they can bring in positive or negative bias for example."

The courses can be a success, but I inform the House that sex education can be a disaster if it is not controlled—and controlled very closely.

Queensland must avoid the pitfalls that were allowed to develop in Victoria in 1980. They are still being actively fostered by the Wran Labor Government in New South Wales.

In Victoria, in 1980, sex education courses were clearly being used as a platform to promote sexual promiscuity and permissiveness in the class-room. In that State, a woman teacher demonstrated actual sexual intercourse with one of her male pupils in a sex education class. Another teacher asked 14-year-old boys to volunteer to show the class how to put on a condom. Pre-school and primary schoolchildren were told that their parents were too old to understand, and they were urged to deceive their parents. Sexual experiences were advocated for pre-adolescent children, and 11 and 12-year-old children were asked to indicate if they had had sexual intercourse.

The Victorian Minister for Education abandoned his responsibilities to the students, to the loyal, devoted and sensible teachers, to schools as a whole, the Education Department, the parents and the State of Victoria by not providing guide-lines approving the use of only suitable material and methods, and ensuring the good government of schools. The Minister said of his Deputy Minister who introduced the sex education program, "Don't ask me

to paddle in his puddle." Perhaps that is a fit summing up by one Minister of his colleague's maladministration of what he considered to be sex education. It was a muddy little puddle!

In reply to the perverted teachers' claims that parents were too old to understand, one mother said, "If I found my daughter was having this sort of instruction she would be out of that school quicker than she could pull up her pants." I make no apology for quoting her, because sexual acts had been performed in class-rooms. She also said, "Please don't tell me that, as a parent, I am too old to understand how young people feel. I am a married mother and 19 years old."

Good on mums like her! They want a big say in their children's sex education. In Queensland, I would give them that right.

In New South Wales, the churches campaigned to delete all references to lesbians and homosexuals from the New South Wales sex discrimination legislation, but Mr Wran sneaked them in as part of the ALP's platform and its promises to the perverted, by way of regulation. A campaign to undermine public morality and the family has ensued ever since.

The Rev. Fred Nile, MLC, had the book titled, "Young Gay and Proud" banned in that State, but the Sex Discrimination Board countered by publishing a list of all homosexual books then in print in New South Wales. That board also commented favourably, in its opinion, on the New South Wales School Commission's kit on homosexuality. I believe that this State can do much better.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Miller): Order! Under the provisions of the Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 5 August, the time allotted for the debate on matters of public interest has now expired.

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

SUGAR ACQUISITION ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading—Resumption of Debate

Debate resumed from 26 October (see p. 1808) on Mr Ahern's motion—

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

Mr EATON (Mourilyan) (2.15 p.m.): As some amendments have been circulated, members will probably adopt a different stance. The Bill is of great significance throughout Queensland. Discussions have been held with the people involved in the sugar industry from the Burdekin River north. The millers and farmers have expressed a great amount of concern at the short-term and long-term effects of the Bill.

I intend to refer to articles in some North Queensland newspapers, including "The North Queensland Register", "The Cairns Post", and the "Innisfail Advocate" I shall refer also to letters regarding the effect that the Bill will have on the industry.

The Bill is opposed to the free enterprise system. The Act was opposed to that system when it was introduced. The reason for its introduction was that the sugar farmers in 1915 faced the problems that are confronting the sugar farmers today owing to circumstances completely beyond their control. I am referring to the international monetary system, problems with overseas trade and various other problems that are facing not only the sugar industry but all primary industries because of strong competition on the world markets.

I refer firstly to "The Cairns Post" dated 25 October 1982. The headline reads, "'Socialism' leaps into NZ Meat Industry 'overnight'" What New Zealand is doing is exactly what the Queensland Government is trying to undo. New Zealand is trying to form a statutory body for the protection and orderly marketing of that industry's products.

The article reads—

> "The New Zealand meat industry has taken a step which some farmers are describing as an overnight leap into socialism.
>
> The private enterprise meat exporting firms have just announced they have agreed to the New Zealand Meat Producers' Board acquiring and marketing all lamb and mutton for the next two years."

That has been brought about by circumstances similar to those in Queensland. Queensland is the major producer of sugar for both the domestic and overseas markets. The article refers to the problems in New Zealand and it indicates that those problems are confronting other countries in this part of the world.

The article continues—

> "This year, the new season arrived with unsold carcasses bulging out of meat board cool stores from the last season, and overseas markets looking decidedly uncertain."

That is the sort of situation in which the sugar industry found itself prior to the introduction of the Sugar Acquisition Act of 1915. The Act was introduced by necessity. If a Government, irrespective of its political philosophy, had attempted to introduce such legislation at any other time, it would have been run out of the country, but the introduction of the Act was the only satisfactory solution to the problems that were confronting the sugar industry in 1915. For 67 years the Act has maintained orderly marketing of sugar.

It is because of the Government's inaction that this Bill is being introduced. I do not place all of the blame on the shoulders of the State Government because the Federal Government, owing to its inaction, must accept some blame. Because the industry had such a well-run and well-organised marketing scheme, sugar sold itself for many years. That is where the Government fell down. It did not establish markets for the future. It let sugar sell itself, as it did with other primary industries.

Because of the technology and production techniques used by the European Economic Community, Australia is faced with a near crisis in trying to sell its products on the world market. That has been brought about by the inactivity of the State and Federal Governments towards marketing. Primary industry bodies should have gone overseas and looked for markets. The markets around the world should have been kept open and keen so that as sugar production was increased, a market would be available for it. That is the main problem. I am sure that the Minister would be aware of that.

Pressure has been brought to bear on the Minister from the Government and the various primary industry bodies operating throughout Queensland. The farmer has gone ahead, but the marketing situation and the Government's care for the farmers and their products has fallen behind. The Government should look at that very closely and do something about it.

Nothing in the world has safeguarded the industry like the Sugar Acquisition Act. Recently, the Minister visited the North and met more than 200 farmers. He assured them that the amendments would safeguard the industry, as well as the farmer. I fail to see how amendments to an Act that has safeguarded and protected farmers for 67 years, in the uncertain economic situation that exists throughout the State, will be of benefit to them. The amendments to the Act will do nothing more than create pitfalls for the farmers.

The main clause of the Bill deals with technicalities. The Sugar Board committed an illegal act, according to legal authorities who should know. The Government is trying to introduce retrospective legislation to make legal something that was previously illegal. That is happening at a time when the Federal Government is working in reverse; it is trying to make illegal something that was previously legal. The Queensland Government is doing exactly the opposite.

I can speak with authority about the producers in North Queensland. They have put their case to the Minister. Only the sugar farmer and his bank manager would know more than myself and the Minister about the financial situation of sugar producers. Farmers have approached me on many occasions to find out what was going on in the sugar industry. They said that they had to discuss their future plans with their bankers. Many farmers have not been able to meet their commitments because of the high interest rates charged. The banks are not the only ones that should be criticised; the Government should do something about the problem. When a farmer approaches his bank manager for a loan for a new tractor, to purchase extra land, or for some other project, he is told that the bank manager is unable to grant his request for a loan at the bank interest rate because the project will not service the debt. The bank manager will introduce the farmer to another company, such as Esanda, Australian Guarantee Corporation or Custom Credit, and arrange a loan for him at a much higher interest rate after telling the farmer that

he could not service the loan at the bank interest rate. The bank should be made to pay the piper because in some instances the banks have forced farmers into their present predicament.

In the old days a banker would advise his customer. On most occasions the customer would take his advice. Today, bankers are telling their customers that their requests cannot be granted through the normal banking channels. However, they introduce them to a personal loan institution or a hire-purchase company that charges high interest rates.

Those lending institutions say, "The risk is high, so you have to pay higher interest." I can assure honourable members that the banks themselves are deciding that the risks are high. That is the way they want it to be. They are refusing to lend under the banking system, which was set up to enable people to borrow money from the banks at bank interest rates. However, the banks have diversified into the finance field. Some farmers, too, wish to diversify into agricultural or cattle-grazing, but, the banks believe that the banks should be the only ones who are entitled to diversify.

Under the Act, the farmer is guaranteed a fair return for his product. The farmers are concerned that that will no longer be so. The present outlook for the sugar industry is rather gloomy. This morning the Treasurer said that people should not have a gloomy outlook but should look to the future, because it is bright and prosperous. How will the Treasurer tell farmers and the unemployed that they should look pleasant and happy and that they face bright prospects in the future? The Government is starting to believe its own propaganda. It believes that it can legislate to provide for conditions that are experienced in a boom period, whereas in many respects Queensland is facing a crisis. Nowhere are the indications of a crisis greater than they are in the Bill.

The Bill also makes provision for the creation of the Sugar Board as a body corporate. Under the Act, the members of the board cannot be held liable and they cannot be sued. In effect, they are protected. In any litigation in which money is involved, it is tied up until the litigation is brought to an end. In the future, sugar moneys could be tied up by litigation. No matter what assurances are given by the Government, I am convinced that the provisions in the Bill will not protect the sugar industry for 67 years as the Act has done.

Mr Ahern: The Sugar Board can be sued at the moment. There is nothing to prevent that.

Mr Casey: Yes, there is—a proclamation by the Minister.

Mr EATON: Yes, under a proclamation. The board can be sued in certain areas; but I take it that the intention is to make it a body corporate over and above what it is now.

Mr Ahern: Yes.

Mr EATON: A great deal of legal advice is floating around. Farmers have shown me copies of statements that have been made. At what level legal advice was given—whether it was by barristers or solicitors—I do not know. However, certain areas of concern have been raised.

Mr Ahern: If it is in the proclamation, the proclamation is ultra vires.

Mr EATON: It is what?

Mr Ahern: Ultra vires.

Mr EATON: This whole procedure can be likened to that of a secret society. No-one has been able to find out anything. I know that the Bill was introduced many weeks ago and that all members have had time to study it. However, many questions remain unanswered. I do not doubt that at times confidentiality has to be maintained. I do not expect such confidentiality to be broken.

At a meeting as recently as Sunday night, the Minister claimed that he had informed the Queensland Cane Growers Council in writing and that he was able to get answers from the Cane Growers Executive.

Doubt has been cast on the members of the executive of the Queensland Cane Growers Council. Certain members of the mill suppliers and sugar farmers organisations felt that the Cane Growers Council executive let them down. One member said

that he received the information in writing on Friday night. He is a farmer and, like everyone else, he did not have time to consider the matter. The doubt that has been cast on the members of the executive of that body has flowed right through the industry. The action that the members of the Sugar Board took in making their decision without consultation has created the problems that the sugar industry faces today, and that is the reason why amendments are being made to the Sugar Acquisition Act. Because of illegalities that were committed prior to the last sugar season, or even this sugar season, the Government is introducing amendments to try to make legal something that was illegal when it was done.

In answer to a question the Minister was asked when he was up North, he said that the Act was old and, because it was old, it needed to be changed. I do not doubt that some Acts are out of date and need changing. It is part of the Government's job to keep up with the times and to make changes in legislation when they are necessary. However, we do not believe that that is sufficient reason for introducing amendments to the Sugar Acquisition Act. No other Act in Australia has proven its worth more and protected an industry more than Queensland's Sugar Acquisition Act. That is why Opposition members from sugar areas will fight the Bill tooth and nail. That is why I have taken such a strong stand in this debate. I have tried to fight the farmers' case. Yesterday, a deputation of farmers flew down from North Queensland to try to get a last minute reprieve for the industry. That indicates the lengths to which the farmers are prepared to go to prevent the Sugar Acquisition Act from being altered in any way.

On many occasions in this Chamber reference has been made to the problems in the sugar industry. Last night, the member for Mulgrave referred to some of the problems in the industry in North Queensland.

Another matter of concern to producers is that once the Act is altered, it could give an open go to the members of the Sugar Board, who are not accountable to anybody in Queensland. When the member for Mulgrave was speaking last night, I interjected and said, "It is like being appointed to the House of Lords. It is a job for life."

The members of the Sugar Board do not have to account to anybody. They can roam the country at will. The proof of the pudding is to be found in the fact that they committed an illegality. The Government appointed them to the Sugar Board, not because of their ability but because they belonged to a certain political party and had a certain amount of experience in the sugar industry. They were appointed over those persons whose names were recommended to the Minister by the elected representatives of the cane growers' associations. I think that the members of the Sugar Board have overstepped the mark, and that is something at which the Government should look. Because the members of the Sugar Board have held their positions for so long, they have become a law unto themselves.

Mr Menzel: Next time we will have to get some northerners on the Sugar Board.

Mr EATON: I am 100 per cent in agreement with the member for Mulgrave. That is a very good suggestion.

Those are the areas at which the Government has to look very closely when it is making appointments to the Sugar Board. The Government knows full well that when the legislation dealing with the fishing industry was introduced into the Parliament last year, we recommended that a percentage of the members appointed to the board should be elected by the people at the grass roots level of the industry. I realise that the Government has to appoint certain persons to boards so that everybody is kept honest. That is fair enough in areas in which the Government has to foot the bill.

If I were in charge of the Government, I would appoint people to look after the State's interests and to keep me informed. In some areas, the Government made a concession and said that it would make an appointment from a list of nominees. As so often happens, the person appointed has not even been on the list of those nominated. That has consistently been the history of the Government since it came to power.

Many sections of primary industry other than the sugar industry are facing hardship and hard times. The Parliament is being asked to amend an Act to make legal something that in the past was illegal. That is a shocking state of affairs, because so many times we have heard from Government members criticism of the Federal Government for

its introduction of retrospective legislation. Many suggestions, that could get the Government off the hook, have been made to the Minister. I sent a telegram to him suggesting that finance could be arranged through the private banking system so that the repayments owed by mills that had borrowed money from the Sugar Board could be guaranteed by the Government. Quite often the Government says that the private banking system always has money to lend to worthy and needy causes. The money could be repaid to the Sugar Board. This Bill would not then be needed, and the Sugar Acquisition Act could remain unamended.

Under no circumstances should the Sugar Acquisition Act be amended, because the purpose for which it was created is defeated once the Act is tampered with. Its initial purpose was to safeguard the producer and to provide for the orderly marketing of the industry's product so that, in the longer term, the producer knew the exact amount of money that he would receive for his crop. That is the basis upon which the sugar industry was developed.

The Sugar Acquisition Act was first enacted when farmers were walking off farms, and the industry is again facing a similar situation. At that time, the biggest landholder in the State was the Agricultural Bank, and over half of the people who had borrowed money from it were either walking off their farms or hanging onto them merely as caretakers for the bank until a suitable purchaser was found. If the sugar industry does not overcome the difficulties now facing it, a similar situation could arise. The present circumstances have arisen because of certain actions taken by the Government, and because of the state of the world economy, the money systems and the marketing of agricultural products.

In previous years, the sugar industry has been held up as an example to various primary industry organisations, many of which wanted the industry in which they were involved organised in a similar manner. The sugar industry's organisation has carried it through two world wars, depressions, boom periods and the floods and droughts that are encountered by all primary producers. That is proof that the Sugar Acquisition Act has been very good legislation.

Mr MUNTZ (Whitsunday) (2.39 p.m.): I am pleased to have the opportunity to enter the debate. At the outset, I should like to trace the history of the sugar industry, an industry that is important to both Queensland and Australia.

Australia is the fourth largest producer of cane sugar in the world and the second largest exporter. In the 1981 season, Australia's 33 raw-sugar mills, 30 of which are in Queensland, produced over 25 million tonnes of cane to produce a record 3.4 million tonnes of sugar. In the last 10 years the industry has grown by more than 20 per cent.

