Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 31 OCTOBER 1984

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Mr SPEAKER (Hon. J. H. Warner, Toowoomba South) read prayers and took the chair at 11 a.m.

PAPERS

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

Reports—

Builders Registration Board of Queensland for the year ended 30 June 1984

Noise Abatement Authority of Queensland for the year ended 30 June 1984

Rural Fires Board of Queensland for the year ended 30 June 1984

Registrar of Co-operative Housing Societies for the year ended 30 June 1984

Financial statements of the Public Trustee of Queensland for the year ended 30 June 1984.

The following papers were laid on the table—

Reports—

Perpetual Trustees Australia Limited for the year ended 30 June 1984

Legal Aid Commission of Queensland for the year ended 30 June 1984.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Strike by Power Station Coal-handlers

Hon. I. J. GIBBS (Albert—Minister for Mines and Energy) (11.2 a.m.), by leave: I wish to make a ministerial statement to the House on the strike by power station coal-handlers, who are members of the Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association. Electricity restrictions were imposed throughout Queensland from midnight on Monday, 29 October, as a direct result of this provocative strike action. As honourable members would be aware, these restrictions have affected all facets of life in this State. In fact, according to an article in today's "Telegraph", because of the strike, 100 000 people are out of work.

This small band of irresponsible men has caused the output of industry to be slashed drastically and has deprived virtually every Queenslander of electricity at some time in the past two days.

Despite the fact that the State's power stations have huge stockpiles of coal, the boiler hoppers can hold only enough coal to generate full electricity supplies for two days. Without coal being fed into the power station boilers, there is simply no electricity—not even for essential services such as water and sewerage systems, hospitals and food-processing plants. Because of a minor demarcation dispute—I emphasise that—Queensland is experiencing power-rationing and faces the very real and imminent possibility of rotational black-outs.

I believe that all honourable members would like to be acquainted with how this situation arose. It erupted over a demarcation dispute between FED&FA coal-handlers and operating staff concerning the transfer of coal within Tarong Power Station. This particular issue has been before the State Industrial Commission several times, and a further meeting was set down for 10 a.m. on Monday, 29 October. However, the FED&FA members decided to press home their point by going on strike at 7 o'clock that morning.

In a responsible move, coal-handlers at Swanbank, Callide "A", Tarong, Bulimba and Tennyson Power Stations met yesterday morning and returned to work. But their

counterparts at Gladstone, the State's biggest power station, voted to stay out. Coal-handlers at Collinsville Power Station, which supplies much of north Queensland's electricity, went back to work for a short time but then decided to take strike action again.

State Industrial Commissioner Ledlie has been doing everything possible to resolve the dispute and reach an amicable agreement. Indeed, the compulsory conference at Tarong began at 10 a.m. yesterday and did not adjourn until after 2.30 this morning. The conference resumed several hours ago in a further effort to end the strike action.

I do not believe that all the union members involved wanted to take strike action. In fact, I am sure it is, once again, the union militants, who so often seem able to sway strike meetings in their favour, who are responsible.

So I appeal to the few FED&FA union members involved to return to work immediately. I also call on members of the Opposition to support the Government and me in making this call so that industry can resume and normal life can return to every Queenslander.

Honourable members should be aware that electricity cannot be stored, except in very small amounts. It must be produced instantly on demand.

When this strike began on Monday, the Government had two choices—to provide full power for less than two days or to guarantee to supply limited but essential electricity requirements for a much longer period.

As the Minister responsible for electricity supply in this State, I stand firmly by my actions of the past two days in ensuring that some power has been available to every Queenslander while this senseless and disruptive strike continues.

Peanut Marketing Board

Hon. N. J. TURNER (Warrego—Minister for Primary Industries) (11.6 a.m.), by leave: The allegations by the Labor member for Murrumba in the Adjournment debate last night, of corruption between the Peanut Marketing Board and the National Party can only be described as contemptible, scurrilous and baseless. I take this opportunity to reject them outright and to add my personal observation that they do nothing to enhance the standard of debate in this House.

The allegations are yet another example of the gutter tactics that the Labor Party loves to adopt under the protection of parliamentary privilege. Let me make it clear that I am a great believer in parliamentary privilege insofar as it assists a member to perform his duty to the House and the public generally. But I also believe that privilege carries with it a responsibility on the member to satisfy himself that to the best of his belief the material he places before the House is based on fact.

It is totally irresponsible to place material before the House which has no basis or foundation. Indeed, I challenge the honourable member to repeat his allegations outside the House, in which case I am confident that instant litigation will follow. I suggest that he has now destroyed any credibility that he may have had with the peanut industry in particular and primary industry generally.

Sugar Industry

Hon. N. J. TURNER (Warrego—Minister for Primary Industries) (11.8 a.m.), by leave: As honourable members are aware, the plight of the sugar industry has been very much in the news in recent months. The Premier and I have devoted much time and effort to trying to get the Federal Government to recognise its responsibilities to this great industry, which has contributed so much over a long period to Australia's export income-earnings and job creation.

The industry has been moving into a deepening depression over the past two years, with world over-production and rock-bottom prices on the world market. Of all the

sugar-producing countries, Australia has suffered worst because 80 per cent of its total production is sold on world markets.

I have said before—and it bears repeating—the sugar industry is a national asset. It pays its taxes and charges to the national Government, bringing valuable export income to the nation. Therefore, I claim quite justifiably that when it falls on bad times, as it is experiencing now, the responsibility to bear the brunt of any rescue operation rests squarely on the national Government.

But what has happened over the past two years? The State Government has made more than $30m of assistance available to millers and growers. The industry recognises that it needs to examine its structure and its future operations, and the State Government is contributing half the cost—up to $175,000—of an internal inquiry.

Further, in recent weeks, following the refusal of the Federal Government to assist, the State Government decided to pick up the interest component, which allowed the first advance payment on this season's sugar to be lifted from $160 per tonne to $180 per tonne, thus giving cane-growers across the board the liquidity to finance their oncoming crops. That initiative will cost the State about $800,000.

Against this performance by the State, the Federal Government made one allocation of $10m last year. Only last week, as a result of the pressure put upon it by the State Government and the sugar industry—and with the election date announced—it made a further $5.5m available for debt reconstruction. I emphasised that I would have liked to see far greater assistance, but, of course, the Prime Minister squashed those hopes within a matter of hours.

Campaigning in sugar areas last Friday, the Prime Minister spelt out the Labor Government's attitude to the industry. He told cane-farmers to "turn to other crops or seek jobs elsewhere" He held out no promises of more aid for the industry, suggesting that farmers turn to vegetables or horticultural production—obviously with no thought for possible markets or the effects on those two particular sections of primary industry. This is the same man who, as Leader of the Opposition in 1983, promised the sugar industry the world if Labor was elected to power.

The man who now holds the Primary Industry portfolio, John Kerin, came to Cairns in February that year and, among other things, said—

> "The drought, coming as it has on top of the collapse of the international sugar market, has emphasised the urgent need to boost returns from the 1982 pool. Labor will sympathetically consider any request for an industry loan and/or an underwriting scheme."

He said that the worsening crisis in the industry demanded urgent Federal Government attention, and pledged the Labor Government to giving it first priority in the long line of primary industries which, he said, had been neglected by the Fraser Government. Match those promises with the actions taken by the Hawke Labor Government. They were virtually so much hot air. Mr Hawke and Mr Kerin clearly acknowledged what I have been saying—that it is a national problem requiring a national solution—yet Labor's performance has been virtually a non-event.

In one reply to the Premier's request for assistance, Mr Hawke suggested that Queensland could, if it wished, apply the assistance available to the whole spectrum of primary industries in Queensland to sugar. I treat that statement with the contempt that Mr Hawke and his Government are now showing the sugar industry.

It is obvious that the implications of Labor's abandonment of the sugar industry are being felt by the party's sitting members in Queensland. For example, Mr Gayler, the member for Leichhardt, is resorting to the most outrageous and scurrilous tactics in accusing the State Government of exploiting the plight of cane-growers by charging excess interest on carry-on finance obtained from the Commonwealth.

A Government Member: He is a liar.

Mr TURNER: The terminology that I would use is that he is deliberately misrepresenting the facts.

At a public meeting of candidates at the Cairns Civic Centre on Monday night, he alleged that the State has been getting the money at 4 per cent interest and lending it out to cane-farmers at 8 per cent. Mr Speaker, that is fabrication of the worst kind. It is an indication that either he is prepared to indulge in deliberate distortion or he has no understanding whatever of such arrangements.

For the benefit of Mr Gayler—and the members of this House—I point out that the $20m of carry-on finance provided for the sugar industry in 1983-84 was funded equally by the Commonwealth and State Governments. This includes the $10m to which I referred earlier as the Federal Government's sole contribution until last week's announcement of a further $5.5m.

By agreement between the respective Governments, loans were made available to cane-growers initially at 8.5 per cent interest over a term of seven years. As the borrowers' repayments are received, they will be shared equally by the State and Commonwealth after a deduction is made to cover the State's administrative costs.

Under this system, the Commonwealth does not charge the State interest on its contribution towards carry-on finance to the sugar industry, but both Governments share principal and interest payments received and any losses incurred. It is significant that neither Mr Hawke nor Mr Kerin has even hinted at any irregularity on the part of the Queensland Government in its handling of carry-on finance.

It is obvious that Mr Gayler has nothing for which to commend the Federal Government in its approach to the sugar industry and, therefore, resorts to baseless allegations against the State Government. But it will not work.

Mr Gayler should also be reminded of a few other matters in relation to the Hawke Government's record in sugar areas generally and in north Queensland in particular. They are—

It has stopped the Australian National Line from coming into north Queensland;

It has downgraded the services of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in Rockhampton and the north to almost the shut-down stage;

It has cut coastal surveillance;

It promised three tracker aircraft for the north and they have not been delivered;

It promised five patrol boats—again, none delivered; and

Mr Gayler himself, on behalf of the Federal Government, announced some time ago that it would fund a water pipeline from Normanton to Karumba for town water supply—again, it has not delivered the goods.

I submit, Mr Speaker, that the cane-growers of Queensland, and the people of north Queensland generally, now know how they stand with the Hawke Labor Government. Every person who gets a living from the sugar industry, or, indeed, any primary industry or secondary industry, should have a clear idea of how to vote on 1 December.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Some trouble is being experienced with the microphones, and I would ask honourable members to make a little less noise.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Bridge to Stradbroke Island

From Mr Burns (5 248 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will not allow a bridge to be constructed to Stradbroke Island thus destroying its unique character.

Safety of Pedestrian Crossing, Stafford Road and Clifford Street, Stafford

From Mr Gygar (217 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will take the necessary action to ensure that the pedestrian crossing at the intersection of Stafford Road and Clifford Street, Stafford, be made safe.

Petitions received.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

Questions submitted on notice were answered as follows—

1. Lucky Numbers Tickets

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

(1) Has his department undertaken a crack-down on the lucky numbers tickets used so widely by sporting clubs and sold over the bars of hotels and clubs in most parts of the State?

(2) How many organisations have been the subject of warnings in the last three months and where have these organisations been located?

(3) Does his department not only warn against the use of the ordinary sale of those tickets, but also recommend the purchase of a specific type of vending machine and, if so, what is the type of machine and why was that one selected?

Answer—

(1) Lucky envelopes may be conducted by any organisation that is registered as an approved association under the Art Unions and Amusements Act. Amendments to the lucky envelope provisions of this legislation were made in August 1984 in order to increase control over the conduct of lucky envelopes and ensure that tickets were sold only on behalf of approved associations and not by persons for their own private gain.

(2) On 13 September 1984, notices were issued to 28 approved associations conducting lucky envelopes in Maryborough. These notices required each association to show cause why its registration as an approved association should not be cancelled or suspended as a result of breaches of the Art Unions and Amusements Act that were revealed during an investigation into the conduct of lucky envelopes in that city.

(3) The legislation enables lucky envelopes to be sold by means of sellers, honour boxes or coin-operated machines. Although my officers may advise associations of the shortcomings associated with the use of honour boxes, they should not recommend to associations any particular method that should be used to sell tickets, nor should they recommend any specific type of lucky envelope vending machine. I am assured that my officers adhere to those instructions.

Before a machine is approved for use, it must comply with a number of requirements, including the provision of a separate lockable cash container and a coin-return system. An approved association may use any approved machine for the purpose of selling its lucky envelopes.

2. Disconnection of Electricity to Consumers

Ms WARNER asked the Minister for Mines and Energy—

(1) What procedures are followed by Queensland electricity authorities when a consumer's electricity supply is disconnected because of failure to pay his electricity account?

(2) Do electricity authorities consult with the consumer to ascertain the reasons why the account has not been paid before electricity supply is disconnected?

(3) If not, as there have been instances in which a consumer's electricity supply has been disconnected without his knowledge, resulting in a loss of refrigerated food, will

he take the necessary action to ensure that electricity authorities do not disconnect supply to a consumer until after consultation with the consumer?

Answer—

(1) Electricity boards generally use a system of accounts and follow-up notices before disconnecting supply to a consumer. In cases in which a consumer has a bad record of payment, reminder notices may not be sent by some boards. However, the consumer is warned of the procedure that will be followed.

(2) It is not practicable for board staff to consult with all consumers before disconnecting supply. Such a practice would involve considerable additional expense, which, ultimately, would be borne by those consumers who do meet their commitments. As an example, in the area of the South East Queensland Electricity Board alone, about 9 600 consumers were disconnected for non-payment in 1983-84. In addition, approximately 22 300 accounts were written off as bad debts. However, where a consumer is experiencing difficulty in meeting a payment, the boards, if contacted, are happy to discuss the matter in an attempt to resolve the problem.

(3) Although this may have occurred, I am not prepared to take the action suggested, as it would be unworkable where consumers abscond or deliberately avoid contact and would add considerably to the board's costs.

3. Braking Standards, Trucks and Trailers

Ms WARNER asked the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Racing—

(1) Does the report of the national road freight industry recommend that trucks and trailers which comply with the latest braking standards as defined in the Australian Design Rules be limited to a speed of 100 km/h outside built-up areas?

(2) Does it also recommend that those trucks that do not comply with the new brake standards be limited to a maximum speed of 80 km/h and be required to display a readily identifiable plate to signify the lower speed limit, that these speed limits be vigorously enforced and that the current practice of unwritten tolerance in relation to speeding come to an end?

(3) How many trucks and trailers registered in Queensland do not comply with the latest braking standards?

(4) Does Queensland allow unwritten tolerance in relation to speeding?

(5) What is the speed limit set for trucks in Queensland?

Answer—

(1 & 2) These aspects of the question relate to the Traffic Act, which is the responsibility of the Honourable the Minister for Transport.

(3) The Australian Design Rule relating to braking systems of trucks over 4.5 tonnes applies to vehicles manufactured after 1 July 1980. Of the 67 081 trucks registered in Queensland, approximately 3 500 trucks are fitted with complying braking systems.

The Australian Design Rule relating to braking systems of heavy trailers is being phased in over a two-year period commencing from 1 July 1984. To date, 13 243 heavy trailers are registered in Queensland, of which fewer than 100 have been fitted with complying braking systems.

(4) The enforcement of speed limits is the responsibility of the Honourable the Minister for Police.

(5) See (1 & 2).

Ms Warner: I redirect the relevant portions of my question to the Minister for Transport and to the Minister for Lands, Forestry and Police.

4. "The Oaks" Nursing Home, Warwick

Mr BOOTH asked the Minister for Health—

(1) What are the most recent developments in relation to the Oaks Nursing Home at Warwick?

(2) In particular, has any headway been made towards a settlement of the dispute with the Federal Government and are negotiations still proceeding?

Answer—

(1 & 2) The Commonwealth Government has requested that a fresh application be submitted for the registration of beds in "The Oaks" Nursing Home at Warwick. A letter was forwarded to the Warwick Hospitals Board requesting that a new application form be completed. The hospitals board has advised that the application has been completed and forwarded to my department for submission to the Commonwealth Health Department.

5. Technical and Further Education College, Warwick

Mr BOOTH asked the Minister for Education—

With reference to the construction of the TAFE college at Warwick, which was announced in the recent Budget papers—

Will he outline a proposed timetable for the construction of the college?

Answer—

Present intentions are to submit developed sketch plans for the college for the approval of the Commonwealth funding body in March 1985. I am hopeful that, provided all the necessary Commonwealth approvals are forthcoming, construction can commence during 1986.

6. Electricity Connection Deposits

Mr COMBEN asked the Minister for Mines and Energy—

(1) What amount of money do the respective electricity distribution boards require from the following consumers as a security deposit: (a) domestic consumers living in their own home, (b) domestic consumers living in rented premises, (c) commercial consumers and (d) industrial consumers?

(2) For each type of consumer, what factors are taken into consideration when determining the amount of security deposit and what formula is used in determining that amount?

(3) What amount of money is currently held by electricity authorities as security deposit?

(4) How is that money invested?

(5) What rate of interest are consumers paid on security deposits held by electricity authorities?

Answer—

(1) (a)	SEQEB	$50 min. (from 1 November 1984)
	SWQEB	$50
	WBBEB	$90 for new consumers since December 1983
	CEB	Nil, unless credit history is unsatisfactory
	MEB	Nil
	NORQEB	Nil, unless credit history unsatisfactory, then 1.5 times normal account or $200 maximum
	FNQEB	Nil
(b)	SEQEB	$60 min. (from 1 November 1984)

SWQEB	$50
WBBEB	$90
CEB	$80
MEB	Nil to $100 (depending on credit history)
NORQEB	$80, increasing if necessary to 1.5 times normal account or $200 maximum
FNQEB	$80

(c & d) For commercial and industrial premises the various boards require a deposit of up to $750 maximum depending on load and consumption.

(2) Having regard to the fact that boards have varying policies with regard to security deposits, as evidenced by the answers to 1 (a) and (b), factors taken into account in determining those separate policies include the average amount of accounts for each type of consumer, individual and type credit histories, ownership of premises and size of loading.

(3) SEQEB	$22,843,561
SWQEB	$ 2,872,784
WBBEB	$ 1,105,000
CEB	$ 2,125,000
MEB	$ 534,000
NORQEB	$ 2,164,447
FNQEB	$ 1,290,300

(4) Investments are made in long-term and short-term State Electricity Commission loans and in short-term securities. Any balance is held in current accounts.

(5) If lodged in cash, interest is payable in accordance with regulation 70 of the Electricity Regulations at the same rate paid by the Commonwealth Savings Bank. The current rate is 3¾ per cent. Where a security deposit has been lodged in the form of inscribed stock, interest is paid at the rate applicable for such stock.

7. Feral and Domestic Cats

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

With reference to the enormous damage and destruction being done to Queensland's native wildlife by feral cats—

Will he give consideration to declaring feral cats as pests and/or to a system, similar to that operating on Lord Howe Island in an attempt to save the Lord Howe Island woodhen, of registration and sterilisation of domestic cats to prevent further stray animals going wild and breeding?

Answer—

Under the provisions of the Fauna Conservation Act 1974-1984, feral cats are classified as non-protected fauna throughout the State. Provided that property-owners' permission has been obtained, the taking or destruction of non-protected fauna is permitted without restriction.

The registration and sterilisation of domestic cats does not fall within the jurisdiction of my portfolio.

8. Atherton State School

Mr MENZEL asked the Minister for Education—

When will the new Atherton State School be completed?

Answer—

Completion date for the Atherton State School is the first week in November 1984; that is, this week or maybe early next week. The Department of Education is due to take possession by the end of November 1984, by which time all the materials and equipment will have been transferred from the old school to the new complex.

I compliment the honourable member on the representations that he has made in the matter.

9. Babinda Bypass Road

Mr MENZEL asked the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Racing—

(1) What progress has been made in land resumption for the new road to bypass Babinda?

(2) How many settlements have been made with persons who have had land resumed because of this new road?

Answer—

(1 & 2) Formal resumption of property for the Babinda bypass has not yet commenced. However, to give people the opportunity to negotiate a sale to the Main Roads Department in the most favourable terms for the property-owners, I arranged for a senior departmental officer to go to Babinda for discussions with any willing party.

Purchases have been completed or contracts signed for purchase of four houses, three residential allotments and a block of flats. Acquisition agreements have also been obtained to cover three instances in which part only of an allotment is required.

10. Railway Bridge, Learoyd Road, Acacia Ridge

Mr PALASZCZUK asked the Minister for Transport—

With reference to the increase in traffic in the Learoyd Road area in Acacia Ridge—

When will the new bridge over the railway line in Learoyd Road be opened to traffic?

Answer—

This bridge was completed and opened for traffic on 11 October 1984. I suggest that the honourable member pay more attention to his electorate instead of blindly reading questions written by party officials.

11. Queensland Bike Plan Conference

Mr PALASZCZUK asked the Minister for Transport—

With reference to the recent bikeways conference which he had the privilege to open—

What was the Government's contribution towards the cost of the running of this very important and highly successful conference?

Answer—

As chairman of the Queensland Road Safety Council, I take an active interest in all aspects of road safety and, because of this interest, I was pleased to participate in the recent Queensland Bike Plan Conference. The Education Department provided use of the seminar facilities at the Bardon Professional Development Centre free of charge.

Several senior officers of the Queensland Road Safety Council and officers of other Government departments, including the Education Department and the Main Roads Department, attended as part of their official duties. In addition, the Queensland Road Safety Council mounted a well-presented bicycle safety display at the seminar venue.

Prior to the seminar, organisers met with the Commissioner for Transport and senior staff of his department, during which the co-operation of the department was afforded to the organising committee. I note that the conference was commercially sponsored by Mercantile Mutual Insurance Ltd in conjunction with Lifecycle, Biketech and Freewheeling. I commend those companies for their excellent community spirit in promoting such an important aspect of road safety.

12. Technical and Further Education College, Maryborough

Mr ALISON asked the Minister for Education—

With reference to the Maryborough High School and TAFE college, which share certain facilities, with both the school and the college suffering seriously from lack of space—

(1) What progress has been made on plans for a solution to this problem by resiting the TAFE college?

(2) Has a decision yet been made to ease the cramped conditions at the TAFE college in the short term by leasing the Wide Bay marine building?

Answer—

(1) The problem of lack of space will be alleviated when the two-storey general studies block, containing music and instrument rooms, general learning and practice rooms, science laboratory and preparation room and computer rooms, under construction at the Maryborough High School is completed early in 1985 and further when the new college at Hervey Bay is completed in late 1985.

A complete assessment of alternative strategies to meet effectively the post-school educational needs of Maryborough is currently being undertaken.

(2) The proposal to lease the Wide Bay marine building has been evaluated. I am currently waiting for an assessment of that valuation. I thank the honourable member for the considerable work being done in that field in Maryborough.

13. Mary River Bridge and Approach Roads

Mr ALISON asked the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Racing—

(1) When will construction work commence on the approach roads and the bridge over the Mary River near Baddow?

(2) When is it expected that the bridge and associated works will be completed and what is the expected total cost thereof?

Answer—

(1) Subject to funds being available, it is anticipated that construction will commence in the latter half of 1985.

(2) Construction of the bridge and roadworks will take approximately three years, again subject to funds being available in the later years. The estimated cost at current values is $5.5m.

14. Railway Department Land, Cluden Racecourse-Stuart

Mr WILSON asked the Minister for Transport—

(1) Has the Railway Department relinquished the strip of land adjacent to the railway line between the Cluden Racecourse and Stuart and, if so, how much land has been relinquished and is it required by the Queensland Housing Commission?

(2) Does the Railway Department require the land it acquired on the opposite side of the railway line and, if not, will consideration be given to handing this over to the QHC for low-rent housing?

Answer—

(1) Yes. In 1974 a strip of land on the western side of the railway line between Cluden Racecourse and Stuart, having an area of 6.8 ha, was transferred to the Queensland Housing Commission. The requirements of the Queensland Housing Commission are not matters within my jurisdiction.

(2) Land on the eastern side of the railway line in the same area was acquired some years ago for future railway purposes and the commissioner advises that its retention by Queensland Railways for this and other railway associated developments is fully justified.

15. Undergrounding of Electricity, Surfers Paradise

Mr BORBIDGE asked the Minister for Mines and Energy—

What is the timetable for the proposed undergrounding of electricity in the central business district of Surfers Paradise?

Answer—

The South East Queensland Electricity Board plans to replace the following low-voltage and high-voltage mains with underground mains during the next two years—

(a) Gold Coast Highway between Elkhorn Avenue and Cavill Avenue (four poles only will remain);

(b) Cavill Avenue between the Gold Coast Highway and Ferny Avenue (three poles only will remain);

(c) Beach Road between Gold Coast Highway and Ferny Avenue and Ferny Avenue between Cavill Avenue and Beach Road (three poles only will remain in Beach Road);

(d) Ferny Avenue between Cavill Avenue and pole No. 47480; and

(e) Gold Coast Highway between Cavill Avenue and Hanlon Street.

16. Training in Tourism and Hospitality Industry

Mr BORBIDGE asked the Minister for Education—

With reference to Federal Government proposals to build a school of tourism excellence in Canberra—

Will he advise the House of Queensland Government initiatives in regard to training in the tourism and hospitality industry, particularly the new college in South Brisbane?

Answer—

The Queensland Government has fostered tourism in Queensland as a major income-earner for the State and has played an active role in the development of education and training facilities in colleges of technical and further education throughout the State. A Cabinet decision in 1979 approved the establishment of centres of excellence for the training of students in tourism and hospitality at South Brisbane and Townsville. The South Brisbane and Townsville colleges will have similar facilities.

Courses which will be offered at both colleges include—

Certificate courses in tourism and hospitality;

Pre-vocational course in catering and hospitality;

Apprenticeship in cooking;

Nutritional courses;

Hotel and catering practices;

Service courses in catering;

Bar attendants course;

Wine service training course;

Dining room service;

Pre-employment course in restaurant practices;

Pre-employment course in hospitality practices;

Housekeeping practices course;

Receptionist practices;

Travel agency practices;

Small business operatives course (catering, hospitality and tourism);

Hotel and restaurant patissier; and

International travel, culture and cuisine.

The College of Tourism and Hospitality, South Brisbane, was completed in August 1984 and the School of Tourism and Hospitality at Townsville is due for completion in January 1985. Both centres will provide live training for students, as the two restaurants and one bistro at South Brisbane and the restaurant and bistro at Townsville will be open to the public. By this means students will gain skills and confidence in dealing with the public before being employed in private industry.

In addition to the above major centres, there are in existence or planned quite substantial facilities at Bald Hills, Cairns, Coorparoo, Central Highlands, Gold Coast, Ipswich, Mount Gravatt, Burdekin, South Burnett, Rockhampton and Toowoomba colleges of TAFE.

So, the proposal of the Federal Minister for Sport, Recreation and Tourism (Mr Brown) is exposed for what it is—a last-ditch attempt by the Labor Government to save itself from being totally discredited in the eyes of the tourist industry.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

National Party Flat Tax Policy

Mr WARBURTON: In asking a question of the Premier and Treasurer, I refer to his strong support for what is known as a flat rate tax, a concept that has been peddled for many years by the League of Rights and the disciples of the late Major Douglas. In view of the fact that he proposes to push flat rate tax as Queensland National Party policy, even though it has no chance whatsoever of getting off the ground and has been dismissed by most of the conservative forces in Australia, is he prepared today to give precise details as to how his flat rate tax proposals are intended to work?

Sir JOH BJELKE-PETERSEN: I do not know how it is that the honourable member always seems to know the type of question I would like him to ask me. In a general sense, the Government supports the policies on taxation enunciated by the coalition parties. The Government has, as an ultimate goal, the introduction of a single rate tax. I do not know why the honourable member spoke about a flat rate tax; it is a single rate tax. That would be the ideal. No doubt, when another party is elected to govern the nation, that will be achieved.

Because I know that the tax-gatherers in Canberra are so fanatical about taking everything they can from people, I like to talk about taxation. Those in Canberra believe that they can spend money better than private individuals. They are obsessed with the idea that they can spend the people's money better than the people themselves.

Mr Warburton: Will you give me the precise details of your scheme?

Sir JOH BJELKE-PETERSEN: The people are concerned about the issues of the present Federal election campaign. The nation is confronted with a capital gains tax, a wealth tax and the reintroduction of death and gift duties. The Prime Minister will not say that he will not introduce them.

Mr Burns interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will not tolerate continued interjections by the member for Lytton.

Mr WARBURTON: I rise to a point of order. The Standing Orders say clearly that the answer to a question must be relevant to that question. I put it to you, Mr Speaker, that the Premier——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Standing Orders state clearly that that is within my jurisdiction.

Sir JOH BJELKE-PETERSEN: I have outlined to the Leader of the Opposition the ultimate taxation objective of the National Party—that is, fewer taxes, lower taxes and smaller government—whereas the policy of the Labor Party is to rip off the people as much as possible to create bigger government, more taxes and higher taxes. The National Party believes in smaller government and lower taxes.

The Labor Government will not accept the principle of a single rate tax. Its concept is to exploit every avenue of taxation. The Labor Government has said quite clearly that these issues will be considered in the future.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions says that Labor Party policy is for the introduction of a capital gains tax and that it will be introduced. Honourable members know that, under the Accord made with the unions, that tax has to be introduced. That cannot be denied, because it is in the Accord. As the president of the ACTU said, "That is our policy, and that will be introduced." That is what confronts this nation—not a single rate tax, which would be good and ideal, but the heavy hand of taxation of the Labor Party that is currently in power in Canberra.

I have never yet met one man or woman who wants to pay more taxes. I cannot understand why those people would vote for the Prime Minister, because when I talk to people, they say, "We don't want to pay more tax; we want to pay less tax." Surely the simple answer is to vote for the coalition parties at the election on 1 December. If the people do that, they will not have to pay more tax.

National Party Flat Tax Policy

Mr WARBURTON: I have another question for the Premier and Treasurer. In his previous answer he admitted that his objective was to introduce a flat tax. He also admitted that most people want to pay less tax. Does the Premier and Treasurer understand that his proposal of a 30 per cent flat tax would at present cost a person in Queensland on average weekly earnings of $380 an amount of $114 a week? That is what his flat tax proposal would mean to a person who is now paying income tax at the rate of $68.80 a week.

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

Mr WARBURTON: I am trying to do so. I am hoping that the Premier can hear me. Does the Premier and Treasurer realise that, whereas he now pays $779 a week tax, under the 30 per cent proposal he would pay $472 a week, and under the 20 per cent

proposal be would pay $315 a week? It is no wonder that the Premier wants a flat tax. So I ask him for the second time today: As he is so intent on pushing his flat tax proposal, will he give this Parliament the full details of it?

Sir JOH BJELKE-PETERSEN: First of all, I have already indicated that it is not a flat tax that I am talking about: it is a flat rate of tax. The Leader of the Opposition asked me earlier for the details of the proposal. I did not answer his question; I spoke on tax matters generally. Now the Leader of the Opposition is attempting to tell me in this Chamber that he knows what it is, although only a few moments ago he asked me for the details. I did not tell him, but now he has invented what he thinks is the correct answer.

Mr Warburton: Am I right?

Sir JOH BJELKE-PETERSEN: No; of course the honourable member is not right. He is wrong, as he is always and as he always will be wrong, because his party has the wrong base and the wrong policies, all directed towards socialism.

I do not know how I can help the Leader of the Opposition and the Labor Party. In fact, it is a long time ago that I gave up trying to help them. They are going in the wrong direction, and all that we on this side can do is to offer the people the right direction, the right policies and the right attitude. Of course, that is exactly what we are doing. The Leader of the Opposition should apply himself to getting his people to adopt a sensible attitude towards taxation; to come out and say that, yes, the Labor Party ought to be sensible——

Mr Warburton: I am trying to get you to be sensible about it.

Sir JOH BJELKE-PETERSEN: Oh, the Leader of the Opposition now says that to tax people heavily is being sensible! Not one member would agree that it is sensible to attempt to tax people heavily. We on this side believe in low tax, and we intend to tell the people of this nation exactly where we stand on this issue and exactly where the Labor Party stands on it and how, with its recent performance, it is ripping off the taxpayers of this nation. Every man and woman in this nation who earns sufficient income to pay tax is paying 23 per cent more in taxation than before Mr Hawke gained office. That is quite apart from the automatic increases in the price of beer, cigarettes and petrol by which the Federal Government rips off the people. The way that the Labor Party in Canberra is ripping off the people is an absolute scandal.

Fire Brigades

Mr NEAL: I ask the Minister for Environment, Valuation and Administrative Services—

(1) What is the cost of running Queensland's urban fire brigades this year, and how much of that amount will Toowoomba receive?

(2) Is there a danger of the 10/14 roster worked at the Toowoomba Fire Brigade coming under threat and, if so, for what reason?

(3) What is the manning situation at the Maroochydore Fire Station, and will it change to an 8-hour roster system?

(4) Is it true that the New South Wales Fire Service is moving away from the auxiliary system and employing more permanent firemen?

(5) Will it be common practice that firemen will be called in for medical examination as is the case in the Mount Isa brigade?

(6) Will the retirement age of firemen be looked at?

(7) What method is being used to determine the staffing levels at each fire brigade station?

I do not mind whether the Minister answers the question now or asks that it be placed on notice.

Mr TENNI: I would like to answer it as a question without notice, simply because the honourable member had the decency to advise me yesterday that he would be asking the question. That is typical of the honourable member for Balonne. He does such a thorough job at all times. I will probably get some special leave for saying that. I thank the honourable member for his question.

The answer is as follows—

(1) The total cost of running Queensland's 81 urban fire brigades this year is $65.4m, as set out in my ministerial statement to this House yesterday. In 1984-85, the Toowoomba Fire Brigade will receive $2.08m, an increase of 9.47 per cent over its approved budget for 1983-84.

(2) The setting of working rosters for officers and firemen is the responsibility of individual boards. I am not aware of any proposals to alter the rosters at the Toowoomba Fire Brigade. However, I note that the Country Fire Brigade Boards have indicated their total opposition to the working of a 10/14 roster by watch-room attendants. I support their view, as it is completely unrealistic for a watch-room attendant to stay awake and alert at a watch-room console for 14 hours of night duty without relief. None of the Opposition members can stay awake for two hours, let alone 14 hours.

(3) Detailed assessments have revealed that the Maroochy Fire Brigade Board has been overmanned with permanent staff, but that the Maroochydore Fire Station has been insufficiently manned. I have directed the board to adjust the deployment of its manpower to ensure that Maroochydore itself is adequately protected.

(4) It is not true that the New South Wales fire service is moving away from the auxiliary system that is prominent in fire protection, particularly in country cities and towns. The New South Wales service is employing more permanent firemen. Queensland also is taking steps to increase its permanent fire-fighter strength, while at the same time lifting the level of involvement of its auxiliaries.

(5) The calling of firemen for medical examination is a decision of individual boards. I have not been involved in discussions on this matter, as I believe that boards should exercise their own judgment as to the necessity for such a move.

(6) I am currently investigating the possibility of lowering the age of retirement for firemen and officers, and to this end I have had discussions with the trustees of the Fire Brigade Employees Superannuation Plan. Naturally, such a move would depend on the ability of the fund to meet such an additional financial commitment, and the trustees are currently investigating possible improved areas of investment. However, if the firemen and officers wish to increase the level of their own contribution, without any attendant cost to the tax-payer, or to match the current level of contribution by the employing boards, it could then be possible to arrange a scheme for earlier retirement.

(7) The level of staffing at fire brigade boards is being determined in relation to the overall fire risk facing each fire brigade board in its districts or subdistricts. The assessment of fire risk is based on many criteria, including resident population, tourist population, city commuter movement, fire calls, both within and outside a brigade area, types and occupancy of buildings, geographical layout of a district, degree of isolation, availability of interbrigade and other mutual aid, transportation aspects and special life and property risks.

I am disturbed to note that these matters are still apparently a source of concern to the staff of the Toowoomba Fire Brigade as, in company with the honourable members for Toowoomba South and Toowoomba North, who are excellent members, I recently had a very productive meeting with the permanent and auxiliary staff of the brigade. I hope that this further explanation settles any concern in the minds of the members of the staff at Toowoomba. The facts have been deliberately distorted by the two so-called specialists, Mr Arthur Rogers of the United Firefighters Union and Mr Hammond of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Officers Association.

National Party Flat Tax Policy

Mr BURNS: In directing a question to the Premier and Treasurer, I point out that a moment ago he said that he would tell the House exactly where the National Party stands on the flat rate tax issue. I ask: Will he tell the House now, quite clearly, what percentage flat rate tax he envisages in his ultimate aim of introducing flat rate taxation and what the threshold will be?

Sir JOH BJELKE-PETERSEN: The honourable member asks me to tell him what is the policy and platform of the National Party. There will be a time and place for us to announce our single rate tax proposal.

Mr Burns: You don't know.

Sir JOH BJELKE-PETERSEN: As I understand and as I have indicated, at this point in time there is no real thought or intention of launching a single rate tax proposal or policy during the present campaign. The Government is dealing with issues that already confront the community, and that is why the flat rate tax proposal is not an issue in this campaign.

Mr Burns: You are the Premier, and you have been promising it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that, because he has asked a question, he must listen to the answer, and he should do so in silence. If he continues to interject, I will take appropriate action.

Sir JOH BJELKE-PETERSEN: I am surprised that the honourable member for Lytton wants another thrashing on this matter of taxation. He is a beggar for punishment. Labor Party members are always at the public about taxes. They are tax-happy, and that is all that they talk about. In fact, Labor Party members must dream about taxes and visualise all sorts of schemes. They do not like this National Party single rate of tax proposal.

Mr Burns: You don't know the answer.

Sir JOH BJELKE-PETERSEN: The honourable member should not worry.

Apart from taxation, there are many other issues in the campaign. The real issue is what does the Labor Party support. The National Party Government believes in lower taxes and small government. The Labor Party believes in big government and more taxes. The honourable member for Lytton should wake up to himself and start to head in the opposite direction.

National Party Flat Tax Policy

Mr BURNS: I have a further question for the Premier and Treasurer. He said that he believes in small government and reduced taxation. I ask: If the National Party's flat-tax proposal were implemented, which it is claimed would result in reduced taxes of $4,000m, in which areas would there be cuts in funding? Would funding for schools, hospitals, main roads or housing be cut?

Sir JOH BJELKE-PETERSEN: Queensland has a balanced Budget and the Government runs within that Budget. It is the ALP Government in Canberra that has the problem. It must stop its duplication of State functions in environment, Aboriginal welfare, education and hospital services. If those functions were left to the States, there would be smaller government in Canberra.

Mr Burns: It is a matter of less funds.

Sir JOH BJELKE-PETERSEN: It is not a matter of less funds. The Commonwealth must stop duplication and cut the size of its government.

Mr Burns: If they give you less money because of lower taxes, what will you cut?

Sir JOH BJELKE-PETERSEN: The Federal Government must cut back.

Mr Burns interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have been very lenient with the member for Lytton. If he continues to interject, I will warn him under Standing Order No. 123A.

Sir JOH BJELKE-PETERSEN: I could keep going, but I think that Opposition members have heard enough.

Promotion in Europe by Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation

Mr JENNINGS: I ask the Minister for Tourism, National Parks, Sport and The Arts: Is he aware of an article in today's "Courier-Mail" in which the editorial of a West German magazine is critical of the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation promotion at an investment seminar? The article also reports a statement from the Opposition spokesman on Tourism (Mr Underwood) that Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation promotions were a sham that lose more tourists than they attract. Is the Minister also aware of increasing reports that Federal Government agencies overseas have been instructed to denigrate Queensland and Tasmanian tourist promotions with a view to placing more emphasis on Labor State promotions? If he is aware of these statements and allegations, can he advise the House of the correct situation?

Mr McKECHNIE: I am aware of the video film that was shown overseas and I will make it available to the media.

That decision is in stark contrast to the attitude of the Opposition to the video films that it is trying to push in this State and Australia. The New South Wales Attorney-General is trying to convince the New South Wales Labor Party caucus to accept the new ER rating for video films. However, he does not want to show those films to members of caucus. At the ministerial council meeting he said that what ruined his case for the acceptance of the ER rating was that the video films were shown to members of caucus. I am prepared to show the media those films that the honourable member and the shadow spokesman were talking about. However, members of the ALP will not show the video films that they are trying to push.

Mr UNDERWOOD: I rise to a point of order. The Minister is totally misrepresenting the position and avoiding the question. He is talking about the wrong video films. Members of the Opposition are talking about the video films that the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation has produced. He cannot answer the Dorothy Dix question.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member for Ipswich West will resume his seat.

Mr McKECHNIE: As I said, I am prepared to show this video film to the press. However, members of the Opposition and their colleagues in Canberra and other States are not prepared to show even members of their own party the video films that they are talking about. They know that if they do the other States will take the same attitude as Queensland.

The article referred to by the honourable member for Southport was not an article about a tourist promotion. The purpose of the video film was to promote an investment seminar to attract people to Queensland.

I might add that officers of the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation are doing their job. That claim is borne out by the increase in the number of people who have travelled to Queensland. Last year, the number of people coming to Queensland increased by 332 000.

An Opposition Member: From where?

Mr McKECHNIE: From overseas countries. There has been an increase in the number of tourists coming from European countries. The total increase in the number

of tourists coming to Queensland from overseas was 37.9 per cent, compared with a 4 per cent increase for all other States in Australia.

The Opposition spokesman was mentioned in that article. He seems to attack the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation continually. The corporation is accomplishing more than any other person or any other organisation in Australia in promoting tourism and creating jobs in this State.

I begin to wonder whether the Opposition spokesman has a deliberate intention of knocking organisations that are creating jobs. I wonder why he continues to do that.

As to the overseas activities of the Australian Tourist Commission—earlier this year when I visited Los Angeles, one of the complaints that I received from my departmental officers was that the Australian Tourist Commission was not giving Queensland a fair go overseas.

Queensland, Tasmania and the Northern Territory were mentioned in the article. They feel it is critical that individual State offices be established overseas to try to balance the fact that Federal Government agencies have definitely had instructions——

Mr CASEY: I rise to a point of order. The Minister is deliberately misleading the House. It is a well-known and established fact that the Hogan commercials are centred almost entirely on Queensland. They have been a great success in the promotion on the west coast of America of Australian tourism, and that is thanks to the Federal Labor Government.

Mr McKECHNIE: In reply to the point of order taken by the former Leader of the Opposition—the Hogan commercials are not shown on many channels in the United States.

I will tell honourable members where the Australian Tourist Commission has gone wrong. The Federal Government has not given the Australian Tourist Commission enough staff to promote Australia's tourist attractions, even with the assistance of the channels that televise the advertisements. Prospective tourists go to the offices of the ATC with their inquiries. That is where the action is. Yet Queensland is not getting a fair go in those offices. Obviously, the Northern Territory feels the same way. Queensland should be promoted on an individual basis overseas, and Queensland's success is evidenced by the figures that I have mentioned.

Visit to Bundaberg by Prime Minister

Mr JENNINGS: I ask the Minister for Education: Is he aware of a number of statements about the visit of the Prime Minister to Bundaberg and the allegation by the honourable member for Bundaberg that Bundaberg schoolchildren were not permitted to see the Prime Minister at the Bundaberg airport? If the Minister is aware of those statements, will he advise the House of the actual situation?

Mr POWELL: It is with a great deal of pleasure that I inform people of the exact situation. The first thing that I want to do is to read into "Hansard" the instruction that has been given to schools. It is as follows—

> "It is inappropriate for school routine to be varied during an election campaign to enable school children to meet with political leaders and candidates while they are campaigning. No such variations must occur."

Obviously, members of the Opposition and the ALP publicity machine are very disturbed about the decision of the Department of Education.

Mr DAVIS: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. I draw your attention to the time.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Brisbane Central is showing contempt for the Chair.

Order! The time allotted for questions has now expired.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

"Collins Place"

Mr FOURAS (South Brisbane) (12 noon): I have set up a Save "Collins Place" fund because I believe that the time is long overdue for Queenslanders to stand up and be counted in their opposition to the trampling of individual rights by the Queensland Government. Ms Lynette Bloss, the owner of "Collins Place", has made a reasonable offer to the Expo authority to lease her property to it free of cost for the duration of Expo '88. The chairman of the authority, Sir Llewellyn Edwards, has publicly stated that it would be an act of vandalism for that historic building to be demolished and that it would not be pulled down. If "Collins Place" is not to be demolished, why is the Expo authority unwilling to negotiate a lease at no cost? There is only one conclusion—that the authority intends to profit from its sale. It is time that immoral land grabs such as those recently attempted at Kangaroo Point were shown for what that are—legal robbery. There can be no justification for refusing land-owners within the Expo site their rightful protection under section 41 of the Acquisition of Land Act.

Under section 30 of the Expo '88 Act, land-owners are denied the usual protection of being able to buy back their properties at market value, set by the Valuer-General, if those properties revert to private ownership within seven years.

The 70 land-owners within the Expo site are being legally robbed to the tune of $42m. That is the profit in 1983 dollar terms that the Expo authority estimates will be made on the resale of the resumed properties. Recent profit estimates indicate that that is a substantial underestimation. A profit of more than $42m will be made.

The non-inclusion of section 41 of the Acquisition of Land Act in the Expo '88 Act is symptomatic of the robber-baron behaviour of the Queensland Government. The Queensland Government is much more interested in setting up prime real estate sites for its developer friends. It is interesting to note that Sir Francis Moore had dinner with Sir Llewellyn Edwards and the Premier and said, "Look, you haven't realised that we can make money from the resale of this land. We can make a lot of money." That is why Expo was sited in my electorate of South Brisbane.

The Queensland Government does not give a damn if, in looking after the interests of real estate developers, it tramples over the fundamental rights of individuals. Queenslanders are becoming increasingly concerned at the State Government's abuse of legislative powers to rob people legally of their properties and their right to profit from them.

It is interesting to note that in 1959 Sir Francis Nicklin introduced a Bill of Rights in this Chamber. The legislation came before the Parliament. One of the provisions of the Bill was designed to—"Secure the freedom of the individual and the protection of his property from unjust acquisition" That proposal was introduced by the Government in 1959. Sir Francis Nicklin stated—

> "We on this side of the Chamber firmly believe that the maintenance of these freedoms is the best and surest means of maintaining for us and our posterity the human rights declared by the General Assembly of the United Nations."

Obviously, "honest Frank's" belief has not been followed by honourable members opposite. That is appalling.

A land agent's district report containing information had to be submitted to the Expo authority. The report states that the building referred to is a two-storey house built in approximately 1870, which has been extensively renovated. It further states—

> "The walls in the ground level are in triple brick and the walls of the first floor level in double brick. This brick work together with interior brick work has been

sand blasted and treated to preserve it against the elements and toxic emission fumes."

The report continues—

" restoration work has been conducted in such a manner as to preserve the house in a substantial condition for a long period of time."

The job was so well done that the property has been listed by the Heritage Commission as a historical building that should be preserved. Sir Llewellyn Edwards says to the public, "Of course it won't be knocked down." That is what he believes.

The same report shows that Ms Bloss did not want to be seen to be fighting with the Government and that she had been very constructive in her approach to the whole matter.

The land agent referred to the options that were open to the Government. It is important to note them. The authority has the right to take up options if it does not want to rob Ms Bloss legally of her property and her right to profit from it. The land agent's report states—

"If the land is to be taken and the authority does not favour a lease as proposed above it was requested that the land be transferred in the normal manner to the Authority with a contract for sale to provide for re-transfer to Ms Bloss after completion of the exposition on terms and conditions to be negotiated."

It mentions another possibility, which is to enter into an agreement under section 15 of the Acquisition of Land Act 1967-1977 to provide for the transfer of the property back to Ms Bloss on completion of the exposition, again on terms and conditions to be negotiated.

Sir Llewellyn Edwards is trying to extract himself from the position in which he finds himself. He is trying to defuse an issue that has the total support of the community. He is trying to snow the public and extinguish the beginnings of a raging fire of public revulsion at the actions of the Government.

I refer to the following article in "The Courier-Mail"—

"The owner of historic Collins Place, Ms Lynette Bloss, could have first option on the property after Expo 88 under a 'gentleman's agreement', the Expo 88 Authority chairman, Sir Llewellyn Edwards, said yesterday.

However, the sale would be at a price determined by the authority taking into account inflationary increases.

'Ms Bloss can have first option on it,' Sir Llewellyn said yesterday.

'There is a provision for us to come to an arrangement on ownership. At any time she can have an interim payment.' "

What happened? Because they did not believe him, Ms Bloss's solicitors wrote to the Expo authority seeking written confirmation of Sir Llewellyn's statement to the press. Quite often there has been reason to disbelieve him. Since I became a member he has been very careless with the truth. In the most monumental rebuff that I have ever seen to the chairman of any State authority, the Crown Solicitor (Mr Sammon) said—

"The report in 'The Courier Mail' on 23rd October, referred to in paragraph (iv) of your letter, was not made on the basis of any information given by the Authority, or made with its consent."