During the 1981 calendar year, Australia exported 3 million tonnes of sugar, which is 12.7 per cent of the value of Australian agricultural exports and 5.4 per cent of total Australian exports. Over the last 10 years, sugar has represented about 11 per cent of the gross production in Queensland—that is agriculture, forestry, mining and manufacturing industries—just under 6 per cent of total Australian agricultural production, and just under 5 per cent of total Australian exports.

The Australian sugar industry has always fulfilled its quota and stockholding obligations under various international marketing agreements to which it has been a party. The industry's outstanding performance in that respect was recognised recently by the International Sugar Organisation when Australia was allocated the highest export quota for the last two years of the current International Sugar Agreement.

Sugar-cane farming, with its small farm system, has brought close settlement and intensive development to the coast of Queensland. Approximately 300 000 people, or about half of the total population of the tropical part of Australia, live in the sugar-producing districts north of the Tropic of Capricorn. The sugar industry provides employment directly and indirectly for about 200 000 people throughout Australia, particularly in Queensland. Approximately 6 800 growers grow sugar-cane along 2 100 km of the coast between Mossman and Grafton. The total area of land allocated to cane growing as at 31 December 1981 was over 374 452 ha.

The sugar industry has played a large part in Queensland's being the most decentralised of the mainland States. More than half of Queensland's population lives outside Brisbane, whereas less than 40 per cent of the population of other States resides outside of the capital cities.

Not only does the sugar industry produce raw sugar; it also finances and operates six bulk sugar terminals designed specifically for the storage and outloading of sugar for domestic and export markets. The terminals have a combined storage capacity of almost 2 000 000 tonnes and make up the world's largest bulk sugar handling system. To transport sugar-cane, Australian sugar mills own, operate and maintain about 3 500 km of narrow-gauge railway and 220 diesel locomotives and associated rolling-stock.

The Australian sugar industry operates within a framework of complementary Commonwealth and Queensland legislation. The Commonwealth Sugar Agreement Act of 1979 approves a sugar agreement between the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments under which—

(1) The Queensland Government undertakes that it will exercise control over, and will acquire raw sugar produced in the State, and that it will purchase raw sugar produced in New South Wales.

(2) The Commonwealth undertakes to control the import of sugar into Australia.

(3) A maximum price for refined sugar sold in Australia is established as at the commencement of the argreement, together with a formula for the annual adjustment of that price.

The Queensland Government fulfils its obligations under the sugar agreement largely through the application of the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act and the Sugar Acquisition Act of 1915 and proclamations thereunder. Under the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act, production quotas are established for all Queensland sugar-mills and cane farms, as is the mechanism for determining the price paid by mill owners to farmers for their sugar-cane.

The Sugar Acquisition Act enables the Queensland Government to acquire the raw sugar produced in Queensland, with the sugar manufacturer becoming entitled to the value of the commodity. The Act then provides the Government with the power to refine and market the sugar acquired.

Four proclamations are issued annually under the Act. The first three are issued prior to the commencement of each season. They are to extend the operation of the Act, to acquire the sugar to be produced in the coming season, and to set terms and conditions for that acquisition. The fourth proclamation is issued at the end of the season to set final prices for the raw sugar acquired.

The Sugar Board was established in 1923 by proclamation under the Sugar Acquisition Act, and changes in board membership are provided for in subsequent proclamations. The board's functions are to oversee, on behalf of the Queensland Government, which is the owner of the sugar, the marketing and disposal of each season's crop and to make recommendations to the Minister as it considers appropriate. In this role, the board oversees the performance of CSR Limited and Millaquin Sugar Company Limited in refining and marketing sugar for the domestic market and the performance of CSR Limited in marketing raw sugar for export and in providing seasonal finance and other services to the Queensland Government.

The Sugar Board also has powers and functions, described in the Harbours Act, in relation to the provision and operation of the bulk-sugar terminals in Queensland ports and, under the Sugar Board Act of 1966, in relation to the borrowing of money and, subject to the Minister's approval, actions taken to assist the marketing of sugar.

When the Sugar Acquisition Act became law in 1915, Australia was a net importer of sugar. Exports commenced in 1923. Mainly because of growth in the past 20 years, Australia has become one of the world's largest sugar exporters. Despite this major change in size and emphasis, only relatively minor changes have been made over that period in the industry's legislative framework and structural arrangements. In fact, there has been no change in the Sugar Acquisition Act since its introduction in 1915.

The growth of the industry through development of export markets has been based on the establishment of sound commercial relationships within the Australian industry. That demonstrates its capacity as a reliable supplier of high-quality raw sugar. The sugar is sold for refining and consumption in a known destination to a buyer of commercial integrity.

The development of that export-marketing policy has included the selling arrangements under which, at times, sugar may be sold forward beyond the current season—for example, long-term agreements; quantity control arrangements and research work in raw sugar quality; the construction and operation of the bulk sugar terminals; and continuing expansion and development works at these terminals.

Perhaps the most important reason for Australia's having been able to develop successfully its export markets has been the establishment and maintenance of a reputation for a high-quality product. To that end, the following procedures and arrangements have been developed and have had industry-wide acceptance—

1. The setting in each season by the Minister of standards for different raw sugar quality characteristics.

2. The operation of bonus penalty arrangements providing financial incentives for the protection of raw sugar that meets the standards.

3. Authorisation of expenditure from industry proceeds on research into raw sugar quality comprising, firstly, the analysis and measurement of a quality problem and, secondly, the development of a solution to that problem.

That expenditure is charged against total industry proceeds and has averaged less than .08 per cent of total income over the past 10 seasons. The cost should be measured against the sales benefits achieved as a result of that research expenditure. It would not be unrealistic to suggest that the benefits could be of the order of 3 per cent to 7 per cent, or perhaps even up to 10 per cent.

The present industry differs greatly from that current when the Sugar Acquisition Act became law in 1915. Notable changes have occurred in technology, markets and scale of production. The industry's continuing development will require that an increasing share of production be exported. Under present marketing conditions and trends, increasing attention to raw sugar quality and increasing flexibility in marketing arrangements are perceived as being vital to meet the challenges of competitors.

Last year, some doubts were raised about the legal authorities that exist in respect to raw sugar quality and marketing procedures. That led the Government and the Sugar Board to examine whether the Sugar Acquisition Act provides adequate authority for actions currently being carried out or likely to be required for the continuation and future development of the industry.

Legal opinion was that a number of the provisions contained in the third proclamation that is issued each season under the Sugar Acquisition Act are invalid. In particular, there appears to be no legal basis for—

1. The setting of raw sugar quality standards.

2. The bonus penalty scheme administered in respect to those standards.

3. The authorisation and funding of research into the raw sugar quality during manufacture of the sugar.

4. Payment of any delivery advances at increased rates on up-to-peak sugar beyond the initial rates specified in the third proclamation.

5. Payment of advances on excess or in-store sugar.

6. Payment of certain allowances in relation to transport and production of certain types of sugar.

There are also doubts about the powers of the Government or the marketing agent with respect to long-term contracts for the sale of sugar. The various proclamations each season under the Sugar Acquisition Act relate only to that season, whereas such contracts extend to cover sugar not yet made.

Except in respect of advances, the deficiencies mentioned cannot be overcome by issuing a further proclamation or proclamations. The Act does not provide the appropriate authority. In the short term, it is necessary for the Act to be amended to provide that authority.

The Government, having acquired all raw sugar produced in the State under the Sugar Acquisition Act, is responsible for disposing of that sugar. Under its sugar agreement with the Commonwealth, the Queensland Government must first supply the domestic market with refined sugar. This is done on behalf of the Government by CSR Limited and Millaquin Sugar Company Pty Limited. The refining and marketing of refined sugar in Australia is supervised on behalf of the Government by the Sugar Board.

The Sugar Board also supervises the export marketing of the remainder of the raw sugar produced. The marketing itself is done by CSR Limited, the Government's agent. As to the remainder, we must bear in mind that more than three-quarters of Australia's raw sugar is now exported. In actual terms, exports are now about 2.5 million tonnes per year—a far cry from 1930, when just over 200 000 tonnes were exported.

The growth of the sugar industry, particularly in respect of exports, is an outstanding example of Australian enterprise and discipline. Australia is one of the largest sugar exporters in the world and sugar is one of Australia's most important primary exports. Australia's export markets have been hard won. One of the main reasons why the Australian industry has been able to sell sugar overseas is that it has been quality-conscious. The Government, through the Sugar Board and the industry, has worked to ensure that the sugar sent overseas has met the requirements of its customers. In terms of production, that has meant that the industry has produced to quality standards set each season by the Minister. The teeth in this scheme, I believe, come from bonuses and penalties that are applied in respect of those standards. Perhaps, more fundamentally, the industry has carried out research into quality problems as they arose—what caused them and how they could be overcome.

Some of this work is funded from levies paid directly by growers and millers to the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations and the Sugar Research Institute. Other research is commissioned by the Sugar Board and funded from industry proceeds. This research into market-oriented problems has been carried out over the years with the concurrence of industry leaders, as has the operation of the quality control program.

The Sugar Board convenes meetings of industry associations on a regular basis. Indeed, the great success of the sugar industry arises from the fact that representatives from all sectors—cane growers, millers, Sugar Board and the Department of Primary Industries—meet and discuss the major issues confronting the industry as a whole. Decisions affecting the industry are taken in the light of the outcome of those discussions.

Doubts have been raised about the legal authority of some of the practices under which the industry operates and to which the industry has agreed in the past. It is important to remember that. When the Minister was made aware of the doubts he quite rightly sought to have the Act amended at the earliest opportunity. All that the Bill seeks to do is give legal backing to what has been done in good faith and for the good of the industry for many years. By "the industry", I mean the growers and the millers alike throughout the State. It will also enable established industry practices over the years to continue.

Mr Eaton: Rubbish!

Mr MUNTZ: The honourable member might say it is rubbish but I do not think it is.

It has been suggested in some quarters that research into raw sugar quality of the type commissioned by the Sugar Board and funded from industry proceeds should be paid for by sugar millers. Some cane growers argue that it is wrong that they bear a larger proportion than millers of the cost of such research. However, it must be remembered that the proceeds of the sugar industry are split roughly two-thirds to the cane-growing sector of the industry and one-third to the millers. Thus any expenditure taken out of the proceeds before distribution is in effect a charge to the cane growers and the millers in the same 2:1 ratio.

Those who now argue that research into raw sugar quality should be funded by millers alone forget an important fact, namely, that quality problems in raw sugar can be introduced by the cane from which the sugar is produced. It could appear anywhere throughout Queensland at any time. Had it appeared in the southern part of the State, the southern growers would face the same problems as those faced by the growers in Mackay. Had it appeared in the North, there would have been a different argument from the growers in the Far North.

Those who argue that research into raw sugar quality should be funded by millers alone are quite prepared to accept two-thirds of the export income that has been won because of the high quality of Australia's raw sugar. They would be the first to complain if export markets were lost because of poor-quality sugar. But, of course, if markets were lost because of poor-quality sugar, all would suffer—the cane growers, the

sugar millers and Queensland as a whole. All growers from one end of the State to the other would suffer. That would be intolerable and that is why the Bill deserves support. That is what I intend to give to it.

If the Bill does not become law the Government will lose its ability to influence the quality of the product that it is required to market. That would be a retrograde step for the whole of Queensland.

The amending legislation is needed to authorise certain loans arranged by the Sugar Board for four raw sugar mills in the Mackay area. The loans were arranged by the board in the belief that the necessary authorising power was provided by the existing legislation. The legal opinion has been given that insufficient power was contained in the sugar legislation for those loans to be arranged.

What has been done, has been done. If the power did not or does not exist, there is no alternative course of action we could or should take other than to correct the situation by validating the loans and their repayment. It must be remembered that those loans are not gifts.

Let us look at the facts surrounding the loans. Some years ago, a quality problem emerged in respect of sugar from the Mackay area and other areas of Queensland. The Sugar Board recognised that the problem could damage not only Mackay, but also the industry as a whole. The whole industry would have been affected if the problem had been allowed to continue. It was not possible to segregate Mackay sugar, the Far North sugar and the southern sugar because we export Australian sugar as a product. We must always be very careful to refer to it as an Australian product. One particular area cannot be isolated.

A research program was funded over a number of years from industry proceeds, as has other research into raw sugar quality matters. We should all be grateful that, as a result of the work that was done, a satisfactory part solution to the problem was developed—first in the laboratory, then on a pilot scale, and then at factory level.

Certain mills in Mackay were then required to install the plant which had been developed. The plants are expensive and cost millions of dollars. It was therefore quite reasonable for the mills to seek financial assistance. What else could they do? It was reasonable that they should seek assistance from the Sugar Board. The Sugar Board believed that it was doing the right thing in arranging for those loans. Only after the moneys had been advanced and the plants installed at the mills did the legal doubts surface.

The amending legislation is needed to authorise the loans and their repayment under the agreed terms. The latter seems to be forgotten all the time. The Bill deals with the repayment of the loans that received industry consent under the agreed terms at the time. The loans followed on from the research program that was carried out when the quality problem arose. We are faced also with legal doubts about funding of such research from industry proceeds and about other aspects of the industry's raw sugar quality practices.

We would all like to think that Queensland could sell its sugar without having to spend money on ensuring that the sugar meets the quality requirements of our customers. That is just not on.

The industry in Queensland has been able to grow as it has in a competitive market only because it has been prepared to spend money on research and accept the disciplines of quality control.

With the surpluses of sugar currently being experienced on the world market, there is increasing pressure on us to produce good quality sugar. If we do not, we could lose our hard-won markets. Therefore, it is important that we continue to have quality control, and that we continue as necessary to carry out research to overcome any quality problems that arise. It is also reasonable that market-oriented research, which is for the good of the industry as a whole, should be funded from industry proceeds.

The last thing that we want is disunity and disharmony within the industry in the prevailing economic climate. Together with other responsible members, I have sensed the ripples of such a situation and would be prepared to agree to the proposed sunset clause that the Minister has circulated to validate financial arrangements already made, as long as the proposed legislation is proceeded with immediately. Over a proposed

two-year period a complete review of all sugar industry legislation would be carried out, finalised and recommendations considered, and then put into effect at the expiration of that two-year period.

I commend the Minister for proposing the amendments, and particularly the compromise in the amendments circulated in the House today, under which the provisions of new sections 4 and 4B shall cease to operate on 31 October 1984. That is a compromise until a full inquiry is carried out and its recommendations implemented.

Mr CASEY (Mackay) (3 p.m.): The Sugar Acquisition Act is one of the most historic pieces of legislation passed by any Parliament in Australia. One must go back to the intent of that legislation to realise what was in the minds of the people who introduced it. It has stood the test of time for 67 years.

I claim to know a little about this historic legislation, because I happen to know where the idea was first formulated. It was put forward by a person in the Mackay district who was a very close friend of my grandparents. It was put forward after discussions with various people. Subsequently, when the T. J. Ryan Government came into office in 1915, which was one of the first Labor Governments in Queensland in its own right, it enacted the Sugar Acquisition Act in order to pull the sugar industry out of the mire into which it had been pushed.

The industry was pushed into the mire by various groups of people—by major mill owners and by major plantation companies. The people who were suffering were the little people in the industry—the mill workers, farm workers and the farmers themselves. The Act enabled them to get together and to become united, and from there to move forward to make the sugar industry into the greatest and best organised primary industry that Queensland has ever seen.

I have stated in this House before, and I state it again, that the Sugar Acquisition Act of 1915 is the greatest example of democratic socialised legislation anywhere. It is the epitome of the socialisation of production, distribution and exchange, which has been Labor policy since the Labor Party was founded. Under that policy, the sugar industry helped to formulate various co-operatives and various sugar companies. It also protected the farmers and the workers in the mills and on the farms.

Mr Menzel interjected.

Mr CASEY: The honourable member for Mulgrave made a lot of money under that Labor legislation. Many National Party members made a lot of money as the result of the introduction of that Labor Party socialised legislation. Whether they like it or not, it is the best piece of legislation that this nation has ever seen.

Mr FitzGerald interjected.

Mr CASEY: I can tell the honourable member for Lockyer that a few people in his area would be better off if they had adopted the same concept in their fruit and vegetable industry and other primary industries.

The Sugar Acquisition Act was designed for one reason and one reason alone: to allow the Government of Queensland to acquire and sell the sugar crop. Financially, certain farms and farm areas were being disadvantaged by the people who at that time had control of the marketing of Queensland's sugar. Farmers, when they planted their crop, were uncertain whether they would get it taken off and sold or whether they would be victimised, as so many of them were, by certain mill owners and milling companies, some of which still survive today and are behind the introduction of this legislation. The farmers were victimised. They were not sure that they could get their crop off.

The Sugar Acquisition Act was only the beginning. After it came other legislation to ensure that the farmers were paid for their sugar on the basis of quality. Each and every cane grower in Queensland had an opportunity to develop his farm instead of being victimised by the mill owners, who perhaps were not prepared to take his crop. So the system of peaks and assignments evolved under Labor legislation.

A very important aspect of that legislation was that it was so formulated that the sugar industry was controlled by the sugar industry itself, under Government legislation. The provisions contained in the Bill are the first major step that has been taken since 1915 to take control of the sugar industry out of the hands of the very people who should

control it—the people involved in the industry. No matter how much this Parliament talks about sunset clauses and validating actions taken by the Sugar Board, the fact remains that the Bill is the first step that has been taken in 67 years to take the control of the sugar industry from those people who organised and are involved in the industry.

These changes are not wanted by the industry, nor are they sought by it. Yet they are to come about at a time when the sugar industry is running into one of the most difficult periods in the memory of honourable members in this House. Certainly the industry has faced harder times. But since 1915, because of the Sugar Acquisition Act, most of the hardships have gone out of the industry. The industry was organised. It was a model for all other primary industries in Australia; and I heard members from all political parties say that.

Why is the Government at this time trying to knock down the sugar industry? The industry is experiencing two great tragedies. The first is outside of its own control, to an extent, and if time permits I shall return to that. The Sugar Board has a lot to answer for in the marketing work in which it has supposedly been involved in the last 10 years, especially since 1974 when Britain entered the European Economic Community. The members of the Sugar Board had it too easy for too long, and when the crunch came they fell flat on their faces and had to try to pick themselves up again to get some long-term major contracts.

I regret to say that my studies show that, unless there is a major disaster somewhere in the world, there is not much hope for a recovery in the price of sugar in the immediate future—and by "immediate future", I mean the next 12 months to two years. Those farmers who are established in the industry will be able to hang on very shakily, but those who are paying the exorbitant interest rates today are already feeling the pinch.

Let me refer to the actual payments to cane growers in the Babinda mill area, which is in the electorate of the member for Mulgrave, and in the Racecourse mill area, which is in my electorate and which adjoins Mackay which had the highest c.c.s. in the State. Because of the practices of the mills, the income of growers in the Racecourse mill area was 50 per cent higher than the income of growers in the Babinda mill area.

Mr Menzel interjected.

Mr CASEY: The honourable member knows as well as I do that for the last 10 years the Babinda mill has been flat out reaching its peak and honouring its commitments to the sugar industry of Queensland and of Australia. It does not have anything to be very proud of.

The second very real tragedy in the sugar industry is that at long last the National Party has its grubby, greedy hands on the industry—and, in that sense, I distinguish the National Party from the previous County Party. I mean no personal offence to the present Minister for Primary Industries, but the John Rows or Ernie Evanses would never have introduced legislation to alter the Sugar Acquisition Act. No way in the world would those long-term members of the Country Party have done that. They knew and understood the intent of the legislation, the way in which it operated, the good that it had done for the industry and the necessity to maintain it in its present form. No way in the world would they have introduced legislation to change the Act.

Under this Bill the Government is trying to set up the Sugar Board as an overriding authority. It will be responsible virtually to no-one. It will take complete control of the sugar industry. Cane growers in this State should look very hard at that because, basically, it is their industry. They also should look very hard at the political philosophies of some of their representatives on the Queensland Cane Growers Council. Tragically, and unfortunately, too many of the members on the council, as they have entered the council rooms, have been prepared to place party politics ahead of sugar industry politics.

There is the old story, "Don't rock the boat. We are going along fine in Government. Let us keep going in Government. We have been there for 25 years now. We do not want to upset the applecart. We know what is best for the industry. This should be best for it. The party says this is best for it and maybe we will go along with it." Of course, we have seen what has happened overnight to certain back-bench members of the National Party. Today, they are prepared to sacrifice principles that they espoused in this Chamber last night.

They have done that despite the efforts of the farmers in their electorates, despite the pressures that have been brought to bear on them and despite their own consciences and their own knowledge that in order to maintain the livelihoods of cane growers and the overall aspects of the sugar industry the Sugar Acquisition Act must be retained as it is.

In future the Sugar Board will be the overriding body. It will be able to walk in and do as it likes, as it has done, unfortunately, for a number of years now. The sugar industry will lose control over itself to that overriding Sugar Board. Let us consider how that board is constituted. Of course, an example of that is the way in which the chairman of the board was appointed the year before last. An old broken-down politician was taken out of this House and put in as head of the Sugar Board, just so that the National Party could have complete control over it. That is how things have begun to deteriorate.

I now consider the cane growers representative. Traditionally their representative was selected from among their own ranks and that nominee was always accepted by the Government. In fact, I can go even further back in time. The person who was the cane growers representative on the Sugar Board for such a long time and who had been appointed by a Labor Government was also accepted by the Country-Liberal Party Government of the State, as it then was. That Government realised the value and worth of the person who was the cane growers representative on the board.

However, what happened when a change was made recently? Was the appointee of the cane growers of Queensland appointed to the Sugar Board to look after their overall interests in the acquisition and sale of their product? Certainly not! Another person was appointed by the Government. Did the Cane Growers Council Executive kick up a row about it at the time? No, it did not because it did not want to rock the political boat once more. The council is just as much to blame as the Government for getting the growers into the trouble in which they now find themselves.

For years the moguls of the National Party have been trying to get control of the sugar industry, and at long last they have. One of the things that had always stood in their way was the practice in the sugar industry that before any major change was contemplated, whether it was a change in the concept of mill assignments, expansion or in method of payment, a judicial inquiry was held under the Commissions of Inquiry Acts. Those inquiries travelled the length and breadth of the sugar-growing areas of the State and gave every person within the industry—from the smallest grower to the largest, a representative on a mill suppliers committee or even a person who sought to get on such a committee but was beaten every year—an opportunity to appear before them and state his views on the industry.

What has happened on this occasion? The Government has introduced legislation that alters the very foundations of the sugar industry without any such committee of inquiry having ever been appointed. I know that since the matter has been raised and since people have said that a committee of inquiry should have been appointed, the Minister has said that there will be an inquiry. It is the old National Party story—shut the gate after the horse has bolted. That is what is happening now.

Mr Ahern: That commitment was made one month ago.

Mr CASEY: The Minister says he made the commitment one month ago. That reinforces what I have said. Before the legislation was introduced, and certainly before the Bill was debated in this place, I and others said that a committee of inquiry should be appointed. What the Minister is now doing is shutting the gate after the horse has bolted, which is typical of the actions of the National Party.

The old Country Party Ministers would not have done that. They would have made sure a committee of inquiry was held. But, no, the National Party now has a new breed in it; the National Party is no longer controlled by the cane-growing industry of the State; it is controlled by the big three millers: Bundaberg Sugar Co. Ltd, Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd and CSR Ltd. They are the bodies that manipulate the National Party's sugar politics. Sir Roderick Proctor and others like him have taken over the Sugar Board.

Government members cannot deny that those three companies have taken over and are dictating sugar policy, not the bloke who is battling his heart out under tough conditions trying to produce sugar for this nation's coffers. Consequently, those big three companies now have the Government's ear. Of course, they are well off. They have diversified every inch of the way with the money they have made out of the sugar industry in the good

times. They can weather the tough times. Bundaberg Sugar has interests in coalfields, and has even built a pipeline from Newcastle to Sydney. It is involved in other enterprises as well. We all know that CSR has diversified into coal and building materials. It will hold on. It will not have to battle like the growers in the Babinda area and some of the other areas that have been mentioned here today. If this legislation is passed, it will set the pattern for the degree of domination of the sugar industry by those companies in the future.

There are a few points on which I want to straighten a few people out. Everybody is talking about the problems in the Mackay area. Typically, when the problem of quality arose—it did not arise yesterday, the day before or the day before that; it arose more than a decade ago—members of the National Party hoped that if they ran away and hid their heads in the sand, ostrich-like, nobody would worry about it. But it would not go away. Had the penalty and bonus provisions been enforced—they were capable of being enforced and had been followed by the industry in the past—there would have been fewer problems. The implementation of those provisions would have forced the mills into doing something there and then, when they could afford it.

This quality problem occurred in other areas. I think the Minister will accept that it was not confined to the Mackay area, although it occurred first there. The problem just would not go away, and that is when an investigation should have been conducted, not now, as I said before, after the horse has bolted.

I now turn to another important point. Earlier in the debate reference was made to an attempt to divide the industry. There has been a lot of criticism of the Mackay district, and one would think from the comments of the honourable member for Mulgrave that it was the only villain of the piece. Many other things have been happening in the industry. Without exception, every expansion in the sugar industry in Queensland in the past 20 years has been based on the ability of the Mackay district to produce sugar, because the expansion——

Mr Menzel: But they can't sell.

Mr CASEY: The honourable member benefited. The money went into his pocket. He cannot deny that he received an increase in his assignment in the past 10 years, because he did. I could find the gazettes showing his farm peak. He has had his share, and he obtained it because the Mackay district was able to produce the sugar that the Sugar Board acquired and could then sell to markets that were opening up. Because it continued to sell to those markets, the industry was able to complete an expansion in a proper and orderly fashion.

It was not just the Mackay district that was able to expand; the expansion occurred throughout Queensland. If members look at the mill peaks and the performance of the industry in the 1970s, they will see that what I am saying is spot on. Every sugar-producing area benefited from the contribution that Mackay made and will continue to make. If Mackay had not produced that additional sugar, the industry would never have gained access to the additional markets. No-one should blame Mackay for the current problem or for the fact that it has dragged on. The blame should be sheeted home to where it truly belongs—and where this legislation shows it belongs—to the Queensland Sugar Board. It did not follow through properly what it should have been doing about acquisition and quality control. It acted illegally and continued to act illegally. It now wants power to act illegally, virtually for ever more.

The Labor Party wants the Sugar Board to fulfil its purpose. It wants it to continue to acquire and market sugar. That is why it was established, that was its intent, and that is how it should continue to operate.

If the board will not acquire sugar, because of poor quality, the mills will not be left with piles of it. They will soon knuckle down and ensure that the standard for acquisition set by the Sugar Board is met. That can be done under the present Act or the proclamations under it.

I accept that the need for quality sugar is even greater today than it was 10 to 20 years ago, because we are faced with a harder selling market. The main basis on which Queensland can, and will, continue to sell sugar is on quality and reliability of supply. On those two concepts, we can continue to be one of the world's biggest sugar exporters. We will be able to capture markets and, when times become better, we will have customers who are prepared to enter into long-term agreements with us to maintain a reliable supply

of quality sugar. If we do not ensure that the present structure of the industry is maintained, that will not occur. It is even more vital today to maintain the current industry structure.

If Government members really want to launch the demise of the sugar industry, they have only to support this Bill and give power to the Sugar Board, as has happened over the years. If they want the industry to remain the strongest primary industry in Australia they should ensure that the Sugar Acquisition Act is retained as is.

Previously, before any major structural changes came about, a committee of inquiry was held. That committee had power to subpoena books and witnesses. It had power to ensure that everything necessary was placed before it so that all in the industry knew what was going on.

I now want to present a quite simple explanation. Reference has been made to the powers transferred in 1947 from the Treasurer. In 1947, the then member for Mirani (Mr Walsh), the Treasurer of Queensland, was defeated in the State election. The incoming Treasurer in the Labor Government was a Mr Larcombe, the member for Rockhampton.

Mr Davis: Jimmy Larcombe.

Mr CASEY: Yes. He was a great bloke, but he did not know the first thing about the sugar industry—and he was the first to admit it.

By proclamation the powers were transferred to Mr Collins, the member for Tablelands—the man who was known affectionately as "Silver" Collins. He took over the operations of this legislation from that time, and it has since remained in that portfolio. I do not think any great argument turns on that.

The Bill contains many anomalies. Why under some provisions can the Minister, under his powers, direct the Sugar Board to do certain things, while under others he will request that it does certain things? Why have we to change the Sugar Board to a body corporate, when the best protection provided for this legislation was the fact that, if it ran into any problems, the Minister, by way of proclamation under the Sugar Acquisition Act, could make sure that the Sugar Board was covered?

I do not believe that we should ever support such legislation in this place without the Minister telling us honestly, firmly and clearly—which he did not do in his speech—just why the validation of certain things is necessary. What has been the cost to the industry? How much have the growers missed out in direct payments from the top of the pool? All of this information had to be drawn out by different methods, instead of the Minister's being open and honest.

In common with the honourable members for Murrumba, Bundaberg and Mourilyan, who have spoken during this debate, I cannot support the concept that the legislation, which for 67 years has been the very foundation of the sugar industry in this State, should be changed.

Mr RANDELL (Mirani) (3.25 p.m.): Many honourable members have spoken in this debate. Many heated comments and highly emotive statements have been made, and many of the statements were made for political gain. It is time that a little common sense was introduced to help the sugar industry. My overriding concern, and that of all Government members, is consideration for the unity and strength in this great industry. The honourable member for Mulgrave is sitting beside me and he would be the first to agree with me.

Mr Menzel: Is it true that Mr Casey intends to vote against his interests and principles and vote with the Labor Party against the Bill?

Mr RANDELL: He can make up his own mind.

We cannot afford sectional thinking. The industry is too big for that. I urge all members on both sides of the House to forget political gain and act in a spirit of co-operation so that this great industry will continue not only for the benefit of the growers but also, as the honourable member for Mackay said, for the benefit of the workers and the other people connected with the industry throughout Queensland. The last thing we want is for the industry to split.

It is pleasing that the Minister has introduced this Bill, and it is pleasing to learn of his circulated amendments. I refer particularly to the sunset clause that will enable the existing commitments and procedures to be legalised and continued and, in the meantime, enable an inquiry to be conducted into the Act and enable changes to be implemented if they are required.