I emphasise "or made with its consent" His letter continues—

"The Authority does not intend to offer your client any such 'first option of purchase' as is referred to in your letter."

Sir Llewellyn Edwards was either not being fair dinkum or was not telling the truth.

I refer to another article in "The Courier-Mail", this time on 30 October—

> "But Sir Llewellyn said last night that he had never referred to Ms Bloss getting first option of purchase. What he had said . . . was that Ms Bloss would have an opportunity after Expo to buy back Collins Place."

What a joke! Of course all the properties will be sold. Every Queenslander will have an opportunity to purchase them.

Sir Llewellyn Edwards has misled the people of Queensland. He is trying to run away from the issue because hundreds of people are telephoning the Expo authority and the Premier to state that they will not countenance the bush-ranging, legal robbery being practised by the robber barons opposite.

The "Daily Sun" contains the following article—

> "Sir Llew last night denied the accusation, saying he had been quoted incorrectly in a newspaper report."

"The Courier-Mail" reporters know very well that Sir Llewellyn was not quoted incorrectly. They know very well that he used them to hose down the fire of public opinion raging against his immoral actions against that lady.

The legality of his actions must be questioned. Ms Bloss sought an injunction. The Supreme Court of Queensland decided that the Expo authority is effectively beyond the court's jurisdiction, provided it takes properties at South Brisbane for the purposes of Expo 88. The court made it clear that it was not able to inquire into whether the authority could more properly deal with the objections by accepting an offer of a lease rather than insisting on resumption of freehold. The court could not decide the reasonableness or otherwise of what the authority has done. It was not deciding whether justice had been done. The court had to decide whether, under the Acquisition of Land Act, the Government could step in with heavy-handedness and legally rob Ms Bloss of her property.

The Government's actions are unreasonable and an erosion of individual rights. They make a joke of what Sir Francis Nicklin said about egalitarian philosophies when the National Party came to power.

I will read again what Sir Francis Nicklin said—

> "Secure the freedom of the individual and the protection of his property from unjust acquisition."

That is what the then Country Party was about in 1959 but, because the National Party has been in power too long, it has been corrupted, for which it should be damned. Members of the National Party are intransigent and will not respect the rights of the people. They ought to be listening to the people, who are ringing my electoral office and complaining. The National Party knows that it has backed the wrong horse and that it has been damned for its behaviour. That such legal robbery should occur is appalling and that so many lies should be told about the reasons for its actions is disgraceful.

Toowong Family Fiesta; Parental Responsibilities for Children

Mr BAILEY (Toowong) (12.11 p.m.): I wish to speak of the abrogation of parental responsibility by so many Australian parents. Before I do that, though, I shall commend those who were involved in last Sunday's Toowong Family Fiesta, which was quite well supported by many members of the Toowong community. One of the problems within a city electorate with artificially created boundaries and a number of different suburbs is to try to create a feeling of community interest, welfare and concern.

I thank very much the service clubs and people who pitched in to make the day a very successful one. I particularly thank those entertainers who donated their time. They included the school bands from Toowong, Ironside and Indooroopilly and the Toowong gymnastics group.

I wish to bring to the attention of all honourable members the extraordinary pressure that the Community has placed upon the Government to become involved in child welfare and the increasing lack of involvement of so many parents in the welfare of their children. In a discussion on the problems of young people with the Toowong branch of the Department of Welfare Services, I was given the most extraordinary statistics on the incidence of child abuse which, over the past year, appears to have doubled. That is an extraordinary statistic that must be brought home to the community. I was told of a six-year-old child whose back was totally covered with bruises and cigarette burns. The boy was the product of a broken marriage and was being abused by the male lover of the deserted husband. That example is apparently only the superficial tip of the iceberg of child-abuse problems in the community.

Some people imply that perhaps more of these cases are now being reported, but the reality seems to be that more of these types of incidents are taking place. Why? Society is becoming increasingly material. Through the impost of large Government, of taxation and the need to survive——

Mr Hartwig: The lack of housing.

Mr BAILEY: Yes, and the lack of housing.

That has created the extraordinary difficulty for the average working person to survive—the great difficulty of trying to make ends meet. One cannot condemn a mother who, through circumstances of economy, is forced out into the work-force, whether by her own choice or not. The result is that children suffer.

Someone enthusiastically claimed that the divorce rate has fallen slightly this year. The incidence of divorce in this country is appallingly high. The Family Court, about which I receive an enormous number of complaints, is having a devil of a job in trying to keep up with the number of divorces being filed. Once again, those who are penalised are the children.

Television has turned into the most convenient form of child-minding that the twentieth century has created. How many latchkey children are sent off to school early in the morning with a couple of bob in their pockets, ostensibly to buy them some lunch, but which is probably spent on all kinds of things before they get to school, and spend an hour running round in the playground before school starts and are unsupervised when they get home? That forces them to resort to self-entertainment, which may be the goggle-box—two or three hours sitting down watching television in the afternoon—or access to other areas of interest, one of which of course is crime. The problem of breaking and entering in western suburban areas such as my own is increasing, basically because many children lack parental supervision or, even worse, lack any parental interest in what happens to them of an afternoon.

It is not only what happens during the afternoon when perhaps Mum and Dad are at work but also what happens when they come home at night. In many cases the mother probably has to do the housework and then discuss with her husband whatever problems she has. The husband is probably tired and irritated, and, often lacks the inclination to get involved with his child, discuss homework or find out if any problems exist, or even ask what the child has done during the afternoon. Such parents are usually surprised to learn that their child is involved with drugs or has a drinking problem. There are 11-year-old alcoholics. Usually they become addicted to alcohol unbeknown to their parents, and it does not matter from which socio-economic level they come. This widespread problem has not yet been sufficiently exposed. The media could well look at what is happening to the youth of this country. Everybody says how healthy they are——

Mr Hartwig: Do you think working mothers have something to do with this?

Mr BAILEY: There is no doubt that part of the problem is caused by the number of women in the work-force who have absolutely no option but to go out and work. One hears the cry. "Why don't we create creches to look after the children?" I ask: Why

don't we look at getting parents to look after the interests of their children rather than their own interests, whether they be in material or other forms?

Many schoolchildren, some from wealthy homes, suffer from an alcohol problem. Totally unbeknown to their parents, they take alcohol from home and either sell it or use it at school. Most of the parents would deny that it happens.

Mr Davis: They must have a pretty good cellar.

Mr BAILEY: I would not have expected that sort of trivial remark from the honourable member for Brisbane Central.

Much is said about the realities of family life in this country. Platitudes are mouthed and we, as politicians, are probably slightly hypocritical in our approach to this problem. Most of us work very long hours, although that is probably not appreciated by the public. Members do not have as much time to spend with their families as they would wish. Only recently I was involved in an incident which brought that home to me. Something happened to my son while he was at a party. He rang home and insisted on talking to his mother. I said, "Your mother is asleep; talk to me." He said, "I would infinitely prefer to talk to my mother." Eventually we resolved the problem. I talked to Penny about it the next morning. I said to her, "It was an extraordinary situation; my son did not really want to discuss the matter with me." She said, "Why? You have become irrelevant to him. You are never home. You are more interested in your work and your constituents than you are in your family." Perhaps one of the problems is that the work ethic has been inculcated so deeply into many of us that we are forgetting the realities of life.

Mr Mackenroth: The members of the media don't understand that, do they?

Mr BAILEY: I am afraid they do not. We are the Aunt Sallys——

Mr Mackenroth: You were the same before you came here.

Mr BAILEY: I agree that I was probably as unfairly critical in that area as any other member of the media.

That is not the only problem. I am using it only as an illustration. I do not care whether the father is a man who works extensive overtime or an executive who flies round the country. Both rely far too much on their wives to be both father and mother. That is one of the reasons why things like X-rated videotapes can be found in some homes. Some people have no idea how their children fill in their time, and what is more, they do not give a damn. Every weekend Dad is happy to go off to sport and Mum catches up on the housework. Why does the father not take the son to the football with him? Why can he not find a family activity in which to indulge? Why not take the children on a picnic?

Our family has discovered a game called Trivial Pursuits, that has swept the United States in a positive way. It is a quiz game that involves all members of the family, and has an extraordinary effect on the family. It stimulates conversation. The conversations that have emanated from some of the brief family experiences have been enormously rewarding for us as a family. I am now trying to concentrate a little more on keeping my family life more responsible.

An examination of some of the other areas of child abuse and child neglect reveals that much of it occurs because parents either do not care or will not take the time to find out what their children are doing. Some people say, "Let the State teach children about sex. Let the State look after them. Let's use the goggle-box to keep them entertained. Let us not worry about them as long as they are not causing us any trouble. Let us not try to find out what they would like." Recently, an impassioned plea was made by members of a school at Nudgee. They said that young people are not involved in the political process. They have got a damned good point.

With the Year of Youth coming up, one of the other things that should be of concern, is how irrelevant it will be if parents do not take the time to find out a little bit more about what their children want and what should be happening to them.

Queensland Probation and Parole Service

Mr McELLIGOTT (Townsville) (12.20 p.m.): Today I wish to speak about the grievous situation that presently exists within the Queensland Probation and Parole Service because of the overloading placed on the officers of that service. Because of the excess work-load that officers are being asked to carry, some parolees may not actually see their supervising officer or, if they do, they see him on only very rare occasions. I do not need to remind honourable members that parolees could have been found guilty of very serious crimes.

In his annual report for 1976-77, the Chief Probation and Parole Officer indicated that the service had adopted the following principle—

> "The primary objective of probation and parole is the furthering of justice through the provision of penal measures which afford protection to society through the control and rehabilitation of offenders within the community."

I repeat those last few words, because they are important—

> ". measures which afford protection to society through the control and rehabilitation of offenders within the community."

Honourable members would understand that the achievement of that objective will require regular contact with the probationer or the parolee. It will require the supervising officer to formulate plans that suit the individual offender's development and rehabilitation, and it will certainly require the monitoring of those programs. Given the present case-load in the Queensland service, that will not be possible.

Now I wish to cite some statistics to indicate the extent of the load. The Budget document titled "Departmental Services and Programs: A Budget Perspective 1984-85" reveals that, in 1983-84, 1 808 community service orders were issued and 211 prisoners were released on parole. Also, at 30 June 1984, 4 883 probation orders were being supervised. Incidentally, there is a mistake in the Budget papers. They refer to 883, but the correct figure is 4 883.

As I read the Budget provisions, established positions for 1984-85 will increase from 100 to 127. That does not mean, of course, that 127 people are employed within the service. The establishment is 127 positions. It would be interesting to know how many of those new positions have actually been filled by now, the end of October.

Let me deal with the establishment of 127. Only 86 of those people actually work with cases. Of course, a case-load cannot be attached to the Chief Probation and Parole Officer, his deputy and the the three principal probation officers. So, if those officers are excluded, the average case-load is 85. If account is taken of the fact that the seven senior probation officers are supposed to handle only half of the average case-load, the figure increases to 90. If it is accepted that there are five vacancies at any one time—and experience shows that that is about the figure—and if it is noted that there is no provision for relief—and again experience shows that a further seven officers are absent at any one time for one reason or another—the average case-load becomes 104. It must be remembered that that is the position when most of the established positions are filled.

I am informed that some officers are presently handling 120 cases. It has been previously established that an officer spends only about 35 per cent of his time on cases. The rest of his time is spent in preparing court reports and dealing with interstate parole inquiries, sundry paperwork and administration. So, when problems occur with some offenders, honourable members can assess for themselves that other offenders will simply not be seen. Of course, the more problems that occur, the fewer the people who can be effectively dealt with by an officer.

Executive Council decided in 1966 that the maximum case-load should not exceed 75 per officer. It should be remembered that I said that the present average case-load is about 120. Even that figure of 75 is very high compared with the figures in the other States. I understand that the figure in South Australia is 40.

Recently, the deputy statistician announced the Bureau of Statistics figures for 1982-83. They show that the number of admissions to prisons rose by 3 per cent. The number of probation orders rose by 37 per cent and community service orders almost doubled in number.

I will quote from the Budget papers as follows—

> "The growth in the service's activities in recent years is part of an on-going program to introduce community service for minor offenders as an option to prison. In addition, the community service option has recently been extended to include a fine paying option fine."

I completely agree with that concept, but it must be accompanied by appropriate resources.

At this point I quote from a strategy study that was prepared by the chief probation officer in 1982. It is still relevant today. In summary, it reads—

> "The consequences of the analysis so far undertaken are as follows—
>
> (a) Workloads are increasing and have reached the point where the standard of supervision has reached a critical point;
>
> (b) A high cost-efficient operation has been maintained in the past but it is inevitable that in the future some services must be reduced;
>
> (c) Restrictions to budget allocations will mean that less funds are available for the development of programs within the Service;
>
> (d) Increases in the number of law enforcement officers will result in more offenders coming before the Courts, thereby further increasing demands for Court reports."

In that report, the chief probation officer listed among his proposals—

> "It is evident from the above—"

that is the summary that I have just read—

> "that the Queensland Probation and Parole Service, if it is to provide a viable sentencing alternative, must respond positively to the restraints that are being placed upon it. Although the reality of government policy cannot be overlooked, I propose to maintain pressure on the Director-General, Department of Welfare Services, to hold the Queensland Cabinet and the Department of the Public Service Board to the 1966 Executive Council decision that set probation officer case-loads at 75."

The report goes on to state—

> "The case for allocating additional funds to the Probation and Parole Service is a powerful one, especially when it becomes evident that this Service is now responsible for about 68% of adult offenders currently under the supervision of the Department of Welfare Services, but has only 7% of the budget allocated for corrections."

I understand that one of the options being considered seriously by the Government is the use of voluntary probation officers. The introduction of voluntary firemen has been given wide publicity, and in the draft Family and Community Development Bill substantial emphasis is placed on voluntary child-care officers. Now probation officers are proposed. I wonder whether the community will eventually have voluntary teachers, nurses and police officers.

The 1982 report indicated that the Queensland Probation and Parole Service had 3 259 clients and 92 staff members, compared with 1 533 offenders in prison and 1 079 staff members. The cost per prisoner is $17,431 compared with $621 per probation officer. An imbalance clearly exists.

A document that has been submitted to the Minister for consideration recommends the use of volunteers, and I will list the minimum standards that will be required of honorary probation officers. It is considered that meetings between the probation officer and the honorary probation officer should be held at least every three months. The probation officer and the honorary probation officer should meet ideally once per week to deal with specific problems. Honorary probation officers should be prepared to devote a minimum of between 12 and 15 hours per month to the conduct of supervision, participation, case review, and reporting to the supervising probation officer. It is suggested that honorary probation officers should be allowed to be flexible in the location of reporting venues, but office interviews will be required on occasions determined in accordance with the standards set by the supervising probation officer. That indicates the extent of the involvement expected from volunteers. The document also indicates that the director will have the power to impose requirements on volunteers and to terminate their services if he regards them as unsatisfactory. I cannot accept that that is a reasonable approach to the provision of this very essential service.

Figures indicate the very high cost of keeping people in prison, and it makes good sense economically and from a rehabilitation viewpoint to get offenders out of prisons and into the community, if possible. When offenders are released into the community, society expects that they will be properly supervised. Members of the public have a right to expect that their safety will be protected by supervision, and that officers will carry out their duties and responsibilities by assisting parolees with rehabilitation.

As I mentioned previously, a large amount of work has to be undertaken on a one-to-one basis. No two people are the same. Special programs are therefore required.

Time expired.

Variation of School Routine to Allow Pupils to Meet Prime Minister

Hon. L. W. POWELL (Isis—Minister for Education) (12.31 p.m.): Before question-time concluded this morning, I was prevented by the uproar from the rabble on the Opposition side from continuing my answer to a question by the honourable member for Southport. I was explaining to the people of Queensland the situation with regard to schools and election campaigns.

I will read into "Hansard" once again the departmental instruction that has been issued to schools and that should have been understood by teaching staff at all of them. It is as follows—

> "It is inappropriate for school routine to be varied during an election campaign to enable school children to meet with political leaders and candidates while they are campaigning. No such variations must occur."

It is clear that that instruction, and the intent of the instruction, has upset the ALP publicity machine's attempts to sell the present Prime Minister as a popular figure. It is disgusting that children are taken away from school for an hour or so to an airport simply to wave to a person competing in the popularity stakes. Such action is not legitimate action; it is plainly dishonest.

No analogy can be drawn between bringing children to an airport to wave to somebody and bringing them into this Parliament. The honourable member for Bundaberg has become paranoiac about this particular issue. He has tried to draw that distinction by saying that the Government—the Government, mind you!—uses children in a political manner by bringing them into this Parliament.

Mr Menzel: The Federal Government tries to use children, not the State Government.

Mr POWELL: That is the distinction I draw.

The honourable member for Bundaberg tried to draw a parallel with bringing children into this Chamber, allegedly for political purposes. That is absolute garbage. Anyone with half a brain can see what he is up to and understand the illogical attitude

behind the way in which he carries on. Children come to this Parliament to try to learn about the process of democracy in Queensland.

Mr Mackenroth: They should not come here to learn about it.

Mr POWELL: What an appropriate interjection! When children do come here, instead of observing parliamentarians discussing issues of importance to the State, they see a Minister, in trying to answer a question, being interrupted by the rabble in the Opposition. Moreover, members of the Opposition even try to stop people from speaking, as happened to me this morning.

A couple more examples of the paranoia of the honourable member for Bundaberg ought to be exposed. In Bundaberg, he tried to draw some attention to himself. He had the local newpaper print a scurrilous article, in which this is reported—

> "Many Bundaberg people could remember the thrill they received as children in meeting a former Prime Minister, Mr Chifley, in the city 39 years ago."

I happened to be one of those children in Bundaberg at the time. I can inform honourable members that children were not taken out of school and marched down to the airport or railway station to wave to Mr Chifley. If we wanted to go out of school hours, we were able to go, just as the people of Bundaberg could have done had they wanted to see Mr Hawke in the last couple of weeks.

I am reliably informed that Mr Hawke arrived at the Bundaberg airport at 7 a.m. School does not start until 9 a.m. The children who wanted to see Mr Hawke—I emphasise the word "wanted"—could quite easily have gone along to the airport, done their waving and then gone to school in the normal course of events. The Australian Labor Party does not want that to happen. It wants the rent-a-crowd situation. Because it cannot get the adults to turn up and ogle Mr Hawke, children must be taken out of school to do it. The ALP is very upset because the Department of Education has stopped it from doing that.

The member for Bundaberg went even further in his fantasies. He claimed that, in the past, children from State schools had been directed to meet the Premier and Treasurer (Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen) without an optional parents' choice. As the member who represents an adjoining electorate, and as Minister for Education, I inform the honourable member that that is absolute nonsense, totally incorrect and a downright lie. Later, the honourable member came out with this gem—

> " ' Parents have advised that their children were lined up and made to applaud and cheer, and for their efforts rewarded with lollies,' Mr Campbell said."

Members in this Assembly surely must take the member for Bundaberg for exactly what he is, that is, a person who is trying to hoodwink people. He does that through the columns of the Bundaberg "News-Mail". There is no way in the world that children in Bundaberg or elsewhere have been taken out of their school to watch the Premier on one of his political campaigns. The Premier and I and, I would hope, every member of this Parliament, have visited the schools in their electorates. I would hope that all members have taken the opportunity to talk to the children and to explain to them how the Parliament works. I believe that to be one of the responsibilities of a member of Parliament. I realise that some members cannot do that. Perhaps the member for Bundaberg is one of them, and must try to obtain publicity in other ways.

What has appeared in the Bundaberg "News-Mail" is a downright lie. It is totally inaccurate and ought to be exposed for what it is. I would not be surprised in the least if not one word of my speech appeared in that newspaper.

Mr Menzel: Members I have spoken to on the other side treat Mr Campbell as a joke, anyway.

Mr POWELL: That may well be so. I would not blame them. It is abhorrent that anybody should suggest in any serious vein that it is an educational experience for

children to be taken from their class-rooms and taken down the road to wave to a Prime Minister. It is absolute rubbish to suggest that that could be regarded as an educational experience. If the Prime Minister was to be in an area for a legitimate function as the Prime Minister of Australia, and the children could obtain some educational benefit at that function, I would be only too happy to send them there.

Mr Mackenroth: What is your attitude when Queen Elizabeth II visits Queensland?

Mr POWELL: Once again, I thank the honourable member for Chatsworth for his interjection. Surely he is not telling me or the people of Queensland that there is any equation between a visit by Mr Hawke and a visit by royalty? The publicity machine of the ALP wants to build up Mr Hawke as a popular republican-type figure to whom everybody can bow and scrape. I will not do that.

I remind the House that the former Prime Minister (Honourable Malcolm Fraser) went to Bundaberg to visit the Agro-trend. That was a completely legitimate exercise. Because they did not believe that it was a legitimate exercise, members of the National and Liberal Parties did not go to the schools and say, "Close your doors and send your children down to wave to him." That is exactly why the Department of Education issued the instruction that it did.

I can only conclude either that the ALP is dead scared that Mr Hawke will not be the Prime Minister after 1 December and, therefore, the children will not be able to see him as Prime Minister, or that it believes, as I do, that Mr Hawke shows such an arrogant disregard for the country people of Queensland that he will not be bothered visiting them except during an election campaign.

Bargara Land-Fraud Investigations; Mr F. P. Luton

Mr MACKENROTH (Chatsworth) (12.40 p.m.): The Minister's speech today will come back to haunt him. The Government is using schoolchildren to further its political ends.

Three weeks ago in the Matters of Public Interest debate I alleged that a conspiracy existed to cover up the Luton affair. Today, I call on the Government to come clean on this whole sordid affair.

Seven weeks ago, when I raised the initial allegation of political interference in a Police Fraud Squad investigation, Government members scoffed and the Minister involved (Mr Goleby), claimed that he knew nothing at all of the allegations I had made and, in fact, that he had met Mr Luton only once, twice or maybe four times at social functions. He also said that he had had no dealings with him other than at those meetings. Over the past seven weeks, as the Government has been forced to release, bit by bit, small pieces of information, it has become apparent that Mr Goleby in fact must have known Mr Luton on a more personal basis than he originally claimed.

Today, I will highlight Mr Goleby's known involvement with Mr Luton and reveal further involvement which, to date, has not been mentioned. My initial allegation, which was made on 18 September, was that Mr Goleby had intervened to have a Detective Vince Mahony removed from a police investigation into a Mr Francis Patrick Luton and his land-dealings at Bargara.

A press conference immediately after I made this allegation—and, incidentally, that is the only time Mr Goleby has spoken to the press about this matter in the past seven weeks— was reported as follows—

> "Question: Did you have any dealings at all in this matter with the police?
>
> Mr Goleby's answer: No, definitely not.
>
> Question: Have you ever discussed with Mr Luton police investigations into these land activities at Bargara?
>
> Mr Goleby's answer: I don't know of Mr Luton's land at Bargara—I know nothing of the land in question at all."

Both statements are very clear. If we had believed Mr Goleby at that time, we would have believed that he only knew Luton socially and that he knew nothing about police investigations or the land at Bargara. Honourable members should consider the following admissions that have been made in the past seven weeks—

Mr Goleby admitted that he did know about the land at Bargara.

Mr Goleby admitted that he made representation to the chairman of the Woongarra Shire Council about this land.

Mr Goleby admitted that Mr Luton phoned him once to invite him to the opening of a church.

Mr Goleby admitted that he had an officer from his department phone Mr Luton in relation to his bogus knighthood.

Mr Goleby admitted that Luton came to his office and met police officers in relation to an investigation into Luton.

Mr Luton admitted that he phoned Mr Goleby in May 1983 in relation to his land at Bargara.

Mr Luton admitted that during the last State election campaign he attended a fund-raising function at Mr Goleby's home for the National Party. Why was it so important to Mr Luton that Mr Goleby be re-elected?

Certainly those admissions point to a closer relationship between Mr Goleby and Mr Luton than was claimed originally.They make Mr Goleby guilty of one of the worst acts a Cabinet Minister can be accused of doing under our Westminster system, which is misleading Parliament.

To prove that point, I refer to Mr Goleby's answer to a question that I asked on 19 September, when he stated that the only contact he had with Luton was at social occasions such as the official opening of buildings. Mr Goleby, by his admission in the statement I have read out, is guilty of misleading Parliament. That, in itself, is a breach of privilege of this House. Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that you should refer the matter to the Committee of Privileges.

I will deal now with two other occasions that have been brought to my notice on which Mr Goleby has been involved with Mr Luton and which, to date, have not been made public. The first relates to the meeting between the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Racing (Mr Hinze) and Mr Luton on 22 March 1983. We have heard a good deal about that meeting, but the one point which has not been highlighted concerns who arranged the meeting. My information is that the approach to Mr Hinze or to his department for a meeting between Mr Hinze and Mr Luton was made by none other than Mr Goleby. I call on Mr Hinze to table the departmental minutes and memoranda relating to this meeting which, I believe, will prove that point.