Some criticism has been levelled at research into sugar quality in the central area. Too much is being said that will split the industry and, as my main concern is to keep the industry together, all I intend to say about it is that only .07 per cent of total sugar industry funds has been used for research. The return from it has been fairly massive—many times the amount invested. It must be borne in mind that the return goes to the whole industry, not only to Mackay as has been implied by many honourable members. In future, if any research is conducted, the whole industry will benefit.

The sugar industry is one of the nation's most important primary industries. It is often referred to as a model for other industries. Through gradual and progressive policies, the industry has gradually increased its production, changing from a supplier of the domestic market to a major exporter earning foreign currency for Queensland and the nation. With increasing reliance upon its export markets, the sugar industry has of necessity had to become more sensitive to the requirements of its international customers.

Over the years, there has been a growing emphasis on quality, which, of course, affects the price paid to growers. Quality is the name of the game. It is the name of the game in any rural industry, whether it be vegetable-growing, beef production, grain-growing or honey production. It is essential to produce a quality product, and research is required to do that.

It is common knowledge that there was a degree of criticism of the industry before the ISC inquiries of 1977 and, following those complaints, positive steps have been taken to meet that criticism. The questions of sugar and nutrition have been addressed head on and there have been greater efforts to inform people about nutrition and sugar, funding of research into sugar and nutrition and a more open attitude in discussing these issues rather than simply ignoring the critics. Honourable members will join me in commending such a refreshing and open attitude being adopted by the sugar industry to what is a complicated and often emotional issue. A lot of emotion has been displayed in the last day or two.

I remind the House that all raw sugar produced becomes the legal property of the Queensland Government and it, in return, has an obligation to provide refined sugar at fixed prices and to guarantee supply regardless of violent fluctuations on the world sugar market. The Bill is aimed at making improvements in raw sugar quality. I see no great change being promoted by this legislation. It is aimed merely at confirming in legal terms what has been happening in practical terms for many years.

The Minister has given an assurance to this House, to me, to the cane growers and to the millers of Queensland. He has bent over backwards to co-operate with representatives of the sugar industry. He has travelled throughout Queensland. Yesterday, before the Minister introduced the Bill he held conferences with cane growers. He has always said that he will be guided by the wishes of the industry. I commend him for that attitude. To me, the industry comes first. The Minister has put the industry first. Contrary to what the member for Mackay said, the Government is concerned about cane growers, and it is concerned about the workers. It has shown that in the past and it will continue to do so.

There is no doubt that the honourable members opposite are rightly proud of the Sugar Acquisition Act of 1915, because it was introduced by a Labor Government. It was good legislation. It was introduced by Mr T. J. Ryan, the Premier of the day. Following World War I, world sugar prices rose, but at that time the Commonwealth Government sought to keep food prices down. That is contrary to what the member for Mackay has said. The Commonwealth Government intervened because it had problems at that time with violent fluctuations of supply and demand caused by the war. In the interest of all concerned it was decided to control the sugar industry by banning the import or export of sugar by anyone except itself. An agreement was drawn up between the Commonwealth Government and the Queensland Government. Its modern equivalent is the Commonwealth/State Sugar Agreement to which I have already referred.

By 1923 Australia had become self-sufficient in sugar and exports commenced. Today, about 80 per cent of our production is exported. I would suggest to honourable members that they peruse a copy of the Sugar Board's jubilee booklet, "50 Years of Achievement—1923-1973", copies of which have been provided to me through the courtesy of the Honourable Ron Camm, the board's present chairman. Copies of that publication can be obtained from the Sugar Board. The booklet sets out the background, the role and achievements of the Sugar Board during that period.

I draw the attention of honourable members to pages 5 and 6 of that publication which set out the Board's basic functions. Anyone who does not know about the sugar industry—there would be quite a few Opposition members—should read that booklet.

Mr Menzel: Especially the honourable member for Mackay.

Mr RANDELL: I would not like to say that. Some members who are not involved with the sugar industry do not know enough about it.

The particular functions referred to on pages 5 and 6 of the booklet relate to the quality and quantity of sugar to be delivered by the mills, to payment for the sugar (on which the board arranges advances prior to the final payment), to the determination of the quantity of excess sugar, if any, required each season, to the determination of the quantity for home consumption, for export, and the prices for each category of sugar.

In addition, the board was enabled to make investigations, negotiations, and recommendations regarding bulk sugar handling and installations for that purpose. Under the Harbours Act 1955-1968 it was given powers to control and manage bulk sugar handling facilities. During 1966, in the particular circumstances of that time and the financial requirements of the industry, the board was given power to borow money. That enabled arrangements to be made for assistance to the industry by way of Commonwealth loans. If I recall correctly, the loan was for an amount of $19m. I truly believe that the industry has repaid that loan. If it has not repaid it, it has repaid an amount so close to it that it does not matter.

The Sugar Board has a key role in the organisation of the industry and in the working of the pooling arrangements which were adopted in 1923. Once again, I give the Labor Party credit for that. That was introduced by the Theodore Government.

The pool covers all the sugar produced in Australia, including that bought by the Queensland Government each year from New South Wales. The pooling system facilitates overall economic efficiency and flexibility in supplying local and overseas markets to the best advantage. It enables the income from all sales to be shared between the mills (which pass on to the growers the proportion determined by awards made under the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act) regardless of where the sugar is sold. It enables the planning and control of production to meet requirements of the home consumption and export markets. It gives strength and cohesion to the industry generally. It is extremely vital that strength and unity remain in the industry. I cannot stress that too strongly.

I come now to the matter of the agents for the Sugar Board, and in this regard I refer to CSR Limited and Bundaberg Sugar Company Limited. These agencies refer firstly to the refining of Australia's domestic sugar consumption which is carried out on the Government's behalf by CSR and Bundaberg Sugar, for which an annual contract is negotiated. The second agency is in respect to export marketing which is carried out by CSR Limited.

Although I have no personal criticism to offer of either of those companies, or of the conduct of those agencies, I think it is an open secret that herein lies the subject of most of the criticism of the Government and the Sugar Board. This criticism comes under two headings: control, and costs and benefits. Although neither of these areas really intrudes into the proposed legislative changes, I commend them to the Minister's attention. Perhaps they could be incorporated in the proposed inquiry.

The common criticism is that CSR is too large and powerful to be humble enough to function as a servant of the Sugar Board, whereas the reverse is true. I do not have any concrete evidence to support such criticism, but I believe that if justice is being done it must be seen to be done.

The action would be modified if the board's accessibility to the grass roots was improved and, secondly, if the board's decision-making was seen to be reflecting grass roots opinion. I am not saying that this is not happening. However, again I emphasise that it must be seen to be happening.

Mr Eaton: The board treats the growers like mushrooms; it keeps them in the dark and feeds them on bulldust.

Mr RANDELL: That is not right at all. It is not fair to make such a claim. The board does a pretty fair job.

Before honourable members opposite take my comments as criticism of the board members, I hasten to say that criticism is not intended. I have the greatest respect for all members of the board. We are indeed fortunate to have as chairman of the board a man of the calibre of Ron Camm. He knows the sugar industry backwards as both a grower and an administrator. I have no criticism at all to offer of him. All members of the Sugar Board are men of the highest integrity and all credit is due to them. They have done their best with a structure that was set up by a Labor Government in 1915. That structure has served well, but it is a postage-stamp operation when one considers the heavy responsibilities that the board carries.

I note that the Minister said that the Bill does not cure all deficiencies. I wonder whether what is needed is a more comprehensive piece of legislation covering all the board's powers and functions.

I am probably treading on dangerous ground here, but I suggest that incorporated in such legislation could be a change to the board's representation and size. My proposal is to change the present system under which the Government appoints the entire board to a system under which the board incorporates some Government appointees and some elected personnel.

If I had my way, I would increase the board to five members, and their appointments would be made as follows:—

Two Government members, appointed by the Government;

One miller member, appointed by the mill owners of Queensland; and

Two grower members, appointed by the Queensland Cane Growers Council.

As to the office bearers, the Government should continue to appoint the chairman, but other officers, such as deputy chairman, would be elected and all staff would be appointed by the board. I would pass over to the board the task of appointing agents and making contracts on such terms and conditions as it sees fit. The board would be appointed for three years.

One might ask why I put forward these suggestions. I am being completely honest about this. Firstly, I point out that the sugar industry's funds are virtually held in trust by the Government for disbursement to the industry after costs of operating the Sugar Board, etc., are deducted. I note that about two-thirds of the revenue is that of cane growers and one-third is that of mill owners. Hence my proposal for the two-to-one representation.

The system under which the Government arranges by annual contract with CSR for refining and export marketing and with Bundaberg Sugar for refining is subject to criticism, in that, although the Government signs the contract, the costs under the contract are paid by the industry.

For an organisation of the size and importance of the Sugar Board, the fact that now the two full-time members can outvote the part-time members is not desirable. I suggest that the Government maintain two appointed members to the new board, one of whom will be chairman. Ultimately the Government is responsible for the sugar industry legislation through the Minister.

I have suggested one miller member, elected by the 30 mill owners of Queensland, and two cane growers, elected by the 30 member Queensland Cane Growers Council. This representation on the board reflects the relative disbursement of the sugar industry's funds.

The responsibility for the annual contract agencies for refining and marketing should rightly be the responsibility of the Sugar Board on behalf of the Government, as the industry foots the Bill.

The second major criticism of the agency agreements with CSR Limited and Bundaberg Sugar come down to a suspicion that the industry does not get the best deal that it could in such contracts. The fact that they are negotiated in private and details are not released even to the sugar association only underscores that criticism. The fact that both of those companies are major sugar millers causes questions to be asked about the possibility that they could influence decisions to benefit themselves. I have heard the criticism and the response and, quite frankly, I have no concrete evidence which supports one view or the other.

What is clear, however, is that suspicion exists—one only has to listen to the talk in the various areas to know that—more openness is required, and greater access to information is necessary. Those who pay the bills should have a greater say and the responsibility should be from the board to the electors—and when I talk about "electors", I am referring to the growers and millers of Queensland. Therefore, I suggest that the alternative to the board's structure would solve the question of control and would largely meet those criticisms. I hope that the Minister takes that point into consideration.

In conclusion, I ask for co-operation from all members to promote unity and strength within the sugar industry of Queensland. This great industry of ours cannot afford to be disunited. I support the intention of the present legislation and commend to the Minister the suggestions that I have put forward in relation to the Sugar Board.

Mr POWELL (Isis) (3.41 p.m.): To say that a piece of legislation that passed through this Parliament in 1915 is adequate for 1982 is ludicrous. The plain, simple fact is that the amendments before us today are merely bringing into effect practices that have evolved over a number of years. According to advice from the Crown Law Office, these amendments are necessary to correct the position.

For people to postulate in this Chamber and say that the Government is deviating from policy in the sugar industry is absolute nonsense, and should be seen as nonsense. It is a complete and utter sham for Opposition members, particularly the member for Mackay, to stand up in this Chamber and say that the Government is playing politics with the sugar industry. If anyone is playing politics, it is the honourable member.

Mr Menzel: What do you think about Mr Casey's claim that the Government only appoints broken-down politicians to the Sugar Board?

Mr POWELL: The member for Mackay is probably a broken-down politician, and maybe he is looking for a job. However, I do not think we would trust him on the Sugar Board.

Over the years, the members of the Sugar Board have served this State well. In fact, the expertise of the present members is such that, even under the difficult economic conditions prevailing in other countries, the total Australian crop will be acquired this year, and the prospects for selling the whole crop are good.

Mr Moore: Do you think that it reeks of socialism?

Mr POWELL: No, I do not think that it reeks of socialism at all. The sugar industry is self-regulatory. This legislation, which has received so much criticism from a very small section of the industry——

Mr Menzel: Now!

Mr POWELL: I repeat: this legislation has received a lot of criticism from a very small section of the industry, and that is what is worrying me and the majority of growers and others within the industry.

Both the Australian Sugar Producers Association and the Queensland Cane Growers Council have accepted the amendments and recommended to the Government that the legislation be passed by Parliament as soon as possible.

Dr Scott-Young: With the sunset clause.

Mr POWELL: I shall come to that in a minute. Those organisations have done that for the very good reason that the sugar industry in Queensland, and in Australia, must produce a high-quality product. There is no way we can sell inferior quality sugar on the world market today. Our product must be of the highest quality.

I place on record my support for the two members from the North Queensland section of the industry, the members for Mulgrave and Barron River, for the way in which they acted in this Parliament, stood their ground and presented their case. I have nothing but condemnation for the former leader of the Labor Party, who stood in the Parliament this afternoon and castigated them for what they said. The honourable members for Mulgrave and Barron River did what we are all elected to do: they represented their electorates. That I take issue with them and disagree with their point of view is another matter entirely.

Mr Menzel: Do you think Mr Casey will vote in the best interests of Mackay when the time comes?

Mr POWELL: I doubt that the member for Mackay will vote in the best interests of his electorate, because he does not know them.

It is clear that if the industry is to produce good quality sugar adequate research must be undertaken. There are those who believe that that research should be undertaken by the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations. I put it to the Parliament that the money advanced by the Sugar Board to the mills in the Mackay area to undertake the research that was undertaken was not only in the best interests of the sugar industry in the Mackay area but also in the best interests of the sugar industry as a whole. That is what we have to think about.

Again I hark back to the point that the industry cannot sell an inferior product on the overseas market. Australia is now selling sugar to many countries around the world. It had lost some of those markets because it was selling an inferior product. However, it has now been readmitted to those markets. Finland is one that comes to mind.

Mr Randell: Do you agree that the only way we will get good quality sugar is by good research?

Mr POWELL: The only way to produce good quality sugar is to undertake good research that will enable good techniques to be used by the farmer and by the miller. Consequently, those things must be borne in mind.

Mr Moore: You might have to stop burning your cane to get it.

Mr POWELL: I doubt that. I think that the reverse is true, and research may prove that.

I was quite surprised by the speech made earlier in the debate by the member for Bundaberg. When the legislation was first introduced in this Assembly, I spoke with the Minister and then spoke with people who represent sugar interests in my electorate. I found that they were happy with the legislation. Subsequently, some controversy has been caused by the immediate past president of the Queensland Cane Growers Council, Sir Joseph McAvoy. I state quite clearly here and now that he is no longer the chairman of the Queensland Cane Growers Council. Another chairman has taken his place, and it is to him and to the members of the 30-man council, not to the former chairman and the past members, that I go for advice. That is what ought to have happened in relation to this matter; unfortunately, it did not happen in Far North Queensland.

As a result of that controversy, I wrote to the Millaquin Mill Suppliers Committee and the Isis and Maryborough District Cane Growers Executives in my electorate seeking from them an expression of opinion. I received only one reply. It was from the Isis executive, which called a meeting for one Saturday morning. Both the member for Bundaberg and I were present at that meeting. I might add that the member for Bundaberg is a cane grower and his farm is in my electorate. As members of Parliament, both of us were fully briefed on the meaning of the amendment, and I understood that the member for Bundaberg, who at that time was the Opposition spokesman on primary industries, accepted the explanation that was given to him and agreed with it.

Mr Blake: I accepted the information; I did not necessarily agree with it.

Mr POWELL: The member for Bundaberg did not argue with the district executive or with the chairman of the executive at that time. The others present were left with the opinion that the Opposition would therefore agree with the legislation.

Subsequent events have removed the honourable member for Bundaberg from the position of Opposition spokesman on primary industries. That is a shame for the Opposition, because it has removed a person who understands primary industries and replaced him with another. The fact remains that I am surprised that his speech was such a turn round.

The Bill simply seeks to clarify the law relative to what has been a rather fuzzy area. Some people in North Queensland are saying that, by accepting this amending Bill, this Parliament is accepting the principle of fragmentation of the industry and that northern growers will pay for research in other areas. Who is to say that tomorrow some sort of fault will not be found in sugar from North Queensland so that research will have to be undertaken before it can be sold? In fact, because of colour problems, a great deal of research had to be undertaken into North Queensland sugar some time ago.

Mr Eaton: Who paid for it?

Mr POWELL: The whole of the industry paid for it, and that is the situation for which I am arguing here today, and for which the Government is arguing.

Mr Eaton: Which organisation?

Mr POWELL: The industry as a whole paid for it, and that is the important point that the honourable member must understand.

Let us hark back to early 1978, when the Matthews committee report was completed. The people who welcomed that report were the northern cane growers; in fact, they were pushing jolly hard for the implementation of its recommendations. I and other members who represent central and southern cane-growing districts pointed out that that would be to the disadvantage of our areas. The Isis mill area lone lost $2m as a result of that decision, and that was $2m that it could ill afford to lose. The reason for that was that 1977 was a year of very good growing conditions and the mill produced well and truly over peak sugar. In 1977, the Isis mill had a peak of 86 000 tonnes of 94 n.t. sugar; it produced 131 137 tonnes of 94 n.t. sugar. Therefore, it produced well and truly over peak.

I might add another commercial for the Sugar Board. Because of its efficiency, it was able to acquire the entire crop. There was no standover cane. The board was able to sell that sugar, and sell it at a profit. The northern mills complained because they have produced peak sugar on only four occasions in the past 11 years. The Burdekin and Mackay mills have produced their peak in 11 out of the past 11 years, and the southern mills have produced their peak in eight out of the past 11 years. The northern mills complained about the arrangements for payment that were being used. The Matthews committee brought in its report in December 1977. In 1978 its recommendations were implemented retrospectively, and that is what the producers in the Isis mill area are complaining bitterly about.

I have heard talk about the northern areas subsidising the research conducted in southern areas. What about the southern areas putting money into the pockets of the northern area producers following the retrospective implementation of the recommendations of the Matthews committee in 1978? That is exactly what happened; $2m was taken from the Isis area, $1.1m from Bundaberg and $1.1m from Maryborough. That is how much they lost, and that had an adverse effect on the growers, the millers, businessmen and everybody else in the community. Because 1978 was a year of low production, it would have made more sense to introduce that system from 1978, because the principles of the Matthews committee report are not disputed by the cane growers in my area, nor are they disputed by most cane growers throughout the State. The retrospectivity is what affected our growers.

From the 1974 crushing season, an amount of $50m was allocated to port and terminal development from the proceeds of overseas—and I emphasise "overseas"—sales of sugar. In 1974, production was similar to that of 1977. The Isis area was well and truly over peak. It was all acquired and sold. The funds for port and terminal development came substantially from the funds of mills that produced large quantities of over-peak sugar in 1974. The production figures for 1974 reveal that the northern mill areas were well below peak.

I bring all these matters forward because I think that they are relevant to the matter before us today. The mills in our area, cane growers in our area and the southern and central mill areas, contributed in 1974 to the tune of $50m for ports and terminal developments. The northern mill areas, because they were under peak in a poor year, did not contribute their share. The mill areas in the Far North are now whingeing because a production quality problem in the Mackay area, which has been under way for some time, is being funded by the whole industry.

The point I must make is that the sugar industry must act, and continue to act, as a homogeneous, viable industry. If it is fragmented it will be destroyed entirely, and the economy of Queensland will suffer seriously.

Mr Casey: You are toadying for Bundaberg sugar.

Mr POWELL: The member for Mackay, as usual, is giggling like a little schoolboy. He came into the Chamber and made a stupid statement. During his speech, he said that the National Party toadied to three sugar millers in this country. At other times, he says that the National Party toadies to the mining industry and the tourist industry. It is a shame that whenever someone with quality and perception comes to Queensland to do some work—and becomes a member of the National Party or has something to do with it—he is castigated for it. That is the substance of the Labor Party's arguments. The National Party does not toady to any sugar millers or any person.

The statement is well made that the sugar industry regulates itself. A very wise saying is that nothing defileth a man from without, but from within. If the sugar industry is to be destroyed it will be destroyed from within. Nothing this Government does will cause its destruction. The trouble will come from within the industry itself. If the industry does not settle down to work out its differences within its own four walls we are likely to see some problems.

I repeat that it is clear to me that the industry, as an industry, is happy with this legislation. The Queensland Cane Growers Council and the Australian Sugar Producers Association have asked that it be proceeded with. One of the mills in my electorate, which is a co-operative mill, has asked that it be proceeded with. What further evidence do we need other than those three groups to justify proceeding with it?

I am delighted that the Minister has decided to move a number of amendments which will, in effect, quieten some of the complaints made from the North.

Mr Muntz: The Far North.

Mr POWELL: Very well, the Far North.

The inclusion of a specific date by which the reorganisation of the industry will commence is very wise. I support the Bill and I know that every member of this Parliament who has a feeling for the sugar industry will support it.

Mr JONES (Cairns) (4 p.m.): What is exercising my mind is the underlying purpose for the introduction of the Bill. What is the need to amend this legislation? Is it that, after 67 years of successful operation, it is considered that the Act has not been a success? Why are members being called upon to legalise the so-called illegal acts that have been carried out over the past 35 years?

This is retrospective legislation. In the past few weeks Government leaders have been out on the hustings condemning retrospective legislation and opposing it vehemently. Today, the Queensland Government calls such legislation validating legislation. In the Federal sphere it is referred to as retrospective legislation. To me, it is retrospective legislation.

If any legislation has proved itself in Queensland with the effluxion of time, it is the Sugar Acquisition Act. This Act, which has survived without amendment during the terms of office of many Governments, Ministers for Agriculture and Ministers for Primary Industry of differing political colours for 67 years, stands alone. It has catered for a primary industry that has been very volatile, has expanded and has been very successful. That in itself should be enough reason for it to be left alone. Under it, Queensland's major industry has evolved.

That the Act has stood the test of time must be to the credit of the Minister who formulated it in 1915. At that time the legislation anticipated 67 years of development in this State in terms of acquiring sugar, marketing it and satisfying all sectors of the

industry. It commends itself by its durability and its continuing success. The Act has been a measuring-stick and the basis for the success of Queensland's top industry. I repeat that this legislation is probably unparalleled in the history of statutes.

During my relatively short time of 17 years in this Parliament, Bills have been introduced, sometimes in haste and sometimes after many months of deliberation, which required amendment during the session in which they were introduced. Is it any wonder that Opposition members have viewed with concern and suspicion the action now being taken to amend the Sugar Acquistion Act?

I do not want the Minister to see that as any reflection on his personality or durability, but we are given assurances by individual Ministers who are subject to human frailty. Ministers have come to Cairns and told me that certain things would be done, such as the building of the Woree/Bayview high school, and that it would be constructed by the commencement of the 1981 school year. The school has not been built. A Government Minister told me that in Cairns at the opening of the Woree primary school. The community was also told. He said that a couple of months before an election. After the election he was no longer the Minister for Education. Therefore, he could not be held to what he said in Cairns on that occasion. As long as the Minister retains his office, can we accept his veracity and support for any particular measure? I am inclined to rely on statute law, such as the Sugar Acquisition Act, which outlasts Ministers and Governments and remains despite the passing parade. Opposition members would prefer the written word of the statute law that is proven by time and its success. Any legislation that lasts for 67 years must be very successful.

Mr Blake: It certainly could stand some extra time for judicial inquiry into the advisability of change, after 67 years.

Mr JONES: That surprises me.

In past years, I think that the Minister might have been rushed into making a decision, and that is why I view the Bill with suspicion. The normal order of things is for an inquiry to take place and for the legislation to evolve from that inquiry. To me, it seems that the Government has adopted an approach that is back to front. With due respect to you, Mr Speaker, your father, as a former Minister, would have said that it was putting the horse head first into the shafts. I cannot see that there is a need to rush.

The Minister has circulated some amendments to the legislation. The purpose of one amendment will be to introduce a sunset clause. It will allow certain provisions to operate for a period of 24 months, or 12 months, depending on the compromise. That amendment will placate and throw cold water on the two members of the National Party who last night told us that they were going to cross the floor, that they had 12 Liberal members to support them and that they would defeat the Bill. But overnight out came the long knives. When Opposition members oppose the clauses in the Bill, and perhaps the Bill in toto, we may find that there will be a party-line vote.

The proven worth of the statute law in the Sugar Acquisition Act provides a legal backing for Opposition members. The amendments to the Act are not needed. If the Government wants to validate past actions, which it now proposes, and allows a loophole to validate future legal actions, that is wrong. It is detrimental to the sugar industry. There are ways and means by which it could be done without messing around with an Act that has stood the test of time.

In Far North Queensland no problems arise with sugar quality. The sugar grown in the Far North has been accepted as being top export quality. The growers and millers in that area do not argue that, because they can attract top export prices for their sugar, they are entitled to overpayment for their crop. They are broadminded enough to realise that the industry as a whole should benefit.

They do recognise that research into the industry should not be paid for by only one section of the industry. Research conducted by the Sugar Board from sugar moneys is funded two-thirds by the growers and one-third by the millers. That is not entirely fair.

During this debate no honourable member has put forward a reason why research cannot be done through the existing research organisations and on existing funding. The research carried out by the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations is funded on a 50/50

basis. Let us face it: the sugar growers cannot be blamed for being somewhat concerned about the fact that, instead of paying for research on a 50/50 basis, they are being asked to pay two-thirds of the cost of research.

Last night the honourable member for Mulgrave raised the matter of filterability, as did the honourable member for Barron River, although I do not think he could pronounce the word correctly. Filterability has been the subject of research at the South Johnstone Mill at a cost of approximately $8m over three years.

As retrospectivity is being looked at in relation to research in the industry, how would it apply to validating refunds to that mill for the research conducted by it into a matter that is probably peculiar to Far North Queensland?

Talking about validation—is there enough money to give some to every mill? How will the money be disbursed? How will the mills be selected? It seems to me that if they are selected on a majority basis we will see a reversion to what was mentioned last night by the member for Mulgrave—the far northern mills will be left sitting on the fence.

As far as I can understand, the changes proposed by the Minister were not sought or canvassed by the industry, nor are they desired by the industry. There is some degree of acceptability. The honourable member for Bundaberg, speaking not as a member of Parliament but in the interests of the sugar industry, stated precisely where the loyalties of the millers lie. He stated the reasons for and against that were put to the millers. Of course, they were told not to rock the boat, not to upset the Government, because the Government would keep faith with them and, like manna from Heaven, benefits would flow to them.

This legislation creates a dangerous precedent, particularly at a time of depressed prices and a downturn in sugar sales. I do not believe that recovery is in sight. To change horses in midstream is a dangerous exercise.

It is very difficult to speak at the end of a debate without repeating many things that have already been said, and I do not want to be accused of indulging in tedious repetition. If the reputation or reliability of the Queensland sugar industry is to be placed in jeopardy by these amendments to the Act, then I am opposed to them.

The trend that seems to be emerging in the debate is that the industry is losing control of its affairs. Traditionally, the industry has controlled itself, and that has been a success story. We should be looking further afield than at individual groups or regional gains. If the Government wants to put beyond doubt the legality of the support given to research, there are other ways and means of doing that. I simply sound a note of warning that that concept is not included in the legislation before the Chamber today.

Hon. M. J. AHERN (Landsborough—Minister for Primary Industries) (4.16 p.m.), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their contribution to the debate. I have to say at the outset that I have not heard so much rhetoric, hyperbole and sheer fiction spoken in this Chamber in a long time.

It has been established that this is absolutely necessary and clearly sensible legislation. I repeat that the legislation has the support of the sugar industry in Queensland. It has the support of the Queensland Cane Growers Council, the Australian Sugar Producers Association and the Prioprietary Sugar Millers Association. Why has there been such disagreement about the legislation? Over the past months, those industry organisations have had ample opportunity to examine all of the detailed arguments. The Department of Primary Industries, officers of the Sugar Board and I have been in consultation with all industry organisations, and they have been clearly convinced that a substantial problem exists, and it has to be overcome.

During the last few hours, some opinions have been put forward by bush lawyers and town lawyers, but a Government can act only on the advice of its Crown Law officers. On this occasion, our Crown Law officers are backed up by independent legal advice, and that is the basis of the legislation I have introduced. On the advice of the Crown Law officers, this action has to be taken. The opinions have been well researched. There is no doubt that action has to be taken in the interests of the industry at this time.

Mr Casey interjected.

Mr AHERN: Firstly, I take the opportunity to establish my argument, and then I shall return to what the honourable member said. He just wants to interrupt my speech.

Last night and today, honourable members have stood in this Chamber and said, "This legislation has stood the test of time.", and have implied that it was Holy Writ. They have said, "Since 1915, it has been unassailed and has been the stalwart of the industry. It has provided protection to cane growers since 1915." That is just not logical. How can something that was written back in 1915 apply to the situation in Queensland in 1982? I suppose there is a chance that the present Act covers the position, but it is a many millions to one chance, and the Crown Law officers say that action has to be taken.

As I say, some honourable members look on the Act as being Holy Writ, but I suggest that what is clearly required is something out of the "New Testament" This is 1982. In 1915, the sugar industry in this State was a fledgling industry. At that time, who could have imagined the tremendous advances that would be made in the industry?

At that time there was no bulk handling and there were very few exports. Today 75 per cent of the output is exported. Many of the quality problems that are now a feature of the scene were unknown at the time when the Act was first contemplated. The quality problems that are an important part of the marketing process, which I will establish in a moment, were unperceived at that time. How could they have been perceived in 1915? Nobody really sensibly suggests that.

Surely the marketing game, as it is today, was not perceived then. I use that word "game" advisedly because when one gets into the international market with any commodity, that is exactly what it is. Internationally the industry is very competitive, particularly today when many countries with a great deal of cheap sugar are in the market and trying to sell it. The Australian industry is very good and understands the market very well.

Last year I was fortunate enough to be sent to Tokyo to take part in sugar industry negotiations. From a consultative point of view that visit was most worth while. For me it was certainly worth while because I heard Japanese industry leaders say that Australia produces the highest quality sugar in the world today. That is the reputation that Australia has in Tokyo. That opinion was not expressed to me by the Government; it came from the refiner on the refiner's floor. I was told that Australia produces the best quality sugar in the world and delivers it regularly. That is what the Japanese like about Australian sugar, and that is why they will continue to deal with us and continue to want to buy Australian sugar.

Those who are associated with the marketers, whether they be officers of the Sugar Board, the marketing agents or the brokers for the industry, know that on the international market-place small quality problems are very important. They can be what make or break a sale or that make or break the price of a sale. There are dozens of examples of why this quality problem is critical to the marketing process of sugar in this State, and why the Sugar Board, as far back as 1968, realised that if it was to operate successfully on behalf of the growers of this country by selling sugar on the world market at the best possible price, it had to grapple with the problem.