The second relates to correspondence between Mr Goleby and Mr Luton. Remember that Mr Goleby claimed originally that he had had very little contact with Mr Luton. At first, he said that that contact was meeting him only once, twice, or maybe on four occasions, at social functions. He then admitted that he had spoken to Mr Luton on the telephone.

I would particularly like to ask Mr Goleby to table correspondence from himself to Luton in relation to the rezoning of land at Island Outlook Avenue. Mr Goleby will know what I am talking about.

I will return to the central allegation of political interference and, by fitting together the jigsaw of information that has been supplied over the past seven weeks and by providing information that to date has not been released, I will highlight how that interference came about.

Following the Huey report of 26 October 1982, Detective Vince Mahony was officially removed from the investigation of land fraud committed by Frank Luton at Bargara. But as Detective Mahony is a dedicated policeman who is experienced in land

fraud investigations and is the senior officer in that section, he unofficially remained on the investigation, assisting Detective Salm, who had been placed in charge of the case.

On 2 August 1983, Detective Mahony and Detective Salm visited Frank Luton's bank at Arana Hills. The purpose of that visit was to inspect Mr Luton's bank records. As a result of that visit, Mr Luton's bank-manager contacted him and informed him that Detectives Mahony and Salm were checking his accounts. Luton, who had believed that Detective Mahony had been taken off the case, phoned Mr Goleby and complained to him about Vince Mahony.

Mr Goleby then contacted the police on behalf of Mr Luton, and that resulted in Assistant Commissioner Dwyer being asked to investigate the matter. Assistant Commissioner Dwyer contacted Detective Salm and checked who had gone to the bank. When he was told that Detective Salm and Detective Mahony had gone, he asked Detective Salm to accompany him to Mr Goleby's office. Detective Salm informed Assistant Commissioner Dwyer at that time that he would only go to Mr Goleby's office on the condition that he made a tape recording of all matters raised at the meeting. Assistant Commissioner Dwyer would not agree to this demand and then asked Inspector Walker to accompany him.

That meeting took place at Mr Goleby's office on 4 August 1984, only two days after Detective Mahony had gone to the bank. Mr Luton was present at the time. Mr Goleby has stated that this meeting with Dwyer and Walker was at their request and was in relation to Luton's bogus knighthood.

Although it is unparliamentary to say that the Minister is telling lies, I would like to know how far Mr Goleby thinks the imagination can stretch to accept his statement as the truth. I ask honourable members to look back at what I said about Detective Salm's requesting that a tape recording be made of that meeting. One might ask: Why would Detective Salm want to make a tape recording of a meeting which was, as Mr Goleby wants us to believe, simply to talk about the bogus knighthood? No, that is not correct. Detective Salm wanted a tape recording to protect himself from political interference. That is why he would not go.

Another question to which I would like an answer is why the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Racing said in the House on 11 October that a memorandum from a senior officer of the Local Government Department informed him that the Fraud Squad had moved in and had frozen all of Mr Luton's bank accounts and assets. This is not correct. The Fraud Squad has never at any time frozen any of Mr Luton's bank accounts or assets, and I would like the Minister for Local Government to tell this House who informed the senior officer in his department that that had happened.

In conclusion, I inform the House that the political interference in this case has now completed the full circle. Although initially this National Party Government attempted to protect Mr Luton, the matters that I have raised in the House and in the media over the past seven weeks have resulted in the Fraud Squad investigation into Mr Luton being stepped up. I believe that the Government is now trying to bring charges of fraud against Mr Luton as quickly as possible in an endeavour to establish that there has been no political interference. The reason I say this is that, in the past week, two detectives have visited Bundaberg and interviewed the council, and last Friday the police, armed with a search warrant, raided Mr Luton's home and confiscated records relating to this case.

I believe it is a disgrace that it has taken action by me in this House to get members of this National Party Government off their backsides to take action on this matter. Once again, I demand a full judicial inquiry.

Time expired.

Dole for Wives of Cane-farmers

Mr MENZEL (Mulgrave) (12.50 p.m.): I wish to correct misleading comments that have been made during the Federal election campaign. The Prime Minister (Honourable Bob Hawke) recently visited Cairns, and his comments were reported, whether correctly

or not I do not know. Anyway, they have not been refuted by the Prime Minister or anyone else in the Federal Labor Government.

An article from "The Cairns Post" headlined, "Dole for wives of growers?", reads in part—

> "The Prime Minister, Mr Bob Hawke, said in Cairns on Thursday that wives of hard hit sugar growers may be eligible for the dole."

The important word in that sentence is "may" I believe that is totally misleading.

Mr Davis interjected.

Mr MENZEL: The honourable member should listen for a moment.

This a serious matter, and he should treat it as such.

Mr Davis: You have asked for that.

Mr MENZEL: If the honourable member listens, he will understand what I am talking about.

To answer the honourable member's interjection—it is true that I have advocated that the dole should be paid to destitute people, whether they are people who have been laid off by North Queensland Engineers & Agents or are unfortunate enough to be involved in a depressed primary industry—in this case, the sugar industry. My comments applied not only to people in Cairns but right throughout the State.

In the same article there is mention of the Prime Minister meeting the wives of cane-growers in Bundaberg. I will give the article to the honourable member for Brisbane Central, and he can read it later on. Immediately after the publication of that article, many people rang my office. They were mainly the wives of cane-growers wanting to know how they could obtain the dole. Because most of them had never worked in their lives, they did not know how to go about it. My secretary rang the office of the Department of Social Security in Cairns and was told that the statement was just nonsense, and that an Act of Parliament would be required before the wives of cane-growers could obtain the dole. It should be borne in mind that 95 per cent of the wives of cane-growers are partners in their husband's farms, anyway. It is obvious that if they have a share in a farm they would not be eligible for the dole. That is why the statement is totally misleading.

If the Prime Minister tries to appease people by making broad unfounded statements, he is being totally irresponsible and is really only playing with the emotions of people who are in desperate straights and do not know where to turn for money. The banks are foreclosing on growers or are at best allowing them to remain on their farms because, to put it bluntly, nobody would be silly enough to want to buy them.

The article also reports Mr Hawke as saying—

> " . . we made available the $10 million in terms of carry-on assistance, we've renegotiated the domestic sugar agreement involving the increase of $28 a tonne in the domestic price . . "

That is another misleading comment. Perhaps Mr Hawke does not understand the sugar industry.

The fact is that that $28 is incorporated in legislation that was in existence when the Fraser Government was in power. That money was a normal flow-on of price indexation. The industry asked for $40, which it thought would be a real catch-up with inflation, but it was rejected, because the formula that had been negotiated contained no provision for catching up with inflation.

Mr De Lacy: That was a negotiated agreement.

Mr MENZEL: That is what I am trying to tell the honourable member.

It was not something that the Hawke Government suddenly gave over and above what was previously negotiated. I know that the honourable member for Cairns tries to make out that he is an expert on sugar, but he does not know what he is talking about. If he listens to what I say, he will learn the truth. He can check it out with the sugar industry. It cannot be denied that what I am saying is the truth.

The Industries Assistance Commission held an inquiry into the sugar industry. The results of that inquiry were not favourable for the industry. Unfortunately, the academics in Canberra came up with many theories about what the sugar industry should or should not do. Of course, during the renegotiations on the domestic sugar price, Mr Kerin imposed the condition that there should be an internal review in the sugar industry. That was another excuse for not giving further assistance to the industry.

I am pleased that the member for Cairns is in the Chamber. I draw his attention to a small article in "The Cairns Post" of Tuesday, 30 October. Under the heading "De Lacy attacks sugar industry", it states—

> "The Member for Cairns, Mr Keith De Lacy, has attacked the sugar industry for playing politics with their future."

Mr De Lacy: That is right. They ask for money and when they get it they say they do not want it.

Mr MENZEL: I do not think that the sugar industry said that it did not want the money. That $5.5m is very welcome. What the industry is saying is that it is only a drop in the bucket; that it is not sufficient.

Mr Randell: They did not get what they asked for.

Mr MENZEL: That is right, and that is what the industry is trying to say.

The member for Cairns and I do not always agree with what the sugar industry wants, and, at times, I have made critical comments about the industry. But the honourable member is a little bit off the mark when he says that the industry did not want the money.

Mr De Lacy: My point is that they criticise the Federal Government's perceived shortcomings, but they do not criticise the State Government when it does things that are worse, and you yourself admitted that when we debated the sugar legislation.

Mr MENZEL: With all due respect, I have heard the sugar industry criticise the State Government. If the honourable member reads the local newspapers, such as the "Innisfail Advocate", he will see that from time to time the sugar industry has criticised the State Government. The honourable member is not entirely correct in what he says.

It is unfortunate that the sugar industry did not receive enough money. As I said last week, it was only because of the pending Federal election that $5.5m was provided. As an afterthought, the Federal Government said, "We have to give them something, so we will give them $5.5m."

Under the heading "Sugar aid is a 'joke' ", the following article appeared in the "Innisfail Advocate" of 26 October—

> "The Federal Government's $5.5m assistance plan for the ailing sugar industry was described in Innisfail yesterday as a 'joke'.
>
> Secretary of the Innisfail District Canegrowers Executive, Mr George Taifalos, said the Federal Government could not be serious if it believed this amount of assistance to the whole of the sugar industry would solve the present predicament.
>
> 'The $5.5 million could be used up by Innisfail cane growers alone in two days,' Mr Taifalos said."

That is true. In some ways, that $5.5m is an insult to the intelligence of the people in the sugar industry.

The Prime Minister went to Cairns and said, "Cane-farmers' wives may be eligible for the dole." He was very clever in using the word "may". When people are desperate they do not note such small words. By using that word, the Prime Minister was later able to say, "Well, I did not say they could; I said that they 'may' " I have explained to wives of cane-farmers, and I say it publicly today, that "may" is the critical word in what the Prime Minister said. In the last couple of weeks, before the Prime Minister visited Cairns, cane-farmers applied for the dole but were knocked back. I can name them, if necessary, because they have come to see me.

Recently, during the debate between the various candidates in the Federal electorate of Leichhardt, a good deal was said about the retrenchments at North Queensland Engineers & Agents Pty Ltd. Mr Gayler tried to wriggle away from the fact that the Federal Government had reneged on the promise to order five more patrol boats. An article that I have refers to the fact that the Federal Government purchased 28-ft boats from a manufacturer in the United States of America at a duty-free price of $85,000. It could have bought similar boats in Australia for $35,000. In fact, the allegation is that no Australian manufacturer was ever asked to build those boats. Of course, the navy claimed that nobody in Australia was capable of building them. That was rot.

No Australian manufacturers were asked. The contract could have helped to create and maintain jobs at NQEA. I know that a fibreglass manufacturer in my area is also capable of building those boats. Why was the contract given to the United States of America? What is going on? An investigation should be held.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Row): Order! Under the provisions of Standing Order No. 36A, the time allotted for the debate on matters of public interest has now expired.

Sitting suspended from 1.1 to 2.15 p.m.

STATE HOUSING ACT AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading—Resumption of Debate

Debate resumed from 9 October (see p. 1232) on Mr Wharton's motion—

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

Mr YEWDALE (Rockhampton North) (2.15 p.m.): At the outset, I will make a brief comment about the housing section of the portfolio of the Minister for Works and Housing. That responsibility is of grave concern to many people throughout the State. A great demand exists for low-rental housing and the type of housing that many middle to low income-earners in Queensland are attempting to buy. The Government provides that housing.

The Opposition has examined the proposed amendments to the State Housing Act and the State Housing (Freeholding of Land) Act. At this point, I will dispose quickly of the amendments contained within clauses 12, 15, 19, 20, 22 and 24 of the Bill that correct errors within the principal Act. I do not believe that I should waste the time of the House elaborating on those amendments. However, I must say that the House spends a great deal of time correcting errors in legislation. I do not know who should be criticised for that but, time and time again, Ministers must introduce Bills to correct errors.

Many of my colleagues who will be taking part in this debate will express concern about housing in their electorates. I will summarise the Bill and make some pertinent comments.

The amendment to section 23 refers to advances for the erection of houses to allow applicants who have not obtained clear title to the land to be eligible for assistance in the purchase of such land. It provides for advance payments on the loan to eliminate the remainder owing on the home site. The Act currently provides for the determination

of the annual rent payable in respect of rental periods commencing before January 1984 under perpetual leases granted or held under the Workers' Homes Act 1919-1957. The new provision will allow the purchasing price of residential perpetual leases administered by the Housing Commission to be reduced by the amount of land rent paid by the lessee with a maximum reduction of 50 per cent.

I am concerned about who will be the major beneficiaries of that provision. It seems to me that many people who have business premises on property that is owned by the Government or the department will be able to exercise their prerogative under that provision. I ask the Minister and his officers to take note of that because I do not intend to go into detail. However, I am concerned that families and low income-earners be given that concession where possible. I ask the Minister to explain whether or not the business sector will receive that consideration.

The Bill provides for the freehold price of leasehold land to be rebated. Previously, the purchase price was the unimproved market value as at the date of application. Under the provisions of this legislation, the price can be determined by the Commissioner of Housing, the Valuer-General or the Land Court. The lessee may buy in cash on 5 per cent deposit with the balance to be paid in monthly instalments with interest at the rate of 11.5 per cent variable over 10 years. In this regard I ask whether ordinary householders or business people will benefit. The provision is in the best interests of all those who participate.

The rents imposed on tenants has concerned many families throughout the State, particularly middle to low income-earners,and unemployed and pensioners. Income-based rents are generally acceptable in lieu of economic rents, but a number of grey areas appear in the system. I refer briefly to parents who, over the years, have raised their family in the one house. If the teenagers or young adults are still living with their parents in that house, the rent could be as high as $135 a week.

I do not wish to cite cases, but I am sure that there are instances in which people are expected to pay $135 as a maximum. No matter who the landlord is, that seems relatively high. The human element should come into it. In the case of a family who have occupied the same premises for a couple of decades, and have reared their children in those premises, greater consideration should be given than merely setting a ceiling of $135. Although an escalation has occurred in private rentals and bonds, many private rental premises are available at less than $135 a week.

I concede that most private landlords require a bond. However, in cases in which the tenant looks after the property and the landlord or real estate agent is a reasonable person, the bond is returned to that tenant. I stress that, to some extent, the $135 is unrealistic. The Government ought to examine that question again. Members of the Opposition will be agitating where possible and as often as possible to have the matter reconsidered.

I believe that the restriction on providing rental accommodation has been removed because of the exclusion of certain categories, namely, aged and single pensioners. The Minister has indicated that there is nothing secret about it.

It has been suggested that, under the Commonwealth and State Housing Agreement, the States ought to look in a different light at cases in which accommodation has been provided on a priority basis, if I might use that term. Some people are not given that consideration and, to that extent, they have been discriminated against. I hope that the intent on which the Commonwealth and State Housing Agreement was founded can be put into practice.

I refer to the provision of bond guarantees and, in particular, subsidised rents, because in recent times the Government moved into that field. I refer to the statement by the Minister for Works and Housing in "The Courier-Mail" on Tuesday, 23 October, in which he elaborated on the availability of rent relief and other aids to the homeless. The recent Hawke/Keating Budget made provision for $4.8m for mortgage relief schemes.

It is reasonable to suggest that such an allocation is of assistance to many people, so the Federal Government should be given credit for allocating funds for that purpose.

With all due respect to the Minister, I point out that he made no reference to that allocation when he referred in his press statement to rent relief and aids to the homeless. He gave the impression to members of the community, and intended politically to convey, that it was the generosity of the State that had provided the concessions. The Minister gave no credit at all to the Federal Government, and it is most regrettable that he did not give that recognition.

It is also regrettable that the State Government has not indicated that $1.1m will not be taken up by the Queensland Government in that respect in 1984-85. It is an indictment on the Queensland Government. People in this State are begging for assistance—not only to be accommodated, but also to be assisted by the provisions of the rent relief and bond schemes. Money will be left lying in the coffers in Canberra, whereas this State is being confronted by what I would describe as a fairly drastic situation.

In the same press release, the Minister also did not indicate that the allocation for public housing in Queensland from the Federal Government was $82.6m. That is a sizeable sum, and would constitute a great input to the funds to be provided for homeless people in Queensland. The total allocation by the Federal Government to the Queensland Housing Commission for 1984-85 is $177.3m. Such a large amount would never have been heard of under the Fraser regime. In the 1983-84-85 allocations by the Hawke Government, the level of funding is increasing repeatedly in response to the grave situation that exists in housing throughout the nation.

In addition, in 1984-85 the Federal Government will allocate $53.1m for the construction or purchase of rental houses. That is a specific allocation to Queensland, and it will enable approximately 2 000 units to be constructed for Queenslanders. In 1983-84, 1 700 units were provided under that scheme. If those amounts are totalled, it will be seen that 4 000 units will be provided in the 1983-84-85 period.

Also included in that funding was approximately $2.1m for crisis accommodation in Queensland. I am deliberately referring to that area, to which the Government is now committed. It is only reasonable to convey to the House the degree of assistance that is being provided to Queensland by the Federal Government.

A further $101m will be provided for home purchase assistance, representing 2 300 home loans. Again, a considerable amount of money is being made available for home purchase assistance.

In the 1983-84-85 period, approximately 5 000 home loans were made available. A further $17.2m was made available for land acquisition. Another $1.1m was made available for local government and community housing programs. Stamp duty concessions will still be provided by the Federal Government to first home buyers. That is another cost that has been waived through the generous provision of funds by the Commonwealth Government.

It should also be pointed out that in 1983-84 Queensland was provided with Federal fund levels of $3.2m. However, it took up only $1.6m of that amount. Those figures are documented in the Commonwealth Government's Budget papers and would withstand any challenge as to their validity and accuracy.

In 1985, Queensland will allocate approximately 40 per cent of total funds to rental housing. In 1984, that will be a static figure. Increased funding by the Bjelke-Petersen Government in 1984-85 in real terms is about 11 per cent. That increase results from Loan Council funding for public housing rising from $10m in 1983-84 to $30m in 1984-85.

As to the private sector and the bond system throughout Queensland—the time has long passed when that situation should be allowed to prevail. I applaud the Federal Goverment, and, in turn, the State Government, for providing some assistance in the

form of rental relief and guaranteed bonds. It is reasonable to suggest that low-income-earners find it very difficult to provide bonds to landlords and/or real estate agents. In many instances, that is a stumbling block to their obtaining reasonable accommodation. Subject to a means test, the Government will provide a written guaranteed bond. That action is certainly welcomed. One would hope that the housing industry, through property-owners and real estate agents who act for them, will accept that as being a bona fide and legitimate action and that it will not reject that type of guaranteed bond. It is only a piece of paper, but it is guaranteed by the Government.

Although the latest bond guarantee and rent relief scheme based on Federal funds is available on request, it is based on a means test for private accommodation. As I have said, the vast majority of families seeking accommodation find it difficult to obtain.

The REIQ has branches in most major provincial cities in Queensland. The Rockhampton REIQ is co-operative in respect to bond disputes. It is only reasonable that the REIQ will deal only with disputes that relate to its members. The president of the REIQ in Rockhampton has always listened to my complaints from people with bond disputes with members of the REIQ. He will personally intervene on behalf of a tenant. In most instances the matter is resolved. Many real estate agents are not members of the REIQ. Consequently, that organisation will not concern itself with non-members.

Opposition members believe that a bond board should be established and that the State Government should be the custodian of all bond moneys paid to private landlords or real estate agents. It would be the responsibility of the landlord to deposit with the board, within seven days of its receipt, any bond money collected. The board would return the bond money at the termination of any tenancy.

If a dispute occurred between a landlord and a tenant over bond money, the board would act as arbiter. All moneys received by the board would be invested and the returns on such investments would be utilised to pay for the operation of the board and to provide a rental advisory service for the benefit of both landlord and tenant. Accumulated surplus funds could be advanced to the Queensland Housing Commission for the purchase of rental homes.

Landlords and real estate agents have increased bonds to amounts between $200 and $400. Upon the tenant's vacating the premises, the agent and/or landlord has to satisfy himself that the property is left in a satisfactory condition and that the cost of rectification of any damage that has been caused to that property is paid by the tenant. The Opposition does not argue against that. Tenants should accept the responsibility for damage and the necessity to repair rented premises. Unfortunately—and I can cite case histories—many unscrupulous landlords and agents reduce the bond on the basis of wear and tear. That is unreasonable.

On many occasions tenants have to vacate premises for good reason. If an argument develops over the return of their bond money, which often is needed to enable them to move into another residence, they are placed at a disadvantage. A bond board is essential. In conjuction with the SGIO, it could establish bond insurance policies as an alternative to bond money. They would insure landlords against damage to their property. I cannot stress too much the need for a bond board. The bond money required by landlords and real estate agents is the final crunch in people trying to find accommodation.

The Government should give consideration to special housing. It should recognise the gradual ageing of our population by building pensioner units in areas close to present Housing Commission developments. That would facilitate the transition of the ageing occupants of Housing Commission homes to conveniently located units, should they so desire. The concept of housing aged people in close proximity to communities in which they have spent a great deal of their lives is commendable. It is an approach that has been followed by the Housing Commission in my electorate, where a number of pensioner units are adjacent to a Housing Commission development. Families enjoy seeing older folk in their community. I am sure that the feeling is reciprocated. The concept should

be broadened, as it leads to a feeling of greater contentment within the community. It certainly benefits the aged.

The Housing Commission should construct suitable homes and units for handicapped persons, elderly people and pensioners taking into account the proportion of those persons in the community. Therefore the Government must know what proportion of the community those people form and must cater for them, for instance, as is done in special schools at which ramps are necessary for children who use crutches and wheelchairs.

For a number of reasons a large number of people in the community are forced to take up permanent tenancies in caravan parks. I would be the last individual to recommend that. Nevertheless, when many aged people retire they decide to move closer to the coast or closer to their families. Some decide that a well-equipped caravan with an annexe in a suitable environment is just what they need and are quite happy to see out their remaining days living in a caravan park.

Like itinerant workers and those with long periods of holidays who spend a considerable period in caravan parks, those who have retired to a caravan park have no security of tenancy. The Opposition has said continually in this House that the Government should accept that permanent caravan tenancies are a major element in accommodation in the State and that it should institute, for permanent residents in caravan parks, a tenancy agreement which should contain guide-lines for eviction procedures.

A person who has resided in the same caravan park for a prescribed period should be recognised as being a permanent tenant, irrespective of the lack of a written agreement. The Opposition wants a certain period to be the criterion for qualifying as a permanent resident of a caravan park. The Opposition also believes that bonds paid by permanent tenants should be paid to a rental bond board. If the management of the caravan park requires permanent tenants to pay a bond, the Opposition does not object, but the bond should come under the control of a bond board, which could deal with any disputes.

Because of the ongoing development in the community, such as the construction of highways, freeways, other roads and industrial developments, many people have been displaced from their homes. In the inner-city areas, invariably those who have been displaced are elderly people. The Labor Party believes that the Government should relocate home-owners, who have been removed because of road or other developments, to a home of a similar size and standard and in a location chosen by the displaced home-owner, without any cost to that home-owner. That is not asking too much for people who have spent the best part of their lives in familiar surroundings. The general surroundings have been to their liking but, because of the need for expansion and development, they have to move. The dislocation of these people's lives is heart-rending. I have spoken to my colleagues about resumptions caused by the construction of freeways, and they have told me about the protest meetings and petitions, which will continue while the Government allows the present criteria to prevail. The Government, the Minister and his department should seriously consider that problem.

The Opposition feels that the Government should make a financial allocation for community housing programs. Such programs can be beneficial in providing assistance for short and medium-term housing for families in emergencies. That has been successfully put into practice in the southern States, and I will elaborate on that later.

At the risk of repeating myself, when I commenced my speech, I commented that housing is a major concern to the community. This one section of the Minister's portfolio is of major concern to people right throughout the Commonwealth. In comparison to the provision of housing across the board in other States, I can constructively criticise the State Government for its lack of action.

I now want to deal with accommodation provided in Rockhampton for families in emergency. In a city of approximately 56 000 people, the Housing Commission had made available one house to be managed by the Life Line organisation. The organisation allocates the home to people in emergency and limits their stay to a maximum of six

weeks. I accept that as being at least some help for people in need, but one house made available for a period of only six weeks only scratches the surface of the problem. The women's refuge in Rockhampton is always fully occupied and is overcrowded on many occasions. Occupants have to put up with the aggravation caused by children bickering and the lack of space and facilities, yet the Housing Commission provides only one house for people in need. I do not know what happens in Brisbane, Maryborough, Townsville or Bundaberg, but if what happens in Rockhampton is the pattern it seems to me that the rest of the State is not too well catered for.