The quality problems have been adequately attended to. At that time the Sugar Board could see important instant monetary advantages to the Queensland and New South Wales industry—millions and millions of dollars—by overcoming the quality problems that confronted the Australian product, problems that confronted every industry in the world. Advice was received from the brokers and marketing agents about the problems that existed, and the Sugar Board learnt of the millions of dollars that those problems were costing the Queensland cane-growing industry. Because the Sugar Board controlled the sugar marketing arrangements, it had the power to bring the parties together to get a quick resolution of the problems. A quick resolution could mean tens of millions of dollars because in one year the Australian product on the world market was worth in excess of $1,000m. So time was of the essence.

The Sugar Board had the capacity to bring together officers of the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations, the Sugar Research Institute, the CSIRO Central Laboratory, the CSIRO, the universities that had developed particular research capacities and the Department of Primary Industries, and personnel in the various mills, to quickly focus their attention on a particular problem that was costing an enormous amount of money.

In my two and a half years as Minister in charge of the Sugar Board and as Minister charged with investigating the sugar industry's problems and sitting as chairman of the board of the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations, I have seen what the board has been able to do to quickly overcome problems of quality. I have never before seen an industry with such a capacity to overcome its problems quickly. Complex quality problems

were occurring in huge amounts of sugar at the rate of one part per million. They had to be resolved or they would have cost every cane grower in this State a tremendous amount of money. Together with practical people, the board was able to establish a mechanism to overcome the problem and quickly put it into effect. I take my hat off to all concerned in that achievement.

Some honourable members have asked in this debate, "Why can't the bureau alone undertake this task?" That is a reasonable argument, but it is a very simplistic argument. BSES funding is 50/50. On the other hand, anything paid out of sugar money is on the basis of two-thirds from the grower and one-third from the mill, and so there is one-sixth involved.

Mr Jones: That is a lot of money for a declining market.

Mr AHERN: Yes, it is, in relation to a research effort; yet the practical growers in the industry are saying that to achieve that type of capability in BSES will cost the growers much more than using the resources of all the other organisations that can be provided at marginal, and therefore cheaper, costs. Therefore, there is a very big body of opinion in the industry today that the quick resolution of problems must rest with the board.

I have been involved in this problem in North Queensland since I became aware of it. Concern has been expressed to me, and I have visited mills in North Queensland to talk to people about the problem. After examining the facts, I am satisfied that all of the quality problems in the industry have been dealt with equally. Where a particular quality problem occurred in one area, it was dealt with in another area under exactly the same set of rules. Where the technology was known and where the tests were adequate, a quality standard was established by the Sugar Board.

However, some quality problems have arisen relatively recently in the history of this great industry and the technology was not as easily discovered. Tests were not clear. Even now the technology is not completely capable of overcoming the problem. So the Sugar Board was confronted with a different set of circumstances in relation to the very big quality problem that was costing an enormous amount of money in extra transport costs and in forfeiture of overseas markets. It was approached in this fashion: a team that had the research capability to conquer the problem was put together, and it is in the midst of tackling it. Then, when what was necessary to be done was established, the board lent some moneys to the millers concerned so that they could overcome the problem quickly. The research had taken place in those mills and that was the easy way to do it.

Let us look at the pragmatism of the Sugar Board in relation to this matter. I was asked how much it is costing the industry out of sugar money. The whole effort was centred in Mackay. As near as I can get, it is .08 per cent. At the same time I was asked what has been the annual return in increment and how much better the mills have done. The figures that have come up show somewhere between 3 per cent and 7 per cent enhancement. That has gone into the pockets of every cane grower in Queensland. Because of that pragmatism, because of the urgency of the problem, because of that excellent effort, because of the discovery of the remedy and because it was put into effect quickly, every cane grower in Queensland has overcome the problem. All that has happened is history. I did not authorise it; it was simply done. In the view of people in the industry in Queensland whose opinion I trust, it could well have cost more. It would have been interesting to see whether it could have been settled so expeditiously, or whether it might have taken a number of additional years to settle, if all the millions of dollars of cane growers' funds had been forgone.

The efforts of the Sugar Board have been successful. The marketing game has been played well by the sugar industry and growers have certainly benefited. Those involved in the industry were proceeding under a fair and honest belief that they had the legal power to do what they did. It is clear for all to see that they were acting in the interests of the growers.

Questions have been raised about the power to undertake this particular research and whether power exists in relation to things such as bonuses, penalty payments and many other things that were thought to rest with the Sugar Board and the Crown under the Sugar Acquisition Act. Crown Law and independent legal advice was sought. It was

considered that the Act did not contain the necessary authority. Very substantial problems have been created. The validity of the Sugar Board itself and its legal power to make proclamations under the Act have been called into question by Crown Law advice.

According to Crown Law opinion, honourable members who have been saying today, "That could have been fixed up by proclamation under the Act," are in error. Clearly, the whole of the legislation is ancient. Validating and declaratory legislation saying simply that what was thought to be legal is legal is required until such time as a lawfully constituted committee of inquiry can investigate the matters and report thereon. That is really all that is being done at this time.

The honourable member for Cairns thought he saw heresy. He said, "Good heavens, this is retrospective." This is a well-established legal provision. It is clearly different from the Costigan type of inquiry. In the case of the Costigan inquiry, the Federal Government is saying, "What people perceived to be legal is now illegal." In the case of this legislation, we are saying, "What was thought to be legal is legal." Very clearly that is a well-established precendent in British Parliaments, and it has been so for generations. Obviously, Governments try to avoid taking such action, but in certain situations it has to be taken. Every Parliament in the world accepts that. A clear distinction can be seen between the Costigan experience and what the Government is doing now.

Honourable members have asked, "Why is it necessary to do this now?" The Government of Queensland decided to announce on 21 May its intention to legislate, which was in the last financial year. Crown Law advice had been made available to companies that have responsibilities under the Companies Act. Advice was also given to the Sugar Board, which has its books audited by the Auditor-General, that a problem existed. It was necessary to make the announcement then so that the matter could be put to rest quickly and those people who had statutory obligations could exercise them in the knowledge of the Government's intention to legislate, to validate and to declare.

I am advised that, with two exceptions, that is all that the Government is undertaking. First, at the request of the cane growers of Queensland, there will be mandatory consultation with the industry until such time as the committee of inquiry reports, so that cane growers can be adequately consulted about legislation. The second exception relates to corporate powers—and there is no secret about them either—that are designed to enable the construction of a terminal in South Queensland. That is being done by virtue of an arrangement with the meat industry to save the cane growers of the State some money. If it were done under the Harbours Act it would cost the growers more. By virtue of an arrangement that I have negotiated, it will be done more economically for the industry in Queensland.

All that is being said about improper motives, unlawful acts and cover-ups as well as the emotional rhetoric about taking the industry out of the hands of the growers is clearly nonsense. We are simply regularising current practice until a proper inquiry establishes the permanent changes that are necessary. The cane growers' protection by law is in no way diminished. I have been put under no pressure of a cynical nature, as was implied by honourable members who referred to big proprietary interests and trustees. I have not had those representations. I have had simple advice from Crown Law officers and I have been advised of my responsibilities. That is all. It is as simple as that. The Government stands four-square behind the sugar growers of this State. It will not see the growers in any way placed in jeopardy at the hands of the lawyers. The Government is putting their position beyond legal doubt.

Opposition members are saying that the legislation should not proceed. If it did not, the growers would be placed in jeopardy. Serious questions have been raised and I would be failing in my duty to the growers if I did not remove any doubt. It is clearly my responsibility. Opposition members have sought to make political capital out of the exercise and their attitude is simply to leave the growers without the traditional protection that they have enjoyed under this legislation for years and which has now been called clearly into question by the Crown Law officers. Opposition members have sought to mislead the cane growers into believing that all in the garden is rosy when clearly it is not. What shallow stuff came from the honourable member for Mackay in this Chamber. It is no wonder that he has been replaced as Leader of the Opposition when he tells that sort of story to the growers.

Surely when questions such as these are raised it is my responsibility, as a member of the Government, to settle the matter and to make certain that the growers are in no way placed in jeopardy. There is no way I will shirk my responsibilities. If I had taken the part of the millers, I would have acted in May when I officially received advice of the problem. I have spent the time between then and now endeavouring to consult with the industry to ensure that full disclosure of all the issues has been made. That is why I can say that the industry supports the initiatives that I have taken. I understand their reasons.

An Honourable Member: Not all of them.

Mr AHERN: It is not possible to obtain unanimity.

There is a lot of history attaching to the problem in North Queensland. I have stood in front of a meeting of growers in North Queensland and I have tried to understand their position. I have visited the millers and spoken to them. I gave them two hours in Brisbane yesterday. We talked about the issues and I think that they now have a better understanding of the problem.

Some honourable members suggested that this was a secret and devious mechanism to give the Sugar Board some capacity to participate in Ord River sugar. What nonsense! That has never been intended. As soon as I heard that preposterous nonsense I circularised the media. I have foreshadowed an amendment that will overcome that problem. The advice of Senior Parliamentary Counsel is that the amendment will overcome it completely.

It was first drawn to my attention when I originally wrote to the Queensland Cane Growers Council. I said that there was no problem and that there was no way in the world the Government would be involved in that sort of thing. I have been completely consistent in my attitude to Ord River sugar. The Government's loyalty to the industry is unchallenged. My loyalty lies with the Queensland industry. I was invited to address the National Rural Press Club. It was the first time a Minister had been invited to do so. Whenever I have spelt out the position, the Government's attitude has been made completely clear. The Government is loyal to the Queensland industry.

Mr Casey: You have changed your mind.

Mr AHERN: I point out to the member for Mackay that my attitude has not changed. Cabinet has made a decision on this matter. The proof of my bona fides is the introduction of amendments to ensure that it cannot happen.

In relation to the IAC inquiries to which honourable members have referred—it is true that the industry is facing very difficult times. An endeavour to do something about it has preoccupied the minds of my officers and me. The Government has supported and documented watertight cases for an increase in the domestic sugar price. However, in Canberra we have been told, "Today we do not do those things to any industry without an IAC report", so we are mobilising our efforts to have a quick IAC inquiry conducted into the domestic sugar price.

The Federal Government has pointed out that the sugar agreement expires on 1 July 1984 and that it will be necessary for a full IAC inquiry to be conducted into the whole sugar industry before that time. The Federal Government has said that that might be an appropriate time to consider the special assistance that might be made available to the industry in view of its current problems. The sugar industry is facing a very difficult time. We are coping with the situation through the Rural Reconstruction Board, but that can continue for only a short time. The industry has received the Government's complete support.

The Government has fought hard for the industry. It has not been found wanting when an important piece of sugar industry legislation is ultra vires. It will take immediate action after the consultative process to put the matter completely beyond doubt.

The Government's dedication to the sugar industry is beyond doubt. The number of members of Parliament who are returned to this Assembly from sugar-growing areas indicates that the industry knows where the Government's loyalty lies.

I can assure honourable members that that the industry will not fail. The legislation is necessary to guarantee the future of all Queensland cane growers. The whole fabric of the legislation is very thin indeed, and that is not good enough. Real security must be given to the industry until a full assessment can be made. That is what the legislation is about.

The fantasy and fears cultivated amongst Opposition members are completely baseless. Opposition members play party politics with the sugar industry in this State. That is shameful when the sugar industry is on its knees financially. I have no doubt that the cane growers in the State acknowledge the Government's sincerity and bona fides in this matter. The industry leaders certainly do, because they have seen us fight. They have told me that the Government has their complete support.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time (Mr Ahern's motion)—put; and the House divided—

Ayes, 40

Ahern	Greenwood	Powell
Akers	Gunn	Prentice
Austin	Harper	Randell
Bertoni	Innes	Scassola
Bird	Jennings	Scott-Young
Bjelke-Petersen	Katter	Simpson
Booth	Kyburz	Stephan
Borbidge	Lane	Tomkins
Doumany	Lester	Warner
Edwards	Lockwood	White
Elliott	McKechnie	
FitzGerald	Miller	*Tellers:*
Gibbs, I. J.	Moore	Frawley
Glasson	Muntz	Neal

Noes, 21

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

Pairs:

Hewitt	Blake
Knox	Hansen
Row	Prest
Wharton	Shaw

Resolved in the affirmative.

Committee

The Chairman of Committees (Mr Miller, Ithaca) in the chair; Hon. M. J. Ahern (Landsborough—Minister for Primary Industries) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

Mr KRUGER (4.55 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 2, insert the following new clause to follow clause 1—

'2. Commencement. (1) This Act shall not commence until a Commission of Inquiry is held pursuant to The Commissions of Inquiry Acts, 1950 to 1954 and that Commission of Inquiry shall inquire into the sugar industry generally.

(2) The Commission of Inquiry referred to in subsection (1) shall be constituted by such person or persons as the Governor in Council determines.

(3) This Act shall commence on a date one month after the findings of the Commission of Inquiry clearly satisfy the requirements of the industry.'"

I wish to comment on some of the remarks made by the Minister in his reply. I want to know why those members of the National Party who last night in this place opposed the legislation have now changed their minds and see it in a different light. I have moved an amendment to insert a new clause to enable a committee of inquiry to be established before the legislation is put into effect.

The Minister has indicated that, once the Bill is assented to, a committee of inquiry will be established. I cannot see the reason for doing it in that manner. Quite clearly, the inquiry should be conducted before legislation is passed. The only other reason the Minister has advanced is that legal problems have arisen. Those problems may be quite a deal more serious than the Minister has spelt out. If the problems were not terribly serious and as the Act has been in operation for the last 67 years, surely there would be no great problem in first having an inquiry to generally sort out the industry and then debating legislation to validate some past acts of the board.

The legal aspects that are in doubt have been in practice for some time, but, as the Minister said, they were pointed out only fairly recently and the Government now wants to make changes. If serious problems do exist, that shows that the people connected with the industry and the Government have not kept in touch with matters and kept ahead of things; otherwise there would be no need for the sudden introduction of the legislation.

The Minister also spoke of the quality of Australian sugar and the satisfaction expressed with our production in overseas markets. That has been so for years. Australia can boast that it produces sugar of a very acceptable quality, as a result of the research that has been done by various sections of the industry and put into effect by the mills. Also, the cane farmers have been doing their share to ensure good quality production.

The legislation has been introduced because something else has gone wrong. The problem is not related to the quality of the sugar, whether it be caused by the growers or the millers. The problem relates to other parts of the industry. The reason I have moved the amendment is to make sure that, before the Chamber becomes too involved with the other clauses, the need for a committee of inquiry can be determined once and for all. After that inquiry the legislation could proceed in this place. I do not know why such a long time elapsed before an attempt was made to solve the problem. I am very concerned about the industry, as is everybody else in Queensland, because of its significance to the State's economy. The Opposition is not satisfied that the Bill has not been introduced quickly to overcome a problem that has not occurred in the past.

I have been told about one other problem—the Minister says he does not know about it—which is that money has apparently been misused or misspent by research people. I also understand that one company might have a large outstanding loan that it now wants the industry to take over. If my information is correct, that would certainly be one of the reasons why the Bill has been introduced so suddenly. If those problems exist, it is obvious that the industry should be investigated and a report made to the Parliament.

The proposed new clause quite clearly spells out—

> "This Act shall commence on a date one month after the findings of the Commission of Inquiry clearly satisfy the requirements of the industry."

Having satisfied the requirements of the industry, we will then be in a position to introduce a new Bill. It can be amended if necessary; but the findings of the inquiry might be that this 67-year-old Act can continue to operate to the satisfaction of the industry, the people of Queensland and those concerned about the revenue-earning capacity of Queensland.

Mr AHERN: The amendment as circularised by the Opposition is not acceptable. Firstly, however, I shall reply to the implication of the honourable member for Murrumba that there has been some tremendous change of heart by me and other members of the National Party. On behalf of the cane growers of Queensland, I say that that is simply not true. We have written into the legislation what was my intention, anyway. Those in the industry with whom I have consulted can verify that. It was always the intention that a committee of inquiry would look at the entire Act, including the proposed amendments. All we are doing is proceeding with the legislation and inserting a sunset clause of two years. In the meantime, the committee of inquiry will report on the industry. So it

is simply a matter of putting my undertakings to the industry into the legislation. That is my intention, and it is described in a later clause, which is a better amendment than that which has been proposed by the Opposition.

The legislation has not been introduced simply to validate something that occurred a long time ago. It is something that is also occurring now. Research projects are under way. There are undertakings which Crown Law advisers have indicated to us are utra vires, so the whole matter is in question and needs to be put at rest right now. A committee will then undertake its inquiry. There are questions not only about research but also about quality standards in the industry. There is also the matter of the board and its powers. All the legal points that have been raised have to be put to rest if the sugar growers of this State are to retain the security which they have enjoyed for years and which has now been called into question.

There has been no haste about the exercise, either. Good heavens, I have been talking about this to such an extent that I am absolutely exhausted by the consultative process. It all started in March. It is now nearly Christmas. Is that quick, for Heaven's sake? In the meantime, there has been virtually continuous dialogue.

I am not aware of any misuse of funds. This is the very first time it has been put to me. If the honourable member has evidence of the misuse of funds, I would certainly like to know about it. I have had a central role in all of these discussions. I have convened meetings of the board of the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations and other organisations in the industry. I am aware of all the research work that is taking place, and I am aware of the role of CSR.

I am aware of the role of the SRI. I am chairman of the BSES Board. No-one in the industry has ever suggested to me that funds have been misused. The Auditor-General of Queensland audits the books of the Sugar Board. He has never reported any irregularities to me, or any misuse. I have no doubt that he would do so if he found any.

Now that the question has been raised, the honourable member has a responsibility to put it at resf, to say that it was a little bit of scuttle-butt that he picked up from somewhere or someone who hates a proprietary company and he floated it in the House under parliamentary privilege. The honourable member has a responsibility to put his information in the hands of someone in authority so that it can be officially investigated. He has not put it to me, but I think he should do so. As I see it, our proposal is far better than that of the Opposition.

Mr CASEY: At this stage a few comments about the proposal put forward by the honourable member for Murrumba would be relevant, especially in the light of the comments made by the Minister. Quite clearly under the legislation introduced by the Minister, or in the circulated amendments, there is no committal by the Government to a committee of inquiry. The Minister made the statement himself. I will accept his word.

I am not criticising my colleague, but because of the time available to get such a major amendment prepared, it may not truly represent the Opposition's intent. Opposition members believe that the points made by our shadow spokesman (Mr Kruger), the members for Bundaberg and Mourilyan and me are very relevant. The Opposition believes that the commission of inquiry should have been held before such major changes were made to the Sugar Acquisition Act. It is useless for the Minister to defend himself by saying that it has only just arisen when, earlier, he said that the announcements were made in May, but the decision was made in March. That is not so.

During my speech I pointed out quite clearly that the quality problem in sugar started about 16 years ago. For maybe four or five years, the BSES, the SRI and other people looked at what was happening and shook their heads. I admit that Australia has some of the best sugar technologists in the world, but it took them ages to determine what was causing the problem. That is when the procrastination started. No real effort was made at the time when the industry was buoyant. When the industry, financially, is on its knees, as the Minister and others have so rightly said, the excuse is being put forward, "Don't kick the industry while it is on its knees. It has problems. This money was lent by the board in good faith." The board provided the money contrary to its powers and contrary to the concept relating to research.

Other speakers have covered the 50/50 business with the BSES, and the 2:1 ratio in the distribution of sugar moneys. The main point is that the Sugar Board acted contrary to its powers, and it did so for a number of years.

To get down to tin-tacks, the trouble has reached the melting pot, but it was only during the Minister's reply to the second-reading debate that we started to get a few facts. It was only after other members spoke that we were given certain material facts. The Minister did not present them to us in his original speech. It seems that a certain mill refused to pay the money when it had an opportunity to do so. That is when the Sugar Board found that it had acted invalidly. It did not know whether it should proceed. That is when the Crown Law Office came into the picture. I have not named any mills. I have not fallen into the same fatal mistake as that of the Minister when he indicated that he was very conversant with the industry. In July this year, the Minister made the biggest faux pas that the industry has ever seen, when he made deliberate comments on some aspects of the problem that the industry had not mentioned because it feared litigation by overseas buyers. I do not want to digress because I have been a party to it as much as anybody else.

Mr Ahern: You are dreaming.

Mr CASEY: Not at all. The Minister is reported in black and white in "The Daily Mercury" in Mackay. I will not use the word, but something hit the fan at that stage and all hell dropped on the Minister's head. He knows that as well as I do. Pressures were put on newspapers to stop publishing that aspect of the quality problem. It is the Minister who did that. That is when the whole matter got into an awful, sticky mess. I am saying that it would not have occurred had established practice been followed. The established practice in the industry is that a committee of inquiry is held before a major change is made. That applies especially to the Sugar Acquisition Act. That is why the amendment has been moved by the honourable member for Murrumba. It is a good amendment and would ensure that the legislation applies until the committee of inquiry is set up.

Mr EATON: The Minister said that this is nothing new, that it was first mentioned in March. I rang the deputy chairman of the Sugar Board, Mr Eric White, while several members of the sugar industry were in my office in Innisfail before any public announcement was made about amending the Act. Mr White said that they were looking into it and that there could be some alterations to clear up a few doubtful areas. He said it would be a machinery Bill to tidy up a few matters. That is all that I could find out. The information that has been withheld from the public would fill two books. We still do not know everything involved although the Bill is going through Parliament. We do not know the amounts of money, the involvement of board members and the board itself and the various sectors of the industry to which the money pertains. We are sailing in the dark regarding those features of the Bill.

The members who have spoken to me about the matter are not as concerned about it as they are about other amendments. We still require answers to a lot of questions. Recently, in a speech in the North, the Minister said that the Act had got away from the practice. It was pointed out to him that the practice of the board had got away from the Act. That is the whole crux of the problem.

Mr AHERN: Reference to the committee of inquiry cannot be included in the legislation because the Government has not made a decision on it yet.

Mr Casey: Are you saying that it could get knocked over in Cabinet?

Mr AHERN: No. I am saying that legislation cannot refer to something that does not exist. It cannot contain reference to a committee of inquiry which may be recommended by the Queensland Government. The Government has decided that that is its intention but the actual form is still under discussion. That consultative process will have to take place before a final recommendation is made on the constitution of the committee of inquiry, and it will be established. Until then no committee of inquiry exists and it cannot be referred to in the legislation. We are now debating some of the matters to which I replied earlier and, to save time, I do not intend to reiterate what I said.

The honourable member for Mackay said that decades ago it was known that legal problems were being experienced with the Act. I am advised that the board undertook investment in research at that time. It was realised in the early part of this calendar year that it was not undertaken legally. Although it is true that the problems have existed for a long time and that the board has been tackling them, it is not true to say that, simply because it has been known for a long time, it was taking place illegally. The knowledge of the illegalities became apparent only in the early part of this year, and action was taken. An extensive consultative process was undertaken. It may be that the honourable member for Mourilyan was not well advised. A large number of people holding responsible positions in the industry took part in a great deal of consultation about the measures and the reasons therefor.

If the Government fails to take action, research will not be the only matter in doubt. Consultation must take place so that everything is put beyond doubt. The position of company auditors under the Companies Act has to be preserved and the position of the Auditor-General has to be put beyond doubt. All of those questions must be resolved, and they are resolved by the legislation. Under the sunset provision the new powers of the Minister and the Sugar Board will cease two years from now. In consultation with industry, a committee of inquiry will be held. It will report to the Parliament. There will be an opportunity to settle the matter and to introduce new legislation before the expiry of the sunset clause. We are actually achieving in a better, legal way what is generally proposed by the Opposition's amendment.

Question—That the proposed new clause to follow clause 1 (Mr Kruger's amendment) be inserted—put; and the Committee divided—

Ayes, 21

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

Noes, 38

Ahern	Gunn	Randell
Akers	Harper	Scassola
Austin	Innes	Scott-Young
Bertoni	Jennings	Simpson
Bird	Katter	Stephan
Bjelke-Petersen	Lane	Tomkins
Booth	Lee	Warner
Borbidge	Lester	White
Doumany	Lockwood	
Edwards	McKechnie	
Elliott	Menzel	
Frawley	Moore	*Tellers:*
Gibbs, I. J.	Muntz	Neal
Greenwood	Powell	Prentice

Pairs:

Blake	Hewitt
Hansen	Knox
Prest	Row
Shaw	Wharton

Resolved in the negative.

Clause 2, as read, agreed to.

Clause 3—Repeal of s. 4 and new sections 4, 4A and 4B—

Mr KRUGER (5.24 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 2, omit all words from and including 'and', second occurring, in line 24 to and including 'acquired' in line 26."

The reason for this amendment is that Opposition members believe that the words, "and may direct that the research be funded from the proceeds of the sale of raw sugar acquired" should be omitted. That matter is one of the major concerns expressed by some people in the industry in the discussions that have been held with us about this Bill. They are concerned that a bigger percentage of funds will be taken from the growers. If the words covered by the amendment were omitted, the position would be more acceptable to those people because the present situation would continue.

It is unacceptable to introduce a provision that directs that the proceeds of the sale of raw sugar be used to fund research. Quite a number of growers hold that view. That is why I have moved the amendment. I hope that the Minister will accept it and not make a great kerfuffle about it.

Mr AHERN: Clearly the amendment is not acceptable. The clause proposes to validate certain actions that have been taken. Those actions will continue until the committee of inquiry submits a report and that report is made available to honourable members. It is not acceptable or advisable to cut short the research programs that are already being undertaken. The better procedure is to allow those matters to be considered by a properly constituted inquiry and for that inquiry to report back to Parliament.

Mr CASEY: I dispute what the Minister has said about this amendment. This matter is the crux of the whole problem and is the very thing that has stirred cane growers. The Ministers knows that if the amendment were accepted funding for research would not stop. Money for research purposes is already available under another financial structure. The Minister is chairman of the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations. The important point is that the contributions for its research are made equally by growers and millers. The Government also makes a contribution towards the running of the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations. In addition, the mills still have available to them the program that is being conducted by the Sugar Research Institute based in Mackay.

I was surprised to hear the Minister make an admission about the sunset clause. Different things have been dragged out of the Minister during the debate. Perhaps if we stay here until 8 o'clock tonight, we might get the whole truth about what is happening in the sugar industry.

In his last reply the Minister said that the sunset clause will go out of being within two years, and that before then he will introduce another Bill. I presume that it will be another Bill to amend the Sugar Acquisition Act.

Mr Ahern: You are putting words into my mouth.

Mr CASEY: I am not putting words into the Minister's mouth. He said a few minutes ago that before the sunset clause goes out of being, fresh legislation will be introduced. I think that he used either the word "fresh" or "new". He can check it in "Hansard" tomorrow.

Some of the weak, lily-livered members of the National Party who said last night that they would oppose the legislation have changed their minds today because of the sunset clause. They believed that once the sunset clause went out of being, everything would return to normal. That will not happen. Once this practice of taking money for research off the top of the proceeds of the sale of sugar is adopted, the cane growers of this State will be committed to providing funds on a $2 for $1 basis with the millers. Also the responsibility for allocating money for research will rest with the Sugar Board. If the Government were to give a guarantee that action would be taken immediately rather than allowed to drag on, even the cane growers would have another look at the matter.

Probably the most honest figures that the Minister has given to date were the ones that related to the better return that has been brought about by research and by the equipment that has been installed at certain mills. The better return is quite true, but it is only because of the bonus penalty system and by the type of sales. It is a bit hard to establish whether, if the research had not been undertaken, that sugar would not have been sold, anyway.

Only a moment ago the Minister once again promised that a committee of inquiry would be established. In recent years a committee of inquiry headed by Mr Justice Matthews travelled throughout Queensland to investigate pricing arrangements and consider if it was time to change the present pricing arrangements of two parts of the proceeds of the sale of sugar to growers and one part to millers. That committee made the strong recommendation to the Sugar Board that there be no change. That recommendation was made after a great deal of evidence had been taken and after the committee had subpoenaed the books of millers and various other people throughout Queensland so that those matters could be examined. Consequently, I do not believe that the committee under any circumstances should support this power being given to the Minister as is, and that is why I strongly urge all members to support the amendment moved by the member for Murrumba.

Mr EATON: From listening to the debate one might get the impression that the Opposition is totally opposed to any research in the industry, particularly as it is referred to in the Bill. The Opposition is not opposed to research; it opposes the commitment that is made when the Sugar Board is given the power to conduct research and handle the money that belongs to producers and cane farmers. The whole crux of the argument is that there is no limit on the amount that can be spent. The legislation gives the Sugar Board an open cheque.

At present the sugar industry is producing sugar on a falling world market while struggling against rising costs of production caused by increases in costs of fertilisers and fuel and high interest rates. Also, some farmers are still making repayments to financial institutions. Unlike a wage earner or some other industries which receive regular payments, either weekly or monthly, the sugar farmers receive their cheques only at certain times of the year. Because of the present economic problems, some cane farmers sign an authority for the amount of the indebtness owed for a particular purchase, investment or whatever to be paid out of the Sugar Board cheque by the bank or, in some cases, by the sugar mill. If the Sugar Board is given an open cheque, farmers can have their incomes further eroded. In the current state of the economy, despite the fact that the Opposition is in favour of research being carried out by the various research organisations that have been mentioned during the debate, it is opposed to giving the Sugar Board an open cheque on the cane farmers' total income. The Opposition objects to the fact that an open cheque is being handed to the Sugar Board, a body which is not accountable to anyone. If the legislation is passed, the Sugar Board has the power to conduct research, irrespective of the cost. Very few figures have been given on the actual debts, costs and loans. The figures are being produced in dribs and drabs, and it is because of that uncertainty that the Opposition opposes the clause.

Mr MENZEL: Firstly, I commend the Minister for the amendments that will be moved by him later. There is no doubt that they were required. After a lot of consultation in an endeavour to solve the problem, the Minister has undertaken to appoint a committee of inquiry. I cannot see why Opposition members are so concerned. Earlier they even proposed that there should be a time limit, but I will not discuss that now. If there are commitments to complete research already under way, then it should be completed.

Mr Casey: Why have you changed your mind between last night and today?

Mr MENZEL: I have not changed my mind.

Mr Casey: You were going to vote against the Bill.

Mr MENZEL: I never said that I intended to vote against the Bill. Mr Casey is rarely in the Chamber, and I doubt that he was here when I spoke last night. I said that I would propose amendments and that the honourable member for Barron River would second them. But we had considerable discussions with the Minister this morning, and I commend him for coming to a reasonable, sensible and responsible settlement, something I did not think we could achieve last night. Therefore I cannot support the Opposition's proposed amendment.

Mr KATTER: A lot of us are thoroughly disgusted with the performance of Mr Casey on this issue——

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The honourable member will refer to the honourable for Mackay.