I now want to look at public rental stock figures. Queensland spends less than any other State per thousand population. The latest figures that I have show that Queensland spends $10 per thousand; South Australia $39, and the Northern Territory $42. The Australian average is $17. They are not my figures; they were compiled by the Commonwealth statistician. If any member wants to refute them, I will be glad to hear from him. If there is a difference of opinion, we can argue about it, but I believe that the figures are authentic.

The total figures for public housing show that per head Queensland spends about $29; South Australia, $139, and the Northern Territory, in excess of $513. The Australian average is $55. I cited the Northern Territory figure because it shows the degree of variation. The Minister said that Queensland funding will increase overall in 1985, but it will still be nowhere near the Australian average.

Members will recall that last week in answer to a question from me the Minister for Works and Housing indicated that his department had spent $756,800 on a package land deal for 16 new rental homes in Leahy Street, Ipswich. There is nothing wrong with that. In normal circumstances, one would applaud any Government expenditure to provide homes for needy families. But there is something strange about that deal. A closer examination shows that the land purchased was in an area described either as the Chappell estate or the Chappell Heights estate. That indicates to me that the underarm bowler Mr Greg Chappell has a personal interest in the development. I do not know of any other Chappell who could be involved, and the Minister might care to enlighten me.

In a recent speech, the member for Woodridge (Mr Bill D'Arcy) predicted that Northern Securities Management Limited, the manager of the Queensland Property Growth Trust, was about to collapse.

Mr Borbidge: You don't believe what Mr D'Arcy says, do you?

Mr YEWDALE: I am referring to a statement made by him. He can stand up for himself.

Mr Borbidge: Do you support it, though?

Mr YEWDALE: I am not aware of all the ramifications. I am merely reiterating what he said for the purpose of my argument.

Mr D'Arcy said that the directors of Northern Securities Management Limited were Mr Greg Chappell, Sir Llewellyn Edwards and Mr B. Maranta. That is recorded in "Hansard"; we will not dispute it. Mr D'Arcy's predictions were refuted and it was stated publicly, to use a common term, that all in the garden was rosy in respect to that organisation.

I am advised also that the area to which I have referred is alongside and/or adjacent to a fairly affluent building area in terms of the value of the land on which homes are being constructed. The commission, in its package deal, purchased 16 allotments. Simple arithmetic shows a price of about $50,000 for house and land. That would be a fairly modest house. Most people who are looking for accommodation will accept a modest house.

I do not support the other people in the area who are griping about their area being inundated with Housing Commission homes of a lesser standard or value. The Opposition's policy in that regard is that Housing Commission homes should be dispersed throughout the community, wherever land can be obtained at a reasonable price, to house people in need. The adoption of that concept creates a better community. There are not rows and rows of Housing Commission homes. I say, in fairness to the Government, that it has not adopted that sort of a concept.

As to the Chappell estate—I really believe that there is a nigger in the woodpile. Certainly, the package deal leaves a lot to the imagination. Is the involvement of Sir Llewellyn Edwards and Mr Chappell a coincidence, or has the Government moved in to prop up some mates? One can only assume that that is the situation. I am informed that, in that area of Ipswich, previous contracts could have been arranged by someone on the inside who had an interest in the matter.

I leave that matter with the Minister and his department. He can deny what I have said or argue about it. Nevertheless, the land has been purchased, and some people will be able to purchase a modern home on that estate.

In my capacity as Opposition spokesman on housing, on 11 May of this year, by invitation, I attended a public meeting at the City Hall that was called by the Catholic Social Welfare Commission in Brisbane to talk about housing problems in Queensland. Particular emphasis was placed on community co-operative housing. From what I understand of the Bjelke-Petersen Government's attitude on co-operative housing, it is a no-no. The Government backed away from it. Even though overtures have been made for the Government to move into co-operative housing, it will not talk about it or become involved in it.

The meeting was very well attended. I cannot give the exact number, but I would say that between 150 and 200 people attended the meeting. The speakers were well informed. They were experienced in community and co-operative housing. The Federal Minister for Housing attended and addressed the meeting. The main thrust of the discussion came from the people in the church. The chairman of the meeting, Father V. Rowan, who is the Vicar-General of the Archdiocese of Brisbane, opened the meeting and said—

> "In setting up the Commission the Archbishop saw it, and I quote, 'as a Diocesean program for social involvement and as a challenge to enforce the vision of the Church as a caring community called to give priority in its service to the poor and to a ministry of justice as well as charity'
>
> In its short period of existence the Commission has come to see, as one of the most pressing social problems in our society, housing for low-income people and in its discussion of this problem the Commission has accepted that initiatives taken in other places to form housing co-operatives are an alternative to the problem. The Commission believes that this concept should be readily available as an option and therefore the Commission has called this public meeting."

Mr Gib Wettenhall, who is a senior research officer for the Victorian Ministry of Housing, delivered a lengthy report to the meeting. I will pick out what I consider to be pertinent segments, because these facts and figures are of interest to the community and to honourable members. Mr Wettenhall stated—

> "Let's start with some facts. Since the success of the pilot project co-op, a further 14 rental co-ops have been set up in Victoria with another 5 planned in the next financial year. In Victoria, the capital budget for rental co-ops is $7.5 million for this financial year and it will jump to $11.5 million in the next financial year. Tenants in Victoria's largest and oldest rental co-op, the Fitzroy Collingwood Rental Housing Association, now manage over 50 houses, plus two rooming houses. After only three years of operation, Victoria rental co-ops have purchased almost 300 houses on the open market."

One must accept that that is a sizeable and very productive co-operative.

Mr Wettenhall then said—

"And if you want to go further afield, take a look at Canada where 900 rental co-ops housing some 33,000 people have been established in a little over ten years. A just-completed task force report on co-operatives in Canada had this to say:

'Co-operatives have proved to be a very inexpensive and socially responsible vehicle for administering housing assistance to lower income families . The co-operatives program has been a judicious blend of self-help, community building and social justice.' "

That is the proof of the pudding. This Government does not want co-operative housing and it does not want to expend money. It is not prepared to assist the community with that form of activity. The Federal Government is prepared to make money available to local authorities and State Governments to develop that concept.

I was told by Gib Wettenhall that the groups in the special co-operatives form themselves into voluntary committees. Any tenant can join the committee. The houses are rented and the tenants can do what they like to the houses, such as painting or making adjustments. The committee meets regularly, and books are kept. Finance is made available through the banks and the Government. In Victoria, the concept is catering more and more for the community.

Another speaker at the meeting on co-operative housing was Father Leo Wright. He gave an overview of the housing situation. Church organisations and others that cater for the welfare of the needy express real concern about housing. The time is long past when the Government should sit up and take notice; it should stop dodging the issue at the expense of the disadvantaged in the community. Father Wright had this to say—

"There are 15 million people living in Australia. Each of us has a need and a right to a home. A minimum requirement for a home is adequate shelter. About 72% of households are purchasing or have purchased their own homes. 20% rent from private landlords. 5% rent from government authorities. There is another group which obtains housing on other bases, such as rent-free or by paying rent to the household head: about 3% of households. And there are Australians who do not appear in these statistics because they are homeless: about one or two people in every hundred."

He went on to speak about the shortage of low-cost accommodation. That is what this whole matter is all about. He said—

"A major problem also occurs where inadequate planning allows rapid industrial growth to outstrip associated social facilities such as housing. Planning as though people mattered has not always characterised public and private development. Concrete examples are clearly evident in regional centres throughout Queensland as well as in Brisbane. The results of all of this are that there is a shortage of low-cost public and private rental accommodation; poorer, low-income people are forced away from their traditional homes in the inner city or suburbs to outer suburbs, have to pay higher rents, or are forced to live in caravan parks."

That was the point that I stressed earlier. Next—

"People are forced to take what they can get in order to avoid the frustration, suffering and insecurity that is part of homelessness. Hence they lose control and power over their own lives. Such a psychological and social loss leads them to a feeling of hopelessness and powerlessness that becomes a breeding ground for other social problems."

All of those comments are pertinent.

I now read the statement of recommendations arising from the public meeting. Eight recommendations were made, and they are as follows—

"1. That the Catholic Social Welfare Commission write to the Prime Minister and Cabinet expressing strong support for the recommendation that the Community Housing Expansion Programme (CHEP) be funded in this budget.

2. That the Catholic Social Welfare Commission write to all Federal politicians asking them to express their support for the Community Housing Expansion Programme.

3. That the Catholic Social Welfare Commission write to the Queensland Housing Minister asking that he look favourably on the use of housing funds proposed to be included in the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement, 1984, for housing co-operatives for low income people."

I pause to ask the Minister whether the Catholic Social Welfare Commission has written to him along those lines and, if so, whether he has replied to the commission's letter. I shall be pleased to hear him make some statement as to his response to that organisation.

The recommendations go on—

"4. That the participation of disabled people be encouraged in the establishment of Community Co-operative Housing at the planning as well as implementation stages.

5. That the Social Welfare Commission contact other Church leaders for their support and involvement in implementing the recommendations of the Public Meeting.

6. That the Catholic Social Welfare Commission and community groups request Federal/State and Local Governments to make available to community groups unoccupied housing owned by them for use by low income families and homeless persons, e.g. Archerfield homes."

My colleague the honourable member for Archerfield may be aware of the situation in Archerfield. However, many homes throughout Queensland are under the jurisdiction of either the Commonwealth Government or organisations other than the State Government. Many of those homes, whether they be allocated to army personnel or other persons, seem to remain unoccupied for lengthy periods. They should be reallocated so that they can be used to the best advantage. Perhaps a notation to the effect that those homes are unoccupied is stuck away somewhere in the files. It is crazy that such homes are unoccupied. I do not blame anyone for the situation, but something must be done to rectify it. I do not know whether the Minister is aware of the existence of unoccupied homes. If he is not aware of it, he should try to ascertain which homes are available, so that people in need of housing accommodation can derive some benefit.

The last two recommendations are as follows—

"7. That in addition to the above, land which can be built on be likewise made available.

8. That note be made by the Social Welfare Commission and others of the opposition of some groups to the displacement of people by the holding of Expo '88."

That is a subject that my colleagues will develop.

I reiterate that the whole matter of housing gives cause for concern. The Queensland Government has allowed the situation to get out of hand and it has reached crisis point. All concerned community groups call upon members of Parliament from all political parties to do something to rectify the situation. A greatly accelerated housing program must be mounted in this State. Funds are flowing to Queensland from the Federal Government, and I have explained the nature of that funding to honourable members. I am prepared to listen to any honourable member who believes that he can destroy the validity of my figures and comments.

To return to the legislation before the House—the Opposition has no objection to it because it eases the housing situation in a number of ways. I elaborated on those matters when I summarised the Bill. Some of my colleagues might criticise some of the clauses. They might ask questions or disagree with my contribution. Opposition members do not hold hard and fast to everything that is said in this Chamber.

I urge the Minister, as the responsible Minister, to get the Treasurer and Cabinet to come to grips with the problem. At the moment they are not catching up on the problem; it is getting away from them. The housing problem is increasing throughout the State. At a later stage I will ask the Minister for some updated figures on the position in Queensland. Again, I will draw the attention of the community and this Assembly to what happens with the waiting-list, who is on the waiting-list and the type of people who are looking for accommodation.

I understand that some of my colleagues wish to participate in the debate. I indicate that I will give consideration to the clauses at the Committee stage.

Mr BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise) (3.1 p.m.): In supporting the legislation before the House, I state that it is important and will be welcomed in the community. Although the honourable member for Rockhampton North raised a few matters concerning the Opposition, it was good to hear him acknowledge that.

Most of the problem to which the honourable member referred could be overcome with increased spending, although it is worth while to make the point that bigger spending in itself does not necessarily solve problems and that bigger government in itself does not necessarily solve problems. I submit to the House that bigger government in itself often creates more problems than it solves. It is a matter of how the resources that are available to the government and to the Queensland Housing Commission are utilised and spent. Honourable members realise that, ultimately, if more expenditure takes place, more Government controls are imposed and that in the long term what is done can certainly backfire. Some of the schemes referred to by the honourable member for Rockhampton North have not been very successful. Experiments in welfare housing in the Labor States have not been as successful as they could have been. Bigger allocations for housing would not necessarily solve the problems.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister stated—

> "My purpose in introducing the Bill is to—
>
> Enable the Queensland Housing Commission to assist applicants to finalise payments for or to purchase land as a prelude to building through the commission;
>
> Update the rental provisions;
>
> Tidy up loose administration provisions; and
>
> Allow the purchasing price of residential perpetual leases administered by the commission to be reduced by the amount of land rent paid by the lessee."

It is worth making the point that Queensland has one of the highest rates of home-ownership in the world. It will be interesting to see during the course of the debate just how often Opposition members refer to home-ownership and what the Queensland Government is doing through the Queensland Housing Commission to assist a great number of people into their own homes.

Mr Comben interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: Later I will give a few figures to the honourable member who is interjecting and getting a little excited. He might come out of his cocoon and learn a few facts. Honourable members know how sensitive he is when it comes to telling a few home truths. He criticises the Minister and the Queensland Housing Commission when Government members say a few words in defence of the Government's very fine record. He just cannot cop that.

The Queensland Housing Commission is recognised as probably the most efficient body of its type in Australia. The waiting-list in Queensland is equal to the lowest of any other State. I suggest to the honourable member that before he makes his usually inane interjections he might check on a few facts. If waiting-lists are examined, it will be seen that the performance of the Queensland Government and the Queensland Housing Commission is pretty good.

Mr Prest interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: In a moment I will tell the honourable member why it is so good.

Mr Prest interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: The honourable member for Port Curtis rarely comes up with anything constructive. He always becomes sensitive when Government members put forward practical and truthful suggestions. For the benefit of the honourable member who is interjecting, I point out that Queensland's waiting-list is considerably lower per head of population than the all-States average and, indeed, lower than that of most other States.

It is appropriate to acknowledge the dedication of the officers of the commission, who frequently are faced with the onerous task of attending to difficult circumstances. Honourable members opposite would share in those comments. As members of Parliament, we frequently have dealings with officers of the commission. They are to be admired for the dedication that they show in performing difficult tasks.

The legislation, by providing assistance to people to buy land and then build, will overcome the present difficulty of the purchase of land not being able to be financed. A requirement for a complete package proposal, with construction to commence within three months, will avoid abuse of the scheme by speculators. Simplified and speedier administrative procedures will benefit both the borrower and the building industry.

The Bill also amends the rental provisions to bring the Act into line with the objectives of the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement. It allows the commission to render assistance to a wider range of people and those most in need.

I comment on the income-based rental scheme. Despite criticism when it was introduced and a concentrated campaign by some members opposite to scare people witless, it has been an outstanding success.

Mr Wilson: Aren't you getting away from what was allowed in the basic wage concept?

Mr BORBIDGE: In reply to the honourable member for Townsville South—I was very pleased to hear the honourable member for Rockhampton North—unless I misunderstood him—basically endorse the income-based concept, although he indicated some reservations. I cast my mind back a couple of years to a debate on the income-based rental scheme when Parliament was sitting in the temporary Chamber in the Parliamentary Annexe. At that time the Opposition opposed its introduction and implementation very strongly indeed. I am pleased at the change of heart by some of the more responsible members of the Opposition. I remember that debate well. I remember some of the predictions made by members who still sit in the Opposition.

The Commonwealth Government accepts the principle of income-based rent, which overcomes the necessity for rent reviews and obviates the hardship and difficulty involved in that process. The income-based rental scheme ensures that Government assistance—that is, tax-payers' assistance—is given to those who need it most, that it continues as long as that need exists and that it can be progressively withdrawn as the need lessens. That philosophy is enshrined in the 1978-1981 Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement.

The income-based rental scheme was implemented for a number of reasons. It was difficult for a Government to maintain rentals in line with those in the private market. The scheme prevents a tenant on a high income from discriminating against the needy by continuing to occupy a Housing Commission property at a low rental. The scheme encourages those people to purchase a home or to move into private rental accommodation.

It was totally unjustifiable for financially disadvantaged people to be paying 20 to 25 per cent of their income in rent while better-off tenants were paying as little as 10 or 15 per cent. To the Government's credit, it acted. History will prove that the

Government is correct, despite the mumblings and mutterings of the member for Townsville South. If he could contain himself and listen, he might get something through his thick head. Critics such as the member for Townsville South—who has obviously fallen out with the Opposition spokesman because he is ridiculing me for congratulating that member for his responsible attitude—are advocating social injustice. The Government, to its credit, was not prepared to wear it, even if at that time Opposition members were.

Help has been concentrated in areas of real need when required, which is what the Government believes is the real purpose of welfare rental housing. In turn, that has increased the turnover of Housing Commission properties, with obvious benefits for those people awaiting accommodation. The scheme has also meant that the Government is not in direct and unfair competition with private enterprise. In effect, the income-based rental scheme is concentrated on assisting those most in need. The tenants have been treated fairly. The maximum use has been made of available stock, and unfair competition with the private sector has been removed. That means that much-needed and very valuable resources have not been frittered away.

I believe that it is interesting to look at a breakdown of the range of welfare tenents' rent payable in Queensland. At present the Housing Commission has 20 581 clients. Of that number, 8 936 tennants—that is 43 per cent—are paying between $20 and $29.99 per week and 1 073 tenants are paying between $60 and $60.99 per week. That number represents only 5 per cent. From time to time I hear a great deal—I have certainly heard it in this House—about the higher rental levels. Of the total of 20 581 tenants, only 17 are paying over $129.99 per week. That number represents less than 1 per cent. In effect, what the Government sought to achieve has been achieved. The resources of the Housing Commission have been directed to those most in need. Those who have been encouraged to move into the private rental market or to buy their own home have certainly made use of the schemes that are available.

I am advised that the Housing Commission has committed $35m to housing loans so far this financial year and, by 31 July, expects to lend more than $105m to low-income families. Recent guide-line changes have seen an increase in the maximum loan from $35,000 to $37,500 and the introduction of a second-loan scheme.

In response to increasing property costs, the maximum threshold for eligibility for the interest subsidy scheme has also been increased from $364 to $376.20. The interest subsidy scheme, which is designed to provide home loans for those Queenslanders who can not afford to borrow through traditional lending institutions, has been an outstanding success. In fact, my attention was drawn to an article in the property section of "The Courier-Mail" of Friday, 26 October, under the headline "Guideline changes increase QHC loans". For the benefit of honourable members opposite, who seem to have a little trouble absorbing some of the good things that the Government is capable of doing very, very frequently, I point out that the article refers to comments by the Commissioner of Housing (Mr Hall). It states—

> "Mr Hall said the interest subsidy scheme was designed to make home loans available to people who could not afford to borrow through the traditional lending institutions.
>
> The scheme is open to all people but those who have previously owned and sold a house have to wait 12 months before they will be considered.
>
> Mr Hall said repayments under the scheme were based on 25 per cent of gross weekly income. 'If that level of repayment doesn't pay the interest required on the amount borrowed, the commission will make up the difference', he said.
>
> Mr Hall said the interest rate was currently 11.5 percent."

Mr Wilson: I thought the Government made those decisions, not the commision.

Mr BORBIDGE: I feel sorry for the incapacity of the honourable member, who cannot understand anything constructive that the Government is doing. I am telling the

honourable member what it boils down to in dollars and cents. I suggest that the honourable member, one of the most radical left-wing members of this Assembly, would not even believe in home-ownership and would do everything he could to prevent it. So I can understand his criticism of this Government for this move.

To continue from where I was so rudely interrupted, the article stated—

" 'If a person borrows the maximum $37,500 at 11.5 per cent, interest repayments would be $359 a month,' he said. 'If 25 percent of the borrower's income is only $200, then the commission will put in the additional $159. This subsidy does not have to be repaid.'

Mr Hall said the borrower's income was reviewed every year and the level of repayment adjusted accordingly.

'If a person becomes unemployed, the repayments would be reduced to unemployment benefit levels.' "

I commend that article to honourable members. For the benefit of the honourable member for Townsville South, I repeat that it can be found in the "Property Mail" section of "The Courier-Mail" of Friday, 26 October. If he has a quick look at it, he might be able to make a more worthwhile contribution to the debate than he is presently demonstrating he would be able to make.

Even the commercial scheme, with interest of 13 per cent on loans up to $35,000 and 14 per cent on loans between $35,000 and $50,000, has been of considerable assistance in securing home-ownership where otherwise it might not have been possible.

This Bill will allow people who have purchased their home on land rented from the commission to buy the land at a set price minus the amount they have paid in rent. About 1 200 blocks of land throughout Queensland are owned by the commission.

A survey of leases freeholded over the past 14 months shows that the total receipts by the commission would have been reduced by an estimated 7.4 per cent had this new rental credit scheme been in operation, so the savings for many Queenslanders would have been considerable.

The honourable member for Rockhampton North touched briefly on the mortgage and rent relief scheme. In a debate such as this, it is worth noting the developments that have taken place in that scheme over recent days. I am advised that the allocation for the scheme was about $3.2m from the Commonwealth and $3.2m from Queensland. Of that amount, about one-third went to crisis accommodation.

The honourable member mentioned that about $2m was short-spent in the last financial year. I am advised that that amount was not taken up because of the demand under the guide-lines of the approved schemes at that time. However, in recent days the Minister has announced that the scheme has now been extended and that problems of that type will be overcome.

The Government has acted. I draw the attention of the honourable member to the Minister's press release of 22 October 1984, which stated—

"Cabinet had approved three moves which will expand rent relief assistance provided through the Government's mortgage and rent relief scheme.

The moves are:

Subsidised leasing of crisis accommodation by community bodies and local authorities;

Provision of bond guarantees for families and single persons wishing to establish private tenancies; and

Bond guarantees for youths to establish tenancies."

That decision amounts to a considerable expansion of this Government's crisis housing accommodation made available through the Housing Commission.

The press release continued—

" subsidised leasing of crisis accommodation would further encourage local government bodies and community organisations to lease premises which can be operated as crisis housing centres.

The State Government, through the commission, will provide such bodies with a leasing subsidy of $30 a week together with the full rent, for up to four weeks, for such premises where they are left vacant."

The release then goes on to detail those other areas of assistance—

"Under the new move the Commission will offer bond guarantees to families and single persons who earn less than ¾ and ½ respectively of average weekly earnings.

Income limits will be $282 and $188 per week respectively."

The Minister then detailed the benefits that would flow through to a number of disadvantaged Queenslanders under the scheme that he has proposed and the extension of the Government's mortgage and rent relief scheme.

Mr Davis: When are you going to make a speech off the cuff?

Mr BORBIDGE: I regret that the honourable member made such a stupid and inane interjection. Last night I had the opportunity, at short notice, to make a speech off the cuff in which I revealed the shameful situation in which the Australian Film Commission finds itself and what the honourable member's colleagues in Canberra are doing to finance certain shabby groups. It is a shame that the honourable member was not in the Chamber to hear what I said. If he had been here he would have learnt something. That is typical of the Opposition. When Government members undertake some research, stand up in this Chamber, rebut the inane, stupid and spurious arguments that Opposition members put forward from time to time, and speak with some knowledge about what is going on, Opposition members, who are locked in their philosophical closet, get a bit touchy.

Mr Simpson: It is not in "The Little Red Schoolbook"

Mr BORBIDGE: As my friend the honourable member for Cooroora says, it is not in "The Little Red Schoolbook" Opposition members get caught out, and they do not like that. We know how the Trades Hall briefs filter down George Street so that Opposition members can get up in this Chamber and make all sorts of ridiculous allegations against the Government's performance.

Mr Jennings: Most of their speeches are written for them by Trades Hall.

Mr BORBIDGE: As my friend the honourable member for Southport says, the speeches that Opposition members make in this Chamber are written for them by Trades Hall.

Sir William Knox interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: The honourable member for Nundah seems to have some justification for doubting the correctness of the previous interjection. I point out to the honourable member that where Opposition members get their speeches and facts must remain a mystery.

Mr FitzGerald: They always end up in the same place.

Mr BORBIDGE: That is true.

This is important legislation and warrants wide support from the community and from this Parliament. It will benefit many people throughout the length and breadth of Queensland. I commend the Minister and the Government for introducing the Bill, and I support it.

Mr WILSON (Townsville South) (3.23 p.m.): It is true that, as the member for Surfers Paradise said, the Government is allowing people to purchase land on which to build a house. However, he did not say how much they will pay for it or how they will meet the repayment commitments for the rest of their lives.

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. I take exception to that. I did not think that the honourable member was so hard of hearing. I spent considerable time detailing what the Government is doing to assist and encourage home-ownership in Queensland.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's point has been noted.

Mr WILSON: The honourable member did not talk about the creation of employment that would allow people to earn money to pay for these homes. In the past, people have scrimped and scraped to save a deposit with which to purchase a home, only to be taken down by loan sharks. I know of one instance in which people had been repaying a loan for six years. At the end of that period they found that they had reduced the principal by $3.

The Government is trying to con people by saying, "It is important that every Australian own his own home." It does not say how the people will be able to pay for their homes. It says, "You must get your own home", and it hands the people over to its friends, the loan sharks. Provided that people are young enough when they get a loan to buy a home, they will probably live long enough to own it. That is, of course, if this Government does not make them unemployed.

The Bill does have some good aspects. If a person is in strife and cannot meet his commitments on his land, a grant will be given so that he can pay off that land, which can be used as a deposit on a home. However, the Bill may also put him in a position that is similar to the one that I have just referred to.

Because of the inflated price of houses and land and high interest rates, it is little wonder that a great number of people are unable to purchase their own homes. Furthermore, if the land is purchased from a subdivider, the intending home-owner has to pay not only for the land but also for the roads, the kerbing and channelling and the installation of the water and sewerage mains. The subdivider makes a profit after providing all of these services.

Mr FitzGerald: Who should provide them—Santa Claus?

Mr WILSON: If the young Turk on the Government side listened for a little while, he might learn that the world was not created yesterday when he was born, that it has been going on for a long period and that there have been other and better ideas in the interests of people who seek to own their own home.

Mr FitzGerald: Australia leads the world, so what are you going to tell us?

Mr WILSON: The Premier and Treasurer has led the koala chase in Japan.

Land-owners have to pay more for amenities so that subdividers make a profit. I could name a few former members who were involved in all sorts of rorts and rackets and became multimillionaires by taking to the cleaners on so-called subdivision deals ordinary working people, young people and young married couples who want to raise a family. The cost of the facilities makes the purchase price of blocks of land exorbitantly high. On top of that are the interest rates on the money borrowed.

Local councils demand that intending home-builders pay for services such as water and sewerage mains. I am talking not about connections to the property but about the mains in the streets. The councils are demanding payment for those services and for roads and kerbing and channelling in areas that may have been subdivided over many years.

Many years ago, people did not have to pay for kerbing and channelling, water mains and sewerage mains personally. Those services were provided by a communal rate system, and that system should apply today.

Today, subdividers must provide those services and the land-purchasers pay the subdividers. Land-owners must also pay rates for up to 20 years on those services without as much as one dollar's worth of maintenance being spent by the local council. That is because the Government has cut down on the money that it gives to the local authorities; it has forced the hand of the local authorities.

Although the Minister for Works and Housing might say that it is the business of the Department of Local Government to provide these amenities, I think that it is the business of the Government to ensure that people, especially young married couples, are able to purchase their own homes. After all, the Government claims that all Queenslanders should own their own homes. If it believed that, it would ensure that the costs were borne by the whole community, as happened in the past. Such a measure would lower the cost of land considerably and allow home-owners to build a better style of home. Many houses are both small and of the cheapest design that conforms to the building regulations. Such houses can be seen from one end of Queensland to the other. Although the houses are not jerry-built, they are constructed to the cheapest design. Once people are committed in the purchase of land, that is all they can afford. I say to the Minister: That is not good enough for our young people. Blocks of land are so costly that many young married couples are unable to build the house of their choice. They are unable to meet the monthly repayments.

Both the housing societies and the banks continually advertise on television, saying, "All you have to do is come into us, and you can get a loan in order to build your own home." Honourable members know that that is not right. In other words, it is false advertising. Unless young couples are able to comply with the requirements and terms laid down by the housing society or the bank, they do not qualify for a loan. The Minister can rest assured that no-one will obtain a loan unless the bank or the housing society can be absolutely certain that the loan will be repaid and that a high profit will be earned through a highly inflated rate of interest. That is an example of the way in which the Government looks after young people.

The Government should be acquiring land and should be undertaking subdivision. Local government should provide all the necessary services, such as kerbing and channelling and water and sewerage mains. The local authorities would squeal and say that if they had to do that, they would have to increase the rates. However, if the house-holder has to meet those expenses, it is another form of rate-paying. In addition to that, the house-holder has to provide amenities. Local authorities should meet those expenses, and the costs involved should be met in a collective way, as it was done previously.

The situation that I have described has been brought about over a lengthy period because the Government has failed to honour its commitments to local authorities. Since the Government came to office in 1957, what has it done? In the greatest con trick possible, it continued to revalue land upwards so that, without raising the percentage of rates, the rates themselves continued to rise. The payments made to local authorities are raised in order to avoid increasing the interest rates or the percentage. For example, if a person paid 8c in the dollar on a valuation of $4,000, the rates payable would be $320 a year. If, as has happened on many occasions, the valuation jumped suddenly to $10,000, without actually raising interest rates, the house-holder would be required to pay $800, an increase of $480 a year—and that is more than double.

The Government is welshing on its commitment to local authorities by increasing valuations and causing the land-owner to pay higher costs for the same services. The point I make is that if a working man and his wife are fortunate enough to own their own home, having gone without other facilities and amenities and the good things of life, they deserve to be congratulated, and I do congratulate them. I wish them all the best. I wish them well.

If they are forced to shift to another locality or another town because of the nature of their employment or for any other reason, they have to sell their home and buy another. All that they really do is exchange one block of land for another. That is all they have. The valuation means nothing unless a profit or a loss is made. Because a worker owns only one house in his lifetime that he can call home, he should not be subjected to false land valuations that increase the rates extortionately in money terms, but do not increase it in interest terms.

I have said before in this Chamber that the Government is not meeting its obligations in providing housing for those who need it most, particularly low-income families and pensioners. Instead, the Government allows those persons to be ripped off by unscrupulous landlords.

I call upon the Government to face up to its obligations so that people may be adequately housed at a rental that they can afford, to put a ceiling on land prices and to provide all the services needed to let an intending home-owner buy a block of land on which to build a house that he can call home, and in which he can enjoy the comforts of life.

Mr SIMPSON (Cooroora) (3.36 p.m.): From the mouths of babes and others come words of so-called wisdom that indicate the real philosophy of the Labor Opposition. Labor believes in the nationalisation of housing, the fixing of rent and the whole——

Mr Wilson: Do you believe in extortion? Do you believe in the mark-up? You don't believe that anything happens to costs?

Mr SIMPSON: I do not believe in the philosophy of the honourable member for Townsville South, namely, the nationalisation of housing, rent-fixing and price-fixing in this State. It has been suggested that the State should buy and develop land. Too much of that has been done; it must be kept to a minimum. I would prefer the Government to be less involved. The very needy must be catered for and encouraged to buy land. Under this legislation, they will have an opportunity to buy land and a house in one package.

For a time I thought that the honourable member was suggesting that the rate-payers, rather than the developer, should pay for all the other services that are provided. I do not know whether he was suggesting that that was Labor Party policy. Perhaps that was its policy in the past. The new, academic Labor Party members would say, "Tut-tut. We won't win votes by suggesting that the rate-payers should pay for the new roads, sewerage and water provided in new subdivisions."

Mr Wilson interjected.

Mr SIMPSON: The honourable member still supports that?

The real philosophy, the real truth and wisdom in the Labor Party's philosophy—

Mr Wilson: I am pleased that you see the benefit of the Labor Party's policy.

Mr SIMPSON: It is according to the little red book. The Labor Party would nationalise everything and control everybody.

Mr Comben: You believe in fairies, too?

Mr SIMPSON: Does the honourable member support the belief held by the honourable member for Townsville South?

Mr Comben interjected.

Mr SIMPSON: Mr Speaker, there are two of them. If we flushed out a few more, they would probably have the same strange Marxist/communist philosophy of nationalisation of housing and price-fixing. The member for Rockhampton North suggested the setting up of another quango—a bond board. He is shaking his head.

Mr Yewdale: You can't call a bond board another quango.

Mr SIMPSON: Will the member for Rockhampton North give it another name?

Mr Yewdale: It could be set up within one of the departments.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask that the debate return to the principles of the Bill.

Mr SIMPSON: That would not be incorporated in the legislation, because it would interfere with private enterprise.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SIMPSON: Very well, Mr Speaker, I will return to the principles of the Bill.

Previouly a clear title was required before Housing Commission assistance could be obtained. The land and housing package will be made possible through this legislation.

The member for Rockhampton North spoke about land speculation. I am amused by such comments. Somebody who is prudent enough to anticipate the market—to buy something today that will be worth more tomorrow—is a speculator. If the price falls, he is imprudent or a fool. The accusation is that people who successfully deal in land are horrible and terrible.

Another Opposition member referred to loan sharks. He did not define a loan shark. His feathered leader in Canberra suggested opening up lending to overseas king-sized sharks. He does not understand the modern-day use of money and how finance can provide people with an asset. The asset under discussion in this debate is a home.

The Government's commitment is to govern well, for the good of all Queenslanders. One of a person's basic rights is to own his own home. His home is his castle. It provides him with security. It gives him a stable environment in which to raise his family. I can hear Opposition members saying, "Hear, Hear!" That is heartening.

How is the basic right of people owning their own home to be achieved? It is better to encourage people to be productive, to be thrifty and to pay for that asset themselves, nurture it and hand it on to future generations. Opposition members want to rip off the thrifty person who has saved and been productive by forcing him to give his property to someone who does not care whether it is abused or not. That is the Labor Party's philosophy. It would control rents and discourage people from owning their own home.

Mr Borbidge: They can't control themselves.

Mr SIMPSON: No, they cannot. The Government and the other side of the House are worlds apart. It is the same as the difference that is emerging between Queensland and the other States of Australia, where Government-controlled housing has led to high-rise communal living, broken marriages, suicides and so forth.

I uphold the principle of Queenslanders being able to own their own block of land and build a home on it in which to raise a family. That is the Government's philosophy—to encourage people to be productive, to look after their children and to help them to achieve a good way of life.

The Housing Commission no longer calcualtes rental on what is payable on the open market, but on the income of its tenants. That helps to identify those in need and

ensures that the Government's resources are directed to the needy. The others can move out and do their own thing. Perhaps that could be called an incentive system.

Those most under pressure in the community are not the oldies and not the really young, but those who are starting off in married life and starting families. The biggest financial commitment that people have is the puchase of a house. Once upon a time, back in the early days of the member for Townsville South, young people used to start off in a little, old humpy and progress from those humble beginnings, which did not involve a great debt, until eventually they were in a nice home and their children were starting to leave home. Nowadays, the regulations that control the standard of housing are very strict. That means that the purchase of a house is a major undertaking that involves the taking out of a large loan and the payment of high interest rates. With the help of the Housing Commission, many people have had their housing loan repayments tailored to their incomes. In that way young people have been able to start off in a far better home than their forbears did, but they pay for it for a long time.

This week I had the very pleasant duty of opening a park on the Sunshine Coast. In that area people were encouraged, with the aid of hire-purchase, to purchase beautiful homes. That is now the Australian way of life. The concept of hire-purchase was not always accepted. People used to put money aside until they had sufficient money to buy whatever they wanted. They did not buy the article until they had the cash to pay for it.

Mention has been made in the debate of people living in caravans. Caravan parks seem to attract those at the extremes of the age spectrum—young people with meagre means and retired people who have no great need for material things, have ensured that their children are comfortably off and do not see the need to own a certain house in a certain street, but rather want accommodation that is handy to, for instance, a bowling green or a fishing spot. That sort of accommodation fulfils a particular need.

High-density housing requires a smaller area of land and therefore involves a lower cost. That type of housing is attractive to those of meagre means who, at some later time, might be able to build their own home on their own plot of land. That sort of progression should be available to people, and the Government is trying to ensure that it is available.

In Nambour the Lions emergency housing fulfils a need by providing accommodation for those who suddenly find themselves without a roof over their heads. But that is only one small part of the problem. People suddenly find themselves out on the street because of the breakdown of a marriage or some other catastrophe that has caused them to run out of money. To find the solution it is necessary to identify the exact problem and work on it rather than simply putting a roof over their heads, which overcomes only one of their problems.

Mr De Lacy: That is the most important part of it. Give them a place to live and that will go a long way towards solving the problem.

Mr SIMPSON: No, that is not the most important part. There is only one solution to the problem that has forced these people into the streets.

The provision of housing is only part of the solution, and that is the difference. Counselling is required in those circumstances, and it has proved very effective in Nambour. Effective counselling means that people spend only three of four days instead of weeks in crisis accommodation. Although the provision of housing is part of the ongoing solution to the problem, it is no good just pouring money into the provision of emergency houses here, there and everywhere. Counselling goes a long way towards providing the solution to the individual one-off problem.

Much has been said about the cost efficiency of home building. An odd situation exists in Queensland in that a line has been drawn through the middle of Caboolture and someone has said it will cost $1,000 or $2,000 more to build a home north of that line than it will to the south. That arbitrary line should be moved south to the New

South Wales border so that the various cyclone categories would be eliminated and all Queenslanders would be treated the same. I draw attention to that problem because it also crops up under another piece of legislation.

The Bill increases the number of categories of persons eligible for housing commission homes. Single pensioners and other single people are now eligible, and that is an important alteration to the legislation.

Equally important is the ability of a lessee to freehold at an interest rate in line with normal rates. A lessee may now pay a 5 per cent deposit and and pay the balance by monthly instalments, with interest at the rate of 11.5 per cent over 10 years.

Another matter to which I wish to refer is of great interest to the Subordinate Legislation Committee. I thank the Minister for amending section 48 (3) to provide for the tabling of Orders in Council under the Acts Interpretation Act. The inclusion of that provision will bring the legislation into line with many other Acts of this Assembly. It is a timely and proper inclusion.

It is with much pleasure that I support this forward-thinking legislation. It upholds the philosophy of those on this side of the House of encouraging people to own their own homes. The Government assists all those who wish to own their own home, and this new housing scheme will enable them to do so under the best possible conditions. The Government's successes are already on the board; its record is better than that of any other State Government, and that is proved by Queensland's home-ownership figures.

Mr Scott interjected.

Mr SIMPSON: The Government will continue that policy, even though it grieves members opposite, including the member for Cook.

It is with pleasure that I support the Minister in his introduction of the legislation.

Mr CAMPBELL (Bundaberg) (3.54 p.m.): Only a few moments ago, the Minister for Welfare Services, Youth and Ethnic Affairs was present in the Chamber. It is important that that be noted, because the mortgage and rent relief scheme has failed. It did so because the Government was not prepared to advertise it and nobody knew about it; yet, in the Year of the Family, the Minister for Welfare Services, Youth and Ethnic Affairs spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in ensuring that his face appeared on television. No information was provided about the availability of schemes for those without housing—the disadvantaged who really need help.

In 1984-85, the Queensland Government will be allocated $3.5m by the Commonwealth Government under the mortgage and rent relief scheme, but it will take up only $2.4m. It is not prepared to take up the other $1.1m. In 1983-84, the Queensland Government was provided with Federal funds of $3.2m; it took up only $1.6m. In those two years, the Queensland Government could have used another $2.7m of Commonwealth money to provide housing for the less fortunate. The people should be made aware of the fact that the Queensland Government has not taken up the full funding that has been available.

I support what the honourable member for Rockhampton North said about the establishment of a bond board to protect not only tenants but also landlords. Often, constituents come to see me about problems with bonds.

Honourable members should acknowledge the Federal Government's very successful first home owners' scheme, under which, within two years, 26 000 Queensland families will be provided with their first home. That will be a great achievement.

The Queensland Government should be doing more in the provision of public housing. The Australian average funding for public housing is $55 a person. The Queensland Government provides only $29 a person. Increased funding for public housing is required immediately.

Recognition should be given to some officers of the Housing Commission. Firstly, I acknowledge the dedication of the staff of the Housing Commission, particularly those in the Bundaberg region, who do a good job. Often, they are the meat in the sandwich and have to deal with disgruntled tenants. They do their job to the best of their ability and should be commended for it.

One of the most disappointing aspects of the work of a parliamentarian is that frequently a constituent with a housing problem comes into a member's office and very little can be done to help him. It is a pity that more houses cannot be made available for people who have been living in caravans for more than 12 months—sometimes up to two years—and who face very serious family problems.

Many organisations have done a great deal to provide emergency housing. A very serious unemployment problem exists in Bundaberg, and organisations such as St Vincent de Paul, the Salvation Army, Life Line, the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Women's Crisis Centre are all doing their bit to help to provide emergency housing. The Government should take up the $2.7m of Federal money that is available, because some really urgent needs in Bundaberg have to be met. One is a for a youth refuge. Many homeless youth, including young boys and girls, could be helped if a youth refuge were established. If the money is there, the Government should take it to help those people.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr CAMPBELL: Does not the honourable member want to help homeless boys and girls? I do. It is important that they be helped. That is why I say that the Government should take up all the funds that are available.

The eligibility requirements for pensioners to have their names placed on the waiting-list for pensioner units are too harsh. One of the requirements is that a pensioner must be receiving social security supplementary rent assistance. Many pensioners cannot meet that requirement. I shall give one example. If a pensioner is living with his relatives who do not charge him rent, he is not able to have his name placed on the waiting-list for a pensioner unit because he does not receive supplementary rent assistance.

A person in Bundaberg was living in a house under shocking conditions, but, because the rent was very low—it was almost non-existent—he had to remain in that house because he could not have his name placed on a waiting-list for a pensioner unit. That position should be improved.

This Bill was probably introduced as a result of legislation that came before the House in March of this year. When the Land Act Amendment Bill was debated, it became clear that people who chose to freehold Housing Commission land rather than Lands Department land were disadvantaged. I will read what the Minister for Lands, Forestry and Police (Mr Glasson) said in his reply at the second-reading stage of that Bill. In referring to the freeholding of Lands Department land, the Minister said—

> "The terms and conditions of purchase were modified over time and culminated in the situation in which leases of rural lands could be converted to freehold by 40 equal annual instalments without interest and leases of town lots could be converted to freehold by 30 equal annual instalments without interest."

In both of those instances, people can freehold land without interest. In referring to Housing Commission blocks, the Minister said—

> "The old workers home perpetual town leases are now all absorbed under the State Housing Act and the relevant freeholding provisions can be found in the State Housing (Freeholding of Land) Act. In summary, a lessee makes application to freehold. The valuation of the land is determined by one of these three methods—valuation by the Commissioner of Housing, valuation by the Valuer-General or valuation by the Land Court. Upon determination of the value, the payment plan is 5 per cent of the purchase price by way of deposit and the purchase term is 10 years payable by monthly instalments at an interest rate of 11.5 per cent reducing monthly. That interest rate is at 1 April 1984."

I do not understand why Queensland family people are discriminated against. Rural land held by the Lands Department can be bought by farmers and foreign companies without interest payments. The ordinary Queensland family is being blatantly discriminated against. The Minister for Lands, Forestry and Police said at the time that he would draw to the attention of his Cabinet colleague the Honourable Minister for Works and Housing the comments made during the debate.

I am sure that the rebate provisions in this Bill have been introduced to overcome some of that criticism. However, in many cases, freeholding costs will not be reduced to a level comparable with the cost of land that is freeholded through the Lands Department.

In March of this year, in the debate on the Land Act Amendment Bill, I referred to the attempts of a Bundaberg family to freehold a $12,000 block of land held by the Housing Commission. The family wanted to freehold the block in 1980 and, with usual repayments over 12 years, they would have repaid $19,680. Had they chosen to freehold a Lands Department block worth $12,000 in an urban area they would have had to repay only $12,000 in usual repayments. The same situation applies to a rural block held by the Lands Department.

Because of amendments to the legislation in 1981, the unjust aspect of freeholding arises when a person wishes to buy up the lease immediately. If the block of land was held by the Housing Commission, a buyer would pay a lump sum of $13,536 for a $12,000 block of land. However, a Lands Department $12,000 urban block could be freeholded today for a total payment of $7,307.07. Today, if a person wants to freehold a $12,000 rural block, he needs to make a once-only cash payment of $4,539.70. That was the case that I brought to the attention of the Parliament in March.

When the Lands Department legislation was introduced in 1980, the headlines stated that the Government would lose $100m through land that was given away to farmers. People were being discriminated against. One newspaper article claimed that Mr Glasson strongly denied that political friends of the National Party would benefit from the amendments, yet Sir Robert Sparkes benefited greatly from those amendments, probably to the tune of thousands of dollars.

I turn now to the manner in which this change helps the ordinary person, and I revert to the example of the Bundaberg couple. Since 1970 they have had their block of land. Over that period, the value has gone up, from $3,000 in 1969, to $6,000 in 1979 and to $12,000 at the present time.

If the rebate that will be allowed to that couple is taken into account—it represents a rental credit of $1,710—it will be seen that, based on the present freeholding costs, they will have to make a repayment totalling $9,690, allowing for the deposit. Over 10 years of instalments, that represents a total of $16,948.80. That is very little help indeed to that couple. I have said that prior to the introduction of the scheme they would have had to pay $19,680 over the period of 10 years.

It is interesting to note that under the Land Act, although it would cost $400 to freehold that land, the rental payments would amount to $360 a year. So a person might as well freehold and derive the benefits, because the extra charge involved is very low. However, freeholding under the Housing Commission's Act is very different, in that the charges will rise from $360 a year to $136 a month. That is the cost of freeholding under the Housing Commission's Act. That is a very high increase, and it places the land-holders at a disadvantage. A heavy burden is imposed on people who choose to freehold Housing Commission land, because their repayments will rise from $360 a year to $136 a month. The rebate reduces the monthly repayments to the Queensland Housing Commission from approximately $160 to the $136. Admittedly, that is a saving, but it is still a good deal higher than the $400 a year that would be paid through the Lands Department.

I realise that the Minister is trying to do away with that unjust discrimination against the ordinary Queensland family person, but he is not doing enough. Some people might be helped more than others, but those who are now moving into a Housing Commission home or have done so within the last couple of years will receive very little benefit from freeholding at this time. Much more help could be given.

A case can be made out for giving people in the cities who buy their own home allowances, interest rates and repayments similar to those given to people in the country and to foreign companies that freehold land. At present, such concessions are not being given to city people.

I now turn to the mortgage and rent relief scheme. The Treasury Department's Appropriation Account shows that under that scheme $700,000 was appropriated, yet only $100,000 was spent. In other words, $600,000 remained unallocated. That unallocated money is referred to as "Lapsed appropriations" How many people could have been helped by the expenditure of that money on the provision of emergency and crisis accommodation? As much as 85 per cent of the money that was allocated for the mortgage and rent relief scheme was not spent.

An examination of other pages shows that the purchase by the Government of an aircraft for $2m can certainly be disguised.

I do not know whether the proposed changes to the mortgage and rent relief scheme will make a great difference. For example, a cash grant with maximum assistance of $500 was proposed. Since the scheme was introduced, I do not know anyone in the Bundaberg region who has received a cash grant or any sizeable cash assistance. I would like to learn how much money has been made available. Is it one of those instances in which the Government has said, "We will provide assistance, but we will not tell anybody about it"? It is the old story of the Government saying, "We will provide the money", but it does not spend it, so that next year it can tell the people of Queensland again that the money will be spent. The Government gets two bites of the cherry. Money that it said it would spend last year has not been spent, and it says that it will spend that money this year. It is letting the people know twice what it is not spending even once.

The Minister might be able to inform me whether, to obtain the rent subsidy, people must now go through one of the relief organisations and stay in one of its units. Can a person obtain subsidy by applying for it and fulfilling the requirements in relation to the amount of rent paid and the level of family income, or must he go through a relief organisation? I do not know whether the system has been changed. Perhaps the Minister could provide an answer to that question. If that system still exists, some people cannot obtain that aid.

The scheme provides welfare on the cheap. The high cost of housing is one of the major causes of family break-ups. If the Queensland Government were sincere about the Year of the Family, it would relax the current rigid eligibility requirements of the mortgage and rent relief scheme. Instead of advertising itself, the Government should be advertising the scheme so that the disadvantaged could utilise some of the 86 per cent of allocated funds that has not been spent. By providing welfare on the cheap, the Government requires welfare service organisations to do a great deal of the work. I know that Life Line and the Women's Crisis Centre must do a lot of work to administer the scheme.

The department could help by allowing decentralisation so that more decisions could be made in country areas. No matter what happens in any matter involving the Queensland Housing Commission, a person must go to Brisbane to obtain an answer. The administration of the Queensland Housing Commission could be streamlined if the people at the work-face dealing with tenants could have more say in decision-making. The decisions could then be made more quickly and more simply.

It is interesting to hear that so much money will be provided by guaranteeing bonds. The Government provides no money under those bonds unless at the end of the tenancy

agreement the landlord makes a claim. It cannot be said that the Government is providing money; it is providing a guarantee or a piece of paper.

Many real estate agents do not want to accept those bonds. In areas in which very little housing is available, real estate agents in most instances try to reject the Government's bond guarantee.

Mr Gygar: How will it work in Charleville?

Mr CAMPBELL: Does it work in Charleville? That would be interesting to know.

It has been stated that there will be a bond guarantee for youth to establish tenancies. To be eligible under the scheme, a person must be over the age of 18. Once a person reaches the age of 18, he is an adult. In effect, the bond is being made available only to adults. It is incorrect to suggest that the bond is being made available to youth. I would regard a youth as being a person under the age of 18 years; adults are over 18 years of age. Money is available to youths who have been in a hostel for a month. However, most hostels do not allow youths to stay for more than four or five days. They will be disadvantaged.

If the Government wishes to assist the homeless with bond guarantees, I suggest that it consider bonds for gas and electricity, which in Bundaberg cost approximately $90.

I refer now to the cash grant. Who will decide who receives a cash grant? Will that be a local decision, or will there be an advertisement on the second page of "The Courier-Mail"? When people apply for it, will it be unavailable? The allocation of those funds should be advertised. People ought to know that they are available.

The mortgage and rent relief scheme could be improved. If the guide-lines were relaxed, welfare organisations would not be under such extreme pressure.

In summary, I refer to the freeholding aspects of the Bill. The Government's attitude to freeholding blatantly disadvantages those seeking Housing Commission assistance compared with those wishing to freehold rural land. The Minister could introduce further amendments with the effect of reducing the discrimination exhibited by the Government's rural and urban land-ownership policies.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM KNOX (Nundah) (4.17 p.m.): The Bill has the support of Liberal members.

I comment first on the establishment of a bond board. I hope that the Minister and the Government are discouraged from moving in that direction, because the bond board in New South Wales, although appearing outwardly to work quite well, is in fact a huge unnecessary bureaucracy between tenants and landlords. Elsewhere in Australia, the relationship between tenants and landlords is governed by legislation, as well as by the usual understandings that have existed between tenants and landlords for generations.

The landlord needs some form of protection, and bonds are recognised and accepted by the community. As a result of an amendment to the legislation, claims relating to bonds are now dealt with by the Small Claims Tribunal. That has worked extremely well in this State. However, I understand that a similar provision in New South Wales has not worked so well.

A bond board creates an enormous and quite unnecessary amount of paper work in the usual transactions between landlords and tenants. Usually, no claim is involved. Records of transactions and everything that flows from the machinery of a bond board simply leads to recycling of paper. Not only that, but it is a great inconvenience to tenants, who have to apply to the bond board for the return of their money. That process takes some time. In Queensland it is effected within 24 hours; in some instances, within an hour. The establishment of a bond board would increase the cost of leasing or renting premises.

The bond board was an invention of the New South Wales Government because it wanted to get hold of money that was freely circulating in trust and other accounts in the community. The millions of dollars that the New South Wales Government collects through the bond board are used for housing and the administration of the board. I am quite sure that the Minister has had the costs of running the board put before him. The costs are met from the funds that are generated by the investment of bond moneys.

Mr Davis: Are you speaking about Lord Knox of Nundah?

Sir WILLIAM KNOX: No, I am speaking about a very practical problem.

The Opposition housing spokesman suggested the establishment of a bond board, but I say that that would lead to the creation of a giant, unnecessary quango. The landlords and tenants of this State and elsewhere in Australia, except New South Wales, are working happily under the existing system, with all the necessary protections.

Mr Yewdale: What about the interest that accrues on large amounts of bond moneys over a lengthy period? Do you think the landlord should keep that?

Sir WILLIAM KNOX: An understanding is reached between the landlord and the tenant. As the honourable member said, the money is really held in trust.

Mr Yewdale: The tenant does not get the interest back with his bond, does he?

Sir WILLIAM KNOX: No, of course not.

The payment of a bond has been understood by tenants for years. The system worked extremely well throughout Australia, and it was working quite well in New South Wales before the bond board was established. As I said, the New South Wales Labor Government invented this device simply to draw millions of dollars out of private enterprise—draw it out of the community—and put it in a Government account.

Mr Yewdale: That is not correct.

Sir WILLIAM KNOX: It is correct.

I spent a whole day going through the bond board in New South Wales. I am familiar with its entire operations. All I can say to the honourable member is that it puts another unnecessary cost on the community. It causes a great deal of inconvenience to tenants, particularly when they want their bond back, because that is a cumbersome process. A tenant who lives in a remote part of New South Wales and who wants his bond back has to do it all through the mail and has to wait some weeks for his money. Even then, the landlord can challenge the return of the bond. The tenant knows nothing at all until he receives a piece of paper telling him what the challenge is all about. So an interminable paper war continues.

Mr Yewdale: In this State it is the law of the jungle.

Sir WILLIAM KNOX: It is not the law of the jungle in this State, nor is it the law of the jungle in any other part of Australia. It is not a problem in the community at all.

In the past, problems have arisen when a landlord has refused to return a bond or has delayed its return. As I mentioned earlier, those disputes can be dealt with by the Small Claims Tribunal. Honourable members would have seen results of those disputes published. Those disputes have been sorted out very well in the Small Claims Tribunal.

An Opposition Member interjected.

Sir WILLIAM KNOX: How does the honourable member think those disputes are sorted out in New South Wales? They go to the bond board—another judicial type body becomes the referee for the disputes. So the paper war continues.

Mr Davis: They fix it on the spot.

Sir WILLIAM KNOX: The board does not fix it on the spot. The honourable member knows that is not right. Is the honourable member trying to tell me that the board in New South Wales has a host of King Solomons in the back-room to fix all these problems. That is not so. For some people a great deal is at stake and the disputes have to be handled properly.

I hope that under no circumstances will the Minister entertain the idea of a bond board. Queensland does not need it. It is not required; the present system is working extremely well without it.

Mr Yewdale: You look after the landlords.

Sir WILLIAM KNOX: I am also looking after the tenants, because tenants find the bond board another intrusion into a normal, social, commercial operation between themselves and their landlords.

Mr Yewdale: They can't get it back.

Sir WILLIAM KNOX: They can get their bond back. Both the honourable member and I have dealt with these problems in our electorates. If there is any difficulty, they get it back. There is no problem on that score. There is adequate machinery available to handle the few difficult problems that do arise.

Mr Yewdale: Would you go about intimating that the tenant gets the interest on the money over a long period?

Sir WILLIAM KNOX: In certain circumstances, perhaps he should, but I will not argue about it. What is it, between $200 and $400?

Mr Yewdale: It could run for four or five years.

Sir WILLIAM KNOX: Yes, it could, but most people are quite happy with the arrangement, knowing full well that their interests are protected.

The provision of housing is always a matter of great public concern, and this country has been very fortunate in having various schemes to provide housing for people who are less fortunate than others, or perhaps have temporary difficulties. Welfare housing has certainly loomed large in the history of this country, and it has been a great success story, although it has been handled differently in each State. For instance, South Australia originally began a housing trust, and I understand that it is still operating.

But I am a little worried about the high profile being given to the term "public housing" I heard evidence of it today from Opposition members. That is not a new term. Australia has various schemes of providing homes for people who want to either lease or buy. They have been quite successful. But now there is movement in the community—quite strong agitation, actually, and even demonstrations—for public housing. What does that mean? It simply means getting right away from the area of essential welfare housing and moving towards the Government embarking upon a program of simply providing houses.

Mr Littleproud: Socialist dogma.

Sir WILLIAM KNOX: It is indeed. It is a move to provide public housing and to abolish the little capitalists. That term was coined in 1952 by a leading member of the Labor Party who happened at the time to be the Deputy Premier. It has been remembered ever since. The Labor Party does not want a person to own his home, because if he did he would be a little capitalist.

So although members of the Labor Party mouth platitudes about looking after people in their own homes and say that they will not be subject to the assets test and all the

other devices that Labor has planned, they design systems to make it difficult for people to own their home—and that is the rub. The whole philosophy of the socialists is to make it as difficult as possible for people to own their home, because their greatest fear is creating a community of little capitalists. Members of the Labor Party have a vested interest in keeping people in depressed circumstances, so care has to be taken about how public moneys are used for housing.

I regard with some suspicion the move to pour consolidated revenue into public housing in competition with all the other sources of funds which are available to borrowers. Only a few weeks ago in Sydney a demonstration was held on the subject of public housing. That sort of thing has to be watched very closely. I hope that this Parliament will keep an eye on that sort of move and hinder it because public housing is only another way of socialising the last and only asset many people have. I quite agree that most members of the Labor Party in this House are only coffee shop socialists, but the dedicated socialists in the party, who are waiting in the wings to take over their seats, have different views about what should be done. Their attitude is that people should not own their home, and they will devise innumerable schemes to prevent that happening. Public moneys—precious Loan Fund allocations—should not be used to build houses simply for the sake of building houses.

An Opposition Member: We build houses and put people into them.

Sir WILLIAM KNOX: Yes. The Government builds houses with public moneys and puts into them people who find it difficult to obtain other accommodation. There are many other ways in which people can get a home. Those ways are not usurious, difficult or prohibitive. Thousands of people are buying their homes under usual commercial arrangements through mutual funds, building societies, friendly societies and so on.

There are numerous ways in which people can get a home satisfactorily without paying exorbitant rates of interest. I hope that we will hear a little less about public housing and a little more about genuine concern for people who presently have difficulty in financing their homes. As the Minister said previously, people should be able to own their home within a reasonable time and under reasonable terms.

Mr De LACY (Cairns) (4.31 p.m.) Coming from Cairns, I could not let the opportunity pass to speak on a Bill that is designed to amend the State Housing Act. Since I have been the member for Cairns, I have found that half of the people who come to my office have housing-related problems. There is an acute housing crisis in Cairns. Often after people have been to the Housing Commission and to the various welfare agencies, they come to see me. Sometimes, because I cannot find any easy solution to their problems, I feel helpless and inadequate.

The member for Nundah referred to public housing and said that the provision of housing was merely the adoption of a socialist attitude. If the provision of public housing is the adoption of a socialist attitude, it is an attitude with which I wish to be associated. It is an attitude with which the Labor Party has always been associated. The reason why Opposition members continue to ask for more public housing is that, for one reason or another, many people in the community either cannot afford usual market rental accommodation or are unable to purchase their own home. It is the responsibliity of the Government to address itself to that problem.

It is often said that the great Australian dream is for people to own their home and, one way or another, it is the Government's responsibility to assist people to own their home. For the member for Nundah to suggest that the Labor Party has a tendency to stop people from owning their home is utter nonsense. The Labor Party pioneered the Queensland Housing Commission and introduced the scheme under which people are helped to own their home.

I wish to take up a previous interjection made by the member for Condamine. He said that the provision of public housing was a socialist doctrine. I imagine that many

people in his electorate would like to be blessed with that socialist doctrine and be provided with more public housing so that they can get a roof over their head.

The attitude that is adopted by Government members and by members of the Liberal Party, who very often have two bob each way, was epitomised best of all by the member for Cooroora in one of his more enlightened speeches this afternoon. He said that the Government supported the idea that everybody in Queensland should be able to own his home. No sooner had he said that than he said that the Government should not be taking from the thrifty to give to the poor or to those people who cannot help themselves. In one breath he said that everybody should have his own home; in the other breath he said that the Government should not help people into their own home. On the logic of his argument, it can be seen that he effectively—although not very effectively—demolished the whole reason for the existence of the Housing Commission.

The Housing Commission is concerned with income-related rentals, the interest subsidy loan scheme, the mortgage relief scheme and the rent relief scheme, all of which are assisting people into accommodation. According to the honourable member's logic, the Housing Commission should not take from those who are more able to afford housing and give to those who are less able to afford it. He should state whether he believes that Queensland should have a program that helps people fulfil the Australian dream of owning a home, such as that provided by the Housing Commission, or should stick to the ideological principle that it is not right and proper to take from the thrifty and give to others.

I am speaking in this debate mainly to refer to the housing crisis in Cairns. Cairns is probably suffering more than any other centre in Queensland because it has been going through what is loosely called a tourist boom. That boom has caused rapid growth, placed pressure on existing housing and market forces, and pushed up the price of existing housing and rental accommodation. Another effect of the boom has resulted in a great deal of the lower-cost, inner-city accommodation being dismantled to make way for tourist-oriented, high-cost accommodation. The whole concept of a tourist-oriented city and tourist accommodation means that less accommodation is provided for local residents and those in the town who are not tourists.

As at the end of September, the waiting-list for Housing Commission rental accommodation was: three-bedroom acommodation, 160; two-bedroom accommodation, 140; four-bedroom accommodation, 25; pensioner accommodation, 56; one-bedroom accommodation, 30, who were not eligible for pensioner accommodation. At that time, a total of 411 people were on the waiting-list for Housing Commission accommodation in Cairns.

That number represents only the tip of the iceberg. Because the people who have no priority rating cannot expect to get accommodation in less than 12 months, or usually between two and three years, they become disillusioned and disenchanted and do not maintain registration with the Housing Commission. If it became possible in the near future to get rental accommodation, I suggest that many more hundreds of people would register with the Housing Commission.

After listening to Government members who support the Minister in this legislation and sing the praises of the Government's record in the provision of accommodation through the Housing Commission for citizens of Queensland, one is led to believe that no real problem exists. However, half of the people who come into my office have a housing-related problem. They read in the press the Government's propaganda about housing, but no housing is available for them. They then place great pressures on the already overworked officers of the Housing Commission. They go into the Housing Commission and state that they are in desperate need of housing. They are told to write their names on forms and to sign them. The officers of the Housing Commission apply the regulations rigidly because they can no longer cope with the pressure.

I understand that, in this financial year, in Cairns, 17 three-bedroom accommodation units and three four-bedroom accommodation units will be constructed. In addition, 10

two-bedroom units will be constructed. Tenders have not been called yet, but I hope that they will be built soon. I have heard on the grapevine that another 10 will be constructed if and when funds are available, and I ask the Minister to consider changing the status so that provision will definitely be made for another 10 units. The housing shortage in Cairns is critical, and the Minister should endeavour to have a further 10 units constructed.

Although I appreciate what is being done, even the present building program will make very little impact on the number of people who require housing in Cairns. However, there are two ways in which the housing crisis can be overcome, at least in the short term. One is by the provision of more housing. On the basis of the number of people on the waiting-list, I ask that consideration be given to that. The second is by assisting people into existing private accommodation.

Prior to the last election, I welcomed the announcement of the mortgage and rent relief scheme. Subsequently, when I became involved with the rent relief part of the scheme, I came to the conclusion that it was little more than an election stunt. The eligibility provisions for that type of relief were so rigid and so narrow that very few people were able to make use of the scheme.

The honourable member for Bundaberg pointed out that of the $700,000 allocated, only $100,000 has been expended. My understanding is that, in addition to meeting the requirements of the means test, people had to spend four weeks in a caravan park or in some other kind of crisis accommodation. Because of the pressure on crisis accommodation in Cairns, it is unusual for people to remain there for four weeks. They simply cannot be kept there for four weeks. The turnover of people using crisis accommodation is high because very often the accommodation has to be made available for someone else who is in need. Consequently, people who are forced out of crisis accommodation do not qualify for rent relief.

It is true that, with the additional caravan park requirement, eligibility was increased. I welcome that. I understand that the provisions for eligibility have been expanded further. Although I am not sure of the exact details, I understand that people who do not have established tenancy can now be eligible.

There is a lot of confusion in Cairns, even among the Minister's officers. I ask the Minister to clarify, as quickly as he can, exactly what the expanded provisions mean. I do not have the brochure with me. That is one of the problems of having two offices; everything is always in the other office. From my recollection, the third provision set out the terms, but not very clearly. As I understand it, people who are living with someone else—for example, a young married couple living with their parents, or an unmarried mother with children who is sharing accommodation with someone else—would become eligible for rent relief under the scheme. If that is so, I welcome it. I ask the Minister to clarify that point, not only for me as a member but also for the officers of his department and the public generally.

Earlier, the honourable member for Cooroora referred to the Rental Bond Board as a socialist monster. At one stage he called it socialist, communist and Marxist, and that was an interesting observation. The honourable member for Nundah also agreed with that description, but not in such extravagant terms.

An Opposition Member: He was having two bob each way again.

Mr De LACY: As my colleague said, the honourable member for Nundah was probably trying to have two bob each way again.

If, as the honourable member for Nundah said, there are no problems in the community relative to the retrieval of bond money, that is probably the measure of the difference between his electorate and mine. It is one of the biggest problems in the community. Time and time again, people telephone and say that they are unable to have their bond money returned because the landlord or the real estate agent is hanging on to it. Sometimes the bond money is withheld for legitimate reasons, but very often

phoney complaints are made by landlords and real estate agents about the premises that have been vacated. They say that the place has not been cleaned, or that this or that has been broken.

The honourable member for Bundaberg mentioned also that many landlords and real estate agents are not keen to let people into accommodation on the basis of the Housing Commission's bond guarantee. I suggest that the reason for that is that they cannot get their sticky fingers on the bond money. Under the present system, even if they have to make a refund, they do not have to refund it completely. Because they will now have to go to the Queensland Housing Commission, they will find it very difficult to profit from the system.

The member for Surfers Paradise said that the legislation refers to income-related rentals. I agree with most of the things that he said. One of the great features of the Queensland Housing Commission is the income-related rentals. That is something that is strongly supported by the Labor Party. In August I presented a petition to the House. Many people in Cairns were upset because, for rental calculation purposes, the income of the children of the tenants also becomes part of the assessable income. I realise that there are two sides to the coin when referring to income-related rents.

One side is that if a person's income goes down, he pays less rent. The other side of the coin is that as a person's income increases, his rent increases. I appreciate that some people do not understand this matter. This becomes an important issue because it demonstrates the Government's lack of commitment to the whole concept of the Year of the Family. When a tenant's family begins to earn an income either through the receipt of unemployment benefits or through payment for work done, he must immediately pay an increased rent. In principle, that sounds OK. However, what happens during those difficult years, when teenage children begin to experience all sorts of problems in finding work and with finding their way in life, is that a great deal of tension arises between parents and children. When the parents find that they must pay more rent to keep their children at home, the problems are exacerbated. I presented a petition that prayed that the Queensland Housing Commission review its formula and exclude the income of children of tenants from assessable income.

Mr Littleproud: Don't you think that, when it gets to the $135 a week upper limit, very often the kids can go into private renting at a cheaper rate?

Mr De LACY: I am not opposed to that, but that is begging the question. That is not the point about which I am speaking, I am talking about children. Very often, parents do not receive a full income. They may be paying only $35. However, when one of their children obtains employment, the rent can increase by as much as $17 a week. Very often, what happens—I am sorry to see it happen and I do not support the parents who do it—is that the children are kicked out of the home, otherwise the parents would have to pay higher rental. That matter should be examined. If something could be done about that, it would honour the Government's commitment to the Year of the Family. It would be a genuine measure to assist families to remain together.

Mr Prest: It would be the first thing that this Government has done in the interests of the Year of the Family.

Mr De LACY: The member for Port Curtis obviously thinks that the advertisements endorsed by the Minister for Welfare Services, Youth and Ethnic Affairs are not doing a great deal for the Year of the Family or to help young families stay together.

I wish to raise briefly the issue of staffing. The staff employed by the Queensland Housing Commission in Cairns and in other centres bear a heavy work-load. I have said that there are 400 people on the waiting-list. The staff must not only process those applications and follow them up but must also carry out a public relations exercise. At the beginning of my speech I said that the public relations exercise is made immeasurably more difficult by the fact that the Government's propaganda machine says how hunky-dory everything is in relation to housing. However people are told, "Leave your name on the list and we will be able to obtain accommodation for you within two years."

Officers of the commission need to be able to fend off irate people who are unable to reconcile those two conflicting points of view. In addition, staff must process all of the loan applications under the commercial scheme and the interest subsidy scheme. The staff are now required to process applications under the mortgage and rent relief scheme.

Cairns has only one estate clerk on a classification 2 and one clerical assistant to carry out the functions of the office. That office needs to be upgraded quickly with many more staff if it is to cope with the difficult work-load. I agree with the member for Surfers Paradise that these dedicated officers are working under very difficult conditions throughout the length and breadth of the State. Is it any wonder that they rigidly apply the rules of the Queensland Housing Commission, and are sometimes seen to do so insensitively? They just cannot cope with the pressure of work.

Cairns also has only one building inspector, who is responsible for all of the Housing Commission's activities from Cardwell in the south to Cooktown in the north and west to Normanton and Croydon. Following representations from the Housing Commission and me, the Minister made available an additional inspector on loan; so Cairns, at least for the remainder of this year, has two building inspectors.

The building inspectors are working above and beyond the call of duty. I ask the Minister to make the second position permanent because the Cairns office cannot function without that person.

The inspectors are responsible also for construction and maintenance by the Department of Community Affairs, formerly the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement, and that adds immensely to their work-load. At times it is necessary for them to travel to Cooktown and Ravenshoe where, although there may not be any QHC housing, there is Aboriginal housing. They have to call tenders and obtain specifications. I ask the Minister not to withdraw the additional inspector at Cairns and to consider upgrading the office.

The first home owners scheme, which aims to put young Australians into their own homes, is certainly the most successful Government program that I have ever been involved in. It gives the lie to the assertion by the member for Nundah that the Labor Party does not want Australians to own their homes. The scheme was introduced by a Federal Labor Government. It met a very important need.

Mr Stephan: Has it been cut back?

Mr De LACY: My understanding is that the eligibility has been restricted, but that in itself is a measure of the success of the scheme. There was simply not enough money to allow an open-cheque approach. It is a very successful scheme, and I am proud to be a member of the party in Government that introduced it.

I now summarise my comments on the Bill. Cairns is suffering a low-cost housing crisis. I ask the Minister to do whatever he can to build more rental housing. More accommodation is needed for the people who cannot afford to buy or rent a home on the private market. I do not care what sort of housing it is. In fact, I would ask him to consider a crash building program for two-bedroom accommodation.

I ask the Minister to consider upgrading the Queensland Housing Commission office in Cairns and to retain the additional building inspector, who is currently on loan.

I ask the Minister to clarify all aspects of the expanded rent-relief eligibility scheme.

Mr PALASZCZUK (Archerfield) (4.54 p.m.): First, I congratulate the member for Rockhampton North (Mr Yewdale) on his contribution to the debate. His response to the Minister's second-reading speech was well researched and rich in rhetoric. He asked the Minister to make allowances in rentals for long-term residents of commission homes who pay maximum rentals of approximately $137.50 per week.

On this issue I fully agree with the honourable member for Rockhampton North because I have the same problems in my electorate. Now that their children have grown up, some people who have lived in the Inala area for more than 20 to 30 years have been forced out of the area to find private accommodation. That might seem fine to the member for Condamine (Mr Littleproud), but these people have contributed much to the community activities of Inala. Once they are lost to the community, the standard of community organisations begins to decline. I have received numerous representations on this matter from the Community House, St Vincent de Paul and the Anglican Church. I urge the Minister to reconsider this idea.

My two predecessors and I have a reputation for looking after the constituents of Archerfield. Both Doug Sherrington and the late Kev Hooper understood the needs of the people. However, the people of Carole Park and Camira have been totally abandoned by their electorate representatives, Mr Gunn and Mr Lingard. The residents of Fassifern and Somerset turn to either Mr Bob Gibbs or me for help. They realise it is a waste of time trying to contact either Mr Gunn or Mr Lingard.

Mr Yewdale: Never available!

Mr PALASZCZUK: That is correct.

I can understand why that happens. The Deputy Premier and Minister Assisting the Treasurer is always too busy. He is taking the Year of the Family literally and is very busy promoting his son. Unfortunately, I expected better of the member for Fassifern. At least he had taught at the Inala State High School, so he should be aware of the problems of Housing Commission tenants.

As a contrast I cite the saga of a young man in my electorate whom I had taught at primary school. His family had lived in a Housing Commission house for 20 years. His father passed away five years ago and the son remained in the family home to look after his mother. Naturally enough, when he got older, he married. He and his wife had two children and they all lived in the family home and looked after his mother. Sadly, his mother passed away this year. He did the right thing by the Housing Commission and applied for the family home. He wanted to stay on in his family home. The Housing Commission told him that he had to relinquish his tenancy and apply for another house. After being in that family for 20 years, unfortunately that home was lost; it disappeared with the stroke of a pen. For the benefit of all members here, I point out that this man is now paying exorbitant rent for a private house that is within walking distance of the old family home. He is still on the waiting-list. I feel that in this case the rules of the Housing Commission could have been bent a little to allow this man, his wife and their two children to remain in the family home.

As I mentioned in my contribution in the Budget debate, the Queensland Housing Commission is to construct 2 000 living units. Unfortunately, that rate of construction is not keeping pace with the increase in the waiting-list.

Recently in my electorate I noted an alarming increase in the number of people still seeking help in obtaining Queensland Housing Commission accommodation. I can only hope that, with the massive injection of funds under the new Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement, the wait time and the wait-list will be reduced drastically.

I suggest that the Housing Commission seriously investigate the buying of established homes to shorten the wait time and achieve a much-needed housing mix in the community. At present it is a buyer's market, especially for established homes. I hope that the Minister will seriously consider this suggestion. Whilst I am on the subject of creating a housing mix in the community, I point out that recently I received a telephone call from a Camira resident who objected to the building of Housing Commission houses in his area. I classified him as a snob who did not want ordinary people living near him. He did not realise that the commission had a regard for the area and adopted a policy of constructing homes that blended in with the environment.

For the enlightenment of all members, I point out that on 13 November, Inala will come into its own with the opening of the new Inala Plaza Shopping Centre. The Inala Civic Centre will come alive. Unfortunately, over the past 20-odd years, the commission has been a very poor landlord. It made no attempt to make anything of the civic centre. As a matter of fact, the centre has not had a face-lift since it was built. As a result, as is common knowledge, it has died. So much for the claim that the Government looks after small business.

I understand that a request has been made of the commission to extend the roof line of the new Inala Plaza to cover the remainder of the civic centre. That would aesthetically enhance the whole area. I have received numerous deputations on the matter from the small shop-keepers of Inala, but I fear that their requests are falling on deaf ears. I urge the Minister to reconsider the Government's position. The extension of the roof would make the whole of the civic centre bustle with renewed vigour.

I must praise the new city council bus service to the civic centre via Acacia Ridge. This service will finally provide the much-needed cross-suburb link between Acacia Ridge, Inala and Rocklea.

In my travels throughout the electorate I have taken the trouble to inspect the new pensioner units near my office. I must compliment the Minister and his department on them. I found them ideal. They are just the right size and easy to maintain and clean. The tenants are very proud of them, from the well-kept gardens outside to the meticulously-kept lounge-rooms inside. The tenants realise how well off they are, because they could be living in a hovel in New Farm or Spring Hill and paying twice the rent. Following the success of those pensioner units, I urge the Minister to use the vacant land near my office in Skylark Street to construct more. That street is ideal. It has all the necessary facilities. A shopping centre and a bus stop are nearby, the medical centre is within walking distance and the new Inala Plaza Shopping Centre will be within 10 minutes' walking distance.

Mr COMBEN (Windsor) (5.2 p.m.): This Bill to amend the State Housing Act provides Government assistance to allow Queenslanders to buy their own homes, but it applies only to a limited area. The Bill deals with the purchase of land. Under the existing provisions of the Act, the Queensland Housing Commission could not finance the purchase of land. A clear title was required as security for home-ownership finance, and borrowers without clear title were disadvantaged compared to spec home-purchasers. The Bill will allow the purchase of land and simplify the provisions relating to its purchase. Unfortunately, the Bill does not go far enough.

The Queensland Housing Commission needs to examine its approach to the provision of public housing, and to become a little more creative in its approach. I recently sent to the Honourable C. J. Hurford, MP, Minister for Housing and Construction a submission concerning provisional subsidies of small boarding-houses for the homeless. I would like to run through the proposals I put to the Commonwealth Minister, because I believe that the points I made in that submission are very relevant to what the Queensland Housing Commission could be doing today if it was a creative, practical body prepared to look at new issues and examine the problems that it faces.

The need for crisis accommodation, as well as short and medium-term accommodation for people on low incomes is well known and documented. At present the provision of crisis accommodation is met by very few Brisbane charitable organisations that receive limited assistance from the State and Federal Governments. Public housing tends to be limited to that provided by the Queensland Housing Commission, and generally lacks any imaginative approach.

An alternative is needed. Although the recent Federal Budget provided money for co-operative housing, both the State and Federal Governments could provide alternative accommodation by financing large Queensland-style homes to be used as boarding-house-type accommodation. The houses would be run on a purely commercial basis, and they

could reduce considerably the pressures on crisis accommodation and provide cheap and acceptable accommodation.

I envisage a large house able to provide sound accommodation for up to half a dozen people. It would not be a guest-house catering for 20 or 30 people, with barrack-like cooking facilities shared by the residents; nor would it be a commune. Each person would have his own room and share a communal lounge, dining-room and kitchen.

The establishment would aim at being a homely place run on a commercial basis, under the day-to-day control of one person who would think of it as his own home, and who would be supervised by a voluntary committee of management. Although modest, even basic, in its amenities, it would be attractive to live in because of the co-operative effort of the residents who would see it as a place to which they could belong. The social advantages of community living, with its built-in support systems, would benefit many potential residents.

The people I see as being most in need are those who require crisis accommodation, those who require cheap accommodation for a short period, those who will benefit from a supportive community before re-entering the private accommodation market, and the homeless youth and supporting parents, about whom we have heard so much this afternoon. Additional residents could be people attempting to purchase their own homes who, at present, pay a large percentage of their income in rent for a flat or house.

The cost to the individual would be about $45 a week. That is approximately half the basic pension rate, and considerably less than people would pay for a single flat or double flat.

As I see it, the Government's role should be to ensure that the Housing Commission provides the boarding-houses with basic amenities, furnishings and appliances, by building new houses of the required size, subsidising additions or renovations to existing houses to make them comply with local government by-laws, or subsidising the shifting of suitable houses now at risk through development.

The Government could also provide social workers to liaise with interested community groups, thus facilitating their participation in the management scheme. The scheme would be managed by a committee of local interested people. Similar schemes are operated in the welfare field under the Community Youth Support Scheme and bodies such as Shelter. There is no reason why a local management body could not look after such a house, with a person employed on a part-time basis to oversee the whole operation. Initially, the houses could be set up in three or four centres, with appropriate feedback to the Queensland Housing Commission.

I do not hesitate to give credit to the Cairns branch of the Women's Electoral Lobby for initially suggesting this type of a scheme. It has made a fairly detailed submission on the appropriateness of the scheme, particularly in provincial towns in which emergency accommodation is not readily available.

Such a scheme has a lot of merit. It would provide simple, basic accommodation—a decent roof over the occupant's head, adequate meals, civilised amenities, permanency, low-cost accommodation, an opportunity for social interaction and social support in a clean, reasonable environment. No emphasis would be placed on providing any form of welfare services; emphasis would simply be on providing stability.

An extension of the concept of public housing is necessary in Queensland to provide the simple accommodation that I have outlined. Implementation of the scheme that I have described would provide one of the cheapest and quickest ways to solve the immediate accommodation problem of many people on low incomes. It is as acceptable to people on limited budgets as any other scheme presently operating. If houses were recommended by local voluntary groups, with applications being made in local areas, local communities would have a large say in the provision of services. Effectively, the decision-making would be taken back to where the problems are, that is, the local community, which so often is neglected by the Government.

Another alternative form of accommodation with which the Minister and the Queensland Housing Commission should be concerned is housing co-operatives. Presently operating in the Windsor and Spring Hill areas are two housing co-operatives.

The people are living in houses rented to them by the Department of Main Roads. The department owns those houses following resumptions prior to the proposed, but now shelved, northern freeway.

The occupiers of those dwellings have organised what is known as the Albion/Wooloowin/Windsor Housing Co-operative and the Spring Hill Co-operative. The concept of the co-operatives is a group management scheme of houses given by the Queensland Housing Commission or purchased by the co-operative that are managed by the residents and rented out to members of the co-operatives.

Local organisers and community leaders such as Peter Fries, Ken Butler and the Reverend John Woodley should be commended for their initiatives in this direction. They have been very active in my area of Windsor raising funds and increasing public awareness of the work that they hope to do. They have also been active in getting a general debate going on the viability of the concept and the alternatives open to such housing co-operatives. They have done a fair amount of research on the co-operatives that are already operating in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. I hope that the secretary of the Queensland Housing Commission will take notice and give further consideration to the possibility of funding these novel but workable schemes.

It is worth noting that, 18 months ago, a delegation led by Peter Fries was given short shrift by the secretary of the Queensland Housing Commission. Because these people suggested something novel, they were not considered to be very desirable. It was not a very fulfilling afternoon for them. They have an alternative, workable scheme and the Government should be promoting it.

I draw the attention of the House to two excellent working papers prepared by the School of Australian Environmental Studies at Griffith University. Working paper 2/84 is entitled "Participation in Alternative Lifestyles in Australia" and working paper 3/84 is entitled "Government Assistance to Alternative Lifestyles: Participant Opinion and Professional Recommendation" The working papers are written by W. J. Metcalf and F. M. Vanclay.

Following publicity in "The Courier-Mail", Mr Metcalf wrote to me, outlining what he considers to be his role in the preparation of these working papers. The letter reads—

> "You may not be aware of the extensive research program which has been conducted from within the Institute of Applied Social Research here at Griffith University, looking at just such questions."

I had referred the matter of communal housing to him. The letter continues—

> "I was retained earlier this year as a consultant by the Federal Department of Education and Youth Affairs to look at just such matters.
>
> I enclose for you copies of two of the reports which we have put out on this topic. I trust that these will be of interest to you."

I have read the reports and the one entitled "Participation in Alternative Lifestyles in Australia" makes very interesting reading. The data used in the preparation of that working papers shows that Australia currently has approximately 60 000 alternative life-style participants whilst a further 95 000 are planning to move to an alternative life-style. The policy implications, problems and benefits presented by the 155 000 current and intending alternative life-style participants are discussed in the working paper.

I know that it is the done thing in the National Party to state that, if a person is living an alternative life-style at, say, Cedar Bay, his house should be destroyed without any by your leave, and probably in breach of the Criminal Code.

Some honourable members are interested in alternative life-styles and the direction of our society. They are also concerned about Government help and planning for

alternative life-styles. The Minister would be well advised to consider that working paper closely.

The second working paper deals with a wide range of suggestions put forward by 683 people in response to a survey. The survey asked people to comment on what sort of Government assistance should be given or what form Government assistance should take in the development of alternative life-styles. The most popular request was for a form of information assistance. People did not want a hand-out; they wanted to know where they could go to get help. Also requested were assistance in the form of training courses, an alternative life-style extension education service and an information learning exchange program.

The second most frequent suggestion was for changes to laws or administrative structures to remove discrimination against alternative life-style groups. I realise that this conservative Government will not take any notice of that comment, but Opposition members believe that the Government should play a creative role and be supportive of all people in the community, not only those who wear hats with corks hanging from them or who have a straw in their mouth. The survey showed that alternative life-style groups should be allowed to operate free of red tape and bureaucratic obstruction. Thirdly, the respondents suggested a wide range of direct grants, including alternative life-style allowances and grants to establish pilot projects.

Fourth in frequency of response was a range of suggestions for non-grant aid. By far the most common suggestion was to make land available—either vacant Crown land or derelict farm land. Ideas were also put forward for the provision of low-interest loans and assistance to small-scale private enterprises in which alternative life-style participants might wish to engage.

That is the type of finding contained in the working paper to which I have referred. I recommend it to all honourable members as being very good background reading. I sincerely hope that in the very near future the Queensland Housing Commission will adopt a creative policy that will look at the alternatives available for all the people of Queensland and not just those to whom the Government believes it should give a 20c hand-out or some other sort of assistance. The Government should be a Government for all people. Every person has the right to Government assistance, whether it be direct aid or information services. In this day and age, the role of a Government is interventionist. The more aid that can be given to all people to ensure a fulfilment of life and a worthwhile life, the better it will be.

Mr McELLIGOTT (Townsville) (5.16 p.m.): From the comments of the Opposition spokesman, I understand that, subject to the answers to a number of questions that he will ask the Minister at the Committee stage, the Opposition will support the Bill. I assess the Bill as being a small step in the direction of achieving a more enlightened approach to the provision of public housing in Queensland.

I think it was the honourable member for Nundah who asked: What is public housing? It is clear to all honourable members that it is housing that is provided from the public purse for either purchase or rental. The difference between the Australian Labor Party's philosophy and that of the Government is that in recent years the Government has tended to place more emphasis on the purchase of public housing than on making sufficient public housing available for rental purposes. From my observations in Townsville, I believe that the Government is shifting its emphasis back to the rental sector. More Housing Commission homes seem to be coming on stream for rental purposes.

The honourable member for Cooroora put forward the idea that, for some reason or other, the Australian Labor Party is opposed to home-ownership. The honourable member for Nundah, too, seemed to take up that point. The honourable member for Nundah referred to a statement that was made by a Labor parliamentarian approximately 32 years ago and used that as the basis for his comments. The record of the present

Federal Labor Government indicates clearly that the basis used by the honourable member is not valid.

I quote from the publication "Government in Focus", which is a monthly digest of Federal Government activity, compiled by the National Media and Liaison Service. It says—

> "A new housing agreement for low-income earners will provide the basis for a 10-year assault on housing poverty in Australia."

The publication quotes the Federal Minister for Housing and Construction (Mr Chris Hurford) as saying—

> "A new system of low-start loans administered by the States with repayments geared to income will enable a family earning as little as $175 a week to repay a loan of up to $40,000 in just over 20 years without committing more than 25 per cent of their income in repayments."

I now quote from "The Courier-Mail" of 16 October, in which this report appeared concerning the Victorian Government, which, too, is a Labor Government. The report says—

> "Families earning between $150 and $200 a week will be eligible for a home-ownership scheme announced yesterday by the Victorian Government.
>
> The Government has set aside $20m for the program to give low-income earners, including the unemployed and single-parent families, easy access to their own home.
>
> The Housing Minister, Mr Cathie, said up to 500 families eligible for the scheme should be able to own their own home up to a value of about $50,000."

Mr Cathie went on to say that house repayments would be limited to one-quarter of the person's income.

Activities have been clearly initiated by Labor Governments to make it easier for low-income-earners to achieve home-ownership. I believe that it is the goal of most Australians, if not all Australians, to own their own home. However, as members of Parliament, we have to accept that there are those in the community who, in many cases through no fault of their own, will never achieve home-ownership. Governments have a responsibility to ensure that secure and permanent accommodation is provided. That is probably the most basic of needs. Many of the other social problems that need attention can be overcome if people live in permanent accommodation.

Previous speakers referred to a matter to which I also wish to refer, namely, the reasons for the reduction in the availability of low-cost accommodation. A change has taken place in the development of our cities. Initially, the population spread out into the suburbs. That resulted in low-cost accommodation being left in the central city area, where it was close to all the services provided by large cities. That seemed to work out fairly well. The people who established themselves in the suburbs could afford cars in which to travel to and from the city. Almost by accident, persons on low incomes who did not have those facilities obtained accommodation in the inner-city area. That situation has now been reversed.

The member for Cairns referred to tourist developments. To some extent his remarks can be applied to Townsville. Tourist accommodation and other tourist facilities are being provided in the inner-city area, and low-cost accommodation is being replaced. It has become trendy for people to purchase older-style homes in the central business area and in inner-city suburbs. The availability of boarding houses and low-cost accommodation is being seriously reduced. Where do the people in that type of accommodation go?

In Townsville, a group known as Family Emergency Accommodation Townsville (FEAT) has been established. The statistics provided by that group show that from January 1981 to June 1984 the single most important primary cause of housing problems is that the cost of private rental accommodation is beyond people's means. In June 1981, 13 families were seeking emergency accommodation for that reason. In December

1981, the number had increased to 30. It peaked in June 1983 at 102, and in June 1984, 87 families were seeking emergency accommodation because the record cost of private rental accommodation was beyond their means.

As I said at the outset, in such situations it is incumbent upon Governments to intervene to provide low-cost accommodation for those people. Matters that must be considered in conjunction with that are the level of social security benefits and the increase in the number of unemployed living on unemployment benefits who simply cannot pay the rentals that are asked by private property-owners.

I said earlier that the Federal Government has initiated a program to increase substantially the amount of public housing that is available. I note that a new housing agreement will include the following initiatives—

> "Youths and singles will now be eligible for public housing assistance. Rents for public housing tenants will be based on costs instead of market value.
>
> Public housing tenants will be able to purchase their homes through a rental purchase programme.
>
> Community groups and local government will be given assistance to provide for specific housing needs such as boarding house accommodation, group housing and housing for single people."

The Minister for Works and Housing has not been one of the Ministers in the Queensland Government who has taken to bucketing the Federal Government, as some of his colleagues have done. From that I would assume that he is happy with the level of Federal funding for housing. The document continues—

> "In 1984-85 the Federal Government will provide some $623 million for public housing . . . All Federal funding in 1984-85 will be provided by way of grants. When the Federal funds are combined with State Government expenditure, a record level in real terms of $1.5 billion will be spent on public housing in 1984-85.
>
> The increase in funding together with the renegotiation of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement will provide the basis for a substantial increase in the number of public dwellings."

The Commonwealth is playing its part. I assume that the Queensland Government will play its part as well.

An enormous increase in public housing stock in Queensland is necessary to overcome the problems raised by me and previous speakers on this side of the House. The Opposition spokesman and the member for Bundaberg referred to the Queensland Government's performance in the provision of public housing. They referred to figures. I have obtained similar information based on a different set of figures. The figures that I have relate to the number of public dwellings per 1 000 population. In Queensland the figure is 8.7 per 1 000, compared with the Australian average of 16. South Australia and the Northern Territory have the highest figures of 36.2 and 40 respectively. Quite clearly, Queensland is a long way behind the other States in providing public housing.

As members are aware, a number of emergency schemes are available in most cities. I have already referred to one scheme in Townsville—Family Emergency Accommodation Townsville. Families are flooding emergency accommodation agencies. FEAT is presently receiving applications at the rate of 45 to 50 per month. Those families have no accommodation at all. They are living in totally unfavourable circumstances, either economically or socially. The need for more housing is obviously urgent.

Family Emergency Accommodation Townsville figures indicate that single supporting parents are emerging as the group most in need of accommodation. In June 1981 the figure was 37. By December 1982 it had risen to 132. In June 1984 the figure was 150, which is higher than all the other groups put together.

Another housing problem experienced in Townsville—I suppose it is evident in other places as well—concerns black families. Figures supplied by FEAT indicate that of the 87 families currently housed in its emergency accommodation, 38 are black families. There are many reasons for that. Incidentally, that figure is high in spite of the number of Aboriginal and Islander housing schemes and hostels. The answer, as I said earlier, is to be found in the provision of more public housing.

I agree with the comment made by the member for Windsor about the design and type of public housing. Everyone knows that Housing Commission accommodation has become very stereotyped. There is something of a stigma about it. In fact, the submission by the Australian Social Workers Union on the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement made the point that public housing is a residual welfare activity by the Government. As long as that continues, the stigma will remain.

That makes the point that public housing currently carries the stigma of being the last resort. I recall mentioning in my contribution in the Budget debate that to obtain most types of welfare assistance a person really has to establish that he has something wrong with him. That certainly holds true with welfare housing. For instance, a woman has to state in a form that she is unemployed, that she has left her husband or that her husband has been violent. She has to establish that she has something wrong with her before she can get welfare accommodation. That that stigma cannot be removed and public housing cannot be made available to those who really need it is a great shame.

The submission also states—

> "To note that most low income people aspire to home ownership in the current housing climate is inadequate. In fact, most ordinary people (low income or not) aspire to the benefits of home ownership: privacy (eg. freedom from bureaucracy); autonomy (eg. freedom to decorate, choice of location, choice of household composition); and affordability. Capital gains as such do not generally feature very highly in most peoples 'desire' to own. All those benefits can and should be the right of public tenants.
>
> We believe that such subsidisation of private landlords with public money is contradictory to the need to expand the public housing sector, and is an ad hoc response which will most likely only increase the problems and squander huge amounts of money without any return. We therefore suggest that the primary strategy towards achieving housing justice is housing price control.
>
> A viable, attractive, affordable public housing sector combined with adequate social security policies should enable the gradual withdrawal of public subsidisation of private purchase over time."

The member for Surfers Paradise indicated that Queensland's waiting-list was as low as that in any of the other States. In fact, that is correct. However, I wish to quote from a report compiled by W. D. Scott & Co. Pty Ltd, management consultants, on homelessness and inadequate housing in Australia on behalf of the Australian Department of Housing and Construction. The report states—

> "Waiting lists are not a good indicator of total need. They may undercount those in need as some are unaware that they can apply for public housing or are discouraged from applying by long waiting times and perceptions of unfavourable community attitudes to public housing.
>
> Waiting lists do not afford a basis for State-by-State comparison. Eligibility for public housing varies from State to State, as do administrative practices. Some States test for eligibility on application, others at interview; the size of the public rental stock, turnover of tenants and public image of the housing authority in each State can also affect the volume of application.

The rate of increase in the number of applicants does indicate, broadly, the growing need for public housing.

Between June 1980 and March 1984 State Housing Authority waiting lists grew from 100,000 to 130,000 applications."

The management consultants tried to assess the true position of waiting-lists by the use of some census data. Some assumptions were made, but the conclusion was—

"On this basis, an estimated 350,000 people are within the eligibility requirements for public housing but are renting privately. This amounts to some 37% of private renters, or 7.7% of all Australian households: or more than 1½ times the total number of households already in public housing. Some of these households are already on waiting lists, but a majority are not, for reasons which could include: ignorance of entitlements, discouragement at long waiting times, stigma attached to public housing, unwillingness to disrupt social contacts or children's education, emotional attachment to present dwelling, or private market rent levels at an affordable price."

Although I acknowledge that the waiting time in Queensland compares favourably with those in other States, the report indicates that that does not necessarily mean that there is not a much greater need.

Finally, I refer to a workshop conducted in Townsville to comment on the Scott report. That workshop listed a number of trends, and I propose to pick out some of the more notable ones. I suppose that some are obvious to members, but I think they are worth repeating. The workshop found a trend to—

"Increasing student numbers and declining availability of college accommodation is placing additional pressure on the private rental sector.

Increasing number of people on benefits and pensions and the inadequacy of benefit and pension incomes to cover accommodation.

Over 40 or 50 years there has been a move away from traditional boarding places in the central city—"

which I mentioned earlier—

"and there has been no new facility replacing that loss.

There is a trend to de-institutionalisation and the normalisation of elderly and otherwise handicapped people."

That trend is to keep those people in their own homes for much longer than perhaps used to be the case. The list continues—

"Increasing number of households requiring accommodation arising from changing family structures.

Increasing unemployment.

Increasing unemployment leading to large families being unable to afford housing."

The workshop also made the valid point that—

"Unemployment is now reaching into middle class families."

So unemployment is no longer the province of the poor. The workshop also found that—

"Overall there is a growing need for more appropriate housing.

The cost of housing is outstripping people's ability to pay for housing."

I am sure that all members are aware of the problem of most young married couples requiring two incomes before they can get anywhere near buying a home on the private market. The workshop then referred to—

"Increasing government regulation and interference is reducing available supply of houses. For instance, Council regulations now prohibit the use of caravan parks as permanent living places.

Increasing number of youths leaving home earlier and less well equipped to cope with independent living.

Increasing family breakdowns.

Increasing mobility amongst people especially young job-seekers

Higher expectations.

In the private rental sector in particular the rapid increases in the amounts necessary for the housing bond for electricity bonds, for advances in rents combine to make entry to private rental sector very difficult."

So all of those trends identified by that workshop are placing additional pressure on the public housing rental market.

As I said, the Government appears to be placing more emphasis on the rental side of the public housing sector. The figures clearly indicate that a considerable amount of additional funding needs to be provided for public housing. As I have said, I believe that the Federal Government is clearly showing the way by the allocation of funds that it has made, and I am hoping that the Queensland Government, if it has not already done so, will accept and approve the new Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement.

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie) (5.37 p.m.): Every member realises how important is the assistance given by the Queensland Housing Commission to single parents, the aged and people in great financial difficulty. Unfortunately, the demand for welfare housing is increasing, and that is noticeable from the number of inquiries made to my electorate office. Sometimes I get the impression that people's expectations are far higher than their needs. Many people seem to think that they can demand subsidised rental accommodation on a whim