Mr KATTER: Once again the honourable member for Mackay has sold out his area, just as he sold out his area on equalisation of electricity tariffs.

I resent very strongly the remarks made by the member for Mackay about the members for Mulgrave and Barron River. I have seldom, if ever, seen two men fight more ferociously for something than I saw them fight in the party room this morning.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr KATTER: Opposition members might well laugh, but those two members fought for their electorates, and I saw at least one Labor Party member do exactly the opposite on this aspect of the Bill.

I share the concern voiced by the honourable member for Mourilyan. There are very real dangers inherent in any Bill in which a blank cheque is given to an industry. I am very worried about that aspect of the Bill because I have seen the results of a blank-cheque situation as far as the Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation and the wool-growing authority are concerned. I would not like to see another industry given a blank cheque. But that has not been done here because there is a two-year period after which parts of this legislation will be phased out. The insertion of that clause prevented an unlimited Donnybrook over the amount that should be provided. So parts of the legislation will be phased out after a two-year period, and we do not have to worry about any of the problems raised by the honourable member for Mourilyan in relation to a blank cheque. As I said earlier, I pay tribute to the honourable member for Mulgrave for the amendments that have been and will be introduced today.

Mr Jones interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I call the Minister.

Mr Jones interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I warn the honourable member for Cairns under Standing Order 123A.

Mr AHERN: I think all matters have been properly canvassed, but I will clarify one point that arose when the honourable member for Mackay endeavoured to twist what I had said.

What I did say is that there is, in relation to certain of these provisions, a sunset clause over a period of roughly two years. During that time there will be a properly constituted committee of inquiry into the legislation. Part of the terms of reference of that inquiry will be a time limit so that it has to report back in sufficient time for the Government and the Parliament to consider the report prior to the expiry of the sunset provision. It might well be that the recommendation is that the old Act does not need any changes, although I can assure the honourable member that I have Crown Law advice that that is not possible. But that is a question for the committee of inquiry. From my perception of the problems I anticipate that the committee of inquiry will recommend change, but that is entirely a question for that committee. Certainly those provisions operate for only two years. Further action by way of legislation awaits the report of the committee of inquiry.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted from clause 3 (Mr Kruger's amendment) stand part of the clause—put; and the Committee divided—

Ayes, 37

Ahern	Gunn	Prentice
Akers	Harper	Randell
Austin	Innes	Scassola
Bertoni	Jennings	Scott-Young
Bird	Katter	Simpson
Booth	Lane	Stephan
Borbidge	Lee	Tomkins
Doumany	Lester	Warner
Edwards	Lockwood	White
Elliott	McKechnie	
Frawley	Menzel	*Tellers:*
Gibbs, I. J.	Moore	Muntz
Greenwood	Powell	Neal

Noes, 21

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

Pairs:

Hewitt	Blake
Knox	Hansen
Row	Prest
Wharton	Shaw

Resolved in the affirmative.

Mr KRUGER: I move the following amendment—

"At page 2, line 33, omit the word—

'request'

and substitute the word—

'direct'."

This is quite a simple amendment. We consider that, instead of the Minister requesting the Sugar Board to report to him, it would be preferable in the circumstances that he direct the board to report to him on those matters. I ask the Minister to give serious consideration to accepting the amendment.

Mr AHERN: The provision will be covered in a later and more appropriate amendment.

Amendment (Mr Kruger) negatived.

Mr AHERN: I move the following amendment—

"At page 2, after line 36, insert the following words—

'For the purpose of obtaining the opinion of the bodies representing cane growing and sugar milling sections of the sugar industry the Board shall supply to those bodies sufficient information to enable them to provide an opinion on the matter the subject of the report.' "

There has been some criticism in the industry about whether the various constituent bodies of the sugar industry were being given adequate information. The amendment will ensure that the necessary information is made available to them.

Mr KRUGER: I consider it to be a ridiculous addition to the clause. It certainly does not do a lot of damage. It does not boost the clause that was inserted. It could be of some advantage to the Bill, so the Opposition accepts the amendment.

Amendment (Mr Ahern) agreed to.

Mr KRUGER: I move the following further amendment—

"At page 3, omit all words comprising lines 20 to 34."

The Opposition considers that portion of the Bill is possibly the most dangerous of all its provisions. Although much legislation is pushed through the Parliament in similar circumstances, it is considered that in this instance, until an inquiry is conducted, everything about the industry is considered and the Act is then clarified, this legislation is too dangerous.

Proposed section 4A (2) states—

". granting and taking leases of land and other property, of entering into arrangements either alone or as a party to a joint venture for the development of land to facilitate the storage, disposal and marketing of sugar "

Earlier the Minister referred to that. I can predict what he will say. That does not mean that certain other undertakings could not occur. I understand that another amendment will be moved. The proposed section as spelt out in the Bill indicates that certain land

could be taken. I have in mind particularly the Ord scheme. As soon as the other matters have been cleared up, the Opposition would be prepared to examine it. In its present form it is not something that the Opposition can accept.

Mr AHERN: The reason why this provision is included was canvassed in my reply to the second-reading debate. It is understood why it is there. It relates to a particular area of land in southern Queensland for terminal purposes. After negotiation with Treasury officers and officers of another statutory authority, we have decided that it will be in the financial interests of the cane-growing industry if a joint-venture arrangement could be negotiated. If it were necessary to proceed under the Harbours Act, it would cost cane growers more to establish that facility than if we proceed in the manner we had proposed. Other statutory authorities in Queensland have that corporate power. I feel that the Opposition is tilting at windmills.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted from clause 3 (Mr Kruger's amendment) stand part of the clause—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 36

Ahern	Gunn	Prentice
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Doumany	Lester	White
Elliott	Lockwood	
Frawley	McKechnie	*Tellers:*
Gibbs, I. J.	Moore	
Glasson	Muntz	Neal
Greenwood	Powell	Scassola

NOES, 21

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

Pairs:

Hewitt	Blake
Knox	Hansen
Row	Prest
Wharton	Shaw

Resolved in the affirmative.

Mr AHERN: I move the following further amendment—

"At page 3, after line 29, insert the following words—

'For the purposes of this subsection "sugar" means sugar produced in Queensland and also that sugar produced in New South Wales which is purchased by the State of Queensland from the New South Wales Sugar Milling Co-operative Limited.' "

This amendment is designed to allay the concern that was expressed to me initially by the Cane Growers Council. The council believed that the Bill might extend the capacity to handle some infrastructure on the Ord River. That was never the intention. The amendment puts the matter at rest; that cannot happen.

Mr KRUGER: I accept the Minister's explanation, but I am somewhat doubtful whether the matter stops there. Opposition members certainly hope that it does, because concern was expressed to us by people engaged in the industry. The Opposition will be watching this amended clause very closely to make sure that the Minister's word stands up.

Amendment (Mr Ahern) agreed to.

Clause 3, as amended, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

Mr AHERN (6 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 4, insert the following new clause to follow clause 3—

'3A. New s. 4C. The Principal Act is amended by inserting after section 4B the following section:—

"4C. Operation of ss. 4 and 4B. The provisions of sections 4 and 4B shall cease to operate on 31st October, 1984." ' "

That is the sunset clause to which I referred earlier.

Mr KRUGER: Of course, this is the step that has been taken to quieten some members of the National Party and the section of the farming community that is concerned about certain sections of the Bill. The amendment is not very acceptable to the Opposition. We still stand by what we said before. We would have liked the inquiry to be conducted first. This is only a means to buy out the National Party members who last night suggested that they would move amendments. They pointed out how strongly they would act today, but they have done nothing. I suppose that the Minister should be congratulated on buying them out so cheaply.

Amendment (Mr Ahern) agreed to.

New clause 3A, as read, agreed to.

Clause 4—Validity of certain things done—

Mr AHERN (6.2 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 4, omit all words comprising lines 5 to 11 and substitute as clause 4 the following clause—

'4. Validity of certain past acts. The authority of the Principal Act to do any act or thing shall be deemed to have always extended to the doing of any act or thing of a description referred to in section 4 or 4B of the Sugar Acquisition Act 1915-1982 prior to the commencement of this Act notwithstanding the provisions of the Principal Act or the absence of or any defect in any approval or authorization required by the Principal Act in respect of the doing of any such act or thing.' "

I move this amendment because of the Senior Parliamentary Counsel's interpretation of the clause in the Bill as presented. Counsel sought to amend the provision in the Bill. The original meaning was left far too wide; so, on the advice of counsel, we have decided to recommend to the Committee that the clause in the Bill be replaced.

Mr KRUGER: This is another very worrying part of the Bill. We are concerned about the extent to which validity is needed. It is necessary to validate certain things that have been done in the industry over the years. We hope that the amendment will improve the Bill, although we are not over-confident. We will be watching closely to see what further action is taken for the good of the industry. We will be watching this validating section of this Bill very closely because we are very concerned about it. If we were not running short of time tonight, there would be much lengthier discussion on the amendment. It is obvious that the amendment will be passed, but, as I say, we will be keeping an eye on it.

Mr CASEY: Very briefly, I support the comments of the honourable member for Murrumba. This clause validates what has actually happened. It is of no use our offering further opposition to this clause by calling for a division, but we are certainly opposed to it.

The Australian Labor Party in Queensland is very disgusted that a situation was reached whereby the Sugar Board was allowed to carry out invalid actions, to develop those invalid actions and continue those invalid actions. This legislation seeks to change things so that in fact the Sugar Board has done nothing invalid, that all its actions were quite valid and lawful. The Minister has admitted what has happened along the way.

I state quite clearly that this matter could be the linchpin on which the Government may eventually rise or fall—may continue in office or may lose office. Only a short while ago the Minister quite correctly mentioned that a large number of members in this Chamber represent sugar electorates. I note the comment of the member for Brisbane Central made a moment ago that no member of the Liberal Party has spoken in the debate.

I remind the Chamber that the sugar industry is the State's major agricultural industry. Yesterday the Minister for Commerce and Industry, who was a former Minister for Primary Industries, reminded the Chamber that sugar-milling is the main manufacturing industry in the State. The legislation under debate is of great import to every person in Queensland and the economy of the State. The future of the Government will rise or fall depending on what happens in the sugar industry in years to come. Mistakes made by the Government today can have a long-lasting effect on that industry and on all the people of the State.

Mr EATON: One honourable member has said that this clause is the icing on the cake, but I believe it is the cake because the retrospective provisions of this clause are designed to undo the wrongs that were committed in the past. Some members have called them illegalities and some have said that the board thought it was doing the right thing. However, if one is charged by the police with an offence, ignorance of the law is no excuse. Some might say that the Sugar Board is part of the protected society. If the Minister takes note of what has happened in the past I am sure that both he and his departmental officers will keep a very close watch on the actions of the Sugar Board. By this Bill, the Parliament has already set a precedent and let the board off the hook. As I have already said, the board is accountable to no-one. Some members of that board consider their appointment as a glory-hunting expedition. If the members had been properly qualified and took the job seriously and acted responsibly, the Government would not have taken over four years to correctly interpret the Act.

I know that times have changed but the principle and the intent of the Act are the same. It is only because some people have introduced technicalities and some educated people have tried to twist terms around that the current circumstances have arisen. It is like listening to two solicitors arguing a case or listening to a good debate; the listener hears both sides of the story but is not too sure who is right, as good arguments have been put up by both sides.

I was asked to fight all the way to see what I could achieve. With the help of the two Government members who stood up to be counted I achieved a little, but overall I am somewhat disappointed with the result.

Mr GREENWOOD: I wish to say only that I support the Minister on this provision. A great deal of nonsense has been talked in the debate about retrospective legislation. Of course, when one looks at this particular provision one sees it is a declaratory provision, an enabling provision, one that is quite commonly found in legislation of this type. It is as different as chalk is from cheese from retrospective penal legislation. This does not make something right that was wrong at the time; it makes something right that was the practice and which was right and which was done at the time. I draw that very clear distinction in case there should be any misunderstanding. I support the Minister's efforts in this regard.

Mr AHERN: The position as described by the Opposition spokesman and the former Leader of the Opposition, the member for Mackay, is well understood and has been properly canvassed. But the actions of the Government and the Sugar Board have to be understood, too.

In summary, the Sugar Board took certain actions that at the time it believed to be legal. It took certain actions that were certainly to the proveable benefit of the cane growers of this State. In money terms, the forthright pragmatism that the board exercised on behalf of the growers of this State put many millions of dollars into their hands that they would not otherwise have received. That has happened, and let the records show

that when the chips were down, when the old Act was called into question, this Government was ready to stand beside the cane growers of this State and say that it was not prepared to see their long-term protection thrown into jeopardy. The Government was prepared to take action to make valid the Act that the growers have looked to for protection for very many years. It was prepared to face up to the hard decisions.

But what has been the role of Labor Party members? Their role has been to connive, to endeavour to create strife and to make political capital out of the whole affair. The Government has stood beside the industry. When doubts were raised, it saw that those doubts were settled. It has acted on behalf of cane growers. I will be the first one out onto the hustings with the honourable member for Mackay, and I will tell the people of Queensland that when those questions were raised he sold out the cane growers of Queensland.

Mr CASEY: First, I refute the allegation made by the Minister that in any respect I or any other member on this side has endeavoured to sell out the cane growers of Queensland. The record shows clearly that this was the Labor Party's legislation in the first instance. It set up the practices now carried on by the sugar industry, as it did the cane-growing organisations. In fact, the opposite of what the Minister said is the truth. There would not be one member of this Assembly who is, or has been, a cane grower or involved in the sugar industry at any stage who could stand up and say that he has not benefited because of Labor legislation. The Labor Party does not want to see this Government or any other Government introduce legislation that, as I said a few moments ago, may jeopardise the future of the greatest industry in Queensland.

The Minister for Primary Industries, the Premier, the Deputy Premier and other Ministers love to talk about outside investment in mining and other industries in this State. But what about the sugar industry? Even in the last decade, if one includes investment in mechanical harvesting equipment, new machinery in mills, bulk terminal handling equipment and the construction of Lucinda Point and other new harbour structures, I would bet that investment in the sugar industry would be far in excess of any mining investment in Queensland. It has all been done by Queenslanders using Queensland money, with the returns all coming back to Queensland. Even Brisbane barristers are paid to appear before the Sugar Cane Prices Board. What about all the people in commerce and industry around the State? Their return from the sugar industry is enormous. Even the insurance industry benefits.

For the Minister to assert that I or any other member of the Labor Party would endeavour to sell the industry down the drain is absolutely hypocritical. I am surprised at his words, because he knows that the exact opposite is true.

As I said, every member of the Australian Labor Party will keep the Minister honest in relation to the promises he has made today. We will keep the Government honest in relation to the commitments it has made. If at the end of the two-year sunset period those commitments have not been fulfilled, we will continue to remind the cane growers of this State who sold them down the drain.

Mr AHERN: I thank honourable members for their contributions to the debate. The cold, hard facts of life are simply that the whole structure of this legislation has been challenged by Crown Law officers, who said that the whole constitution of the board is in question and that the power to make proclamations is in question; that the whole of it, from top to bottom, is very thin indeed. That is the official advice to the Government. I sincerely regret that I have had to bring the legislation forward. When the whole security of the industry and its legislation were called into question, the Government was prepared to act. I am always prepared to do that. I am sure that the people in the sugar industry in Queensland understand that and appreciate it.

Amendment (Mr Ahern) agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Third Reading

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

The House adjourned at 6.18 p.m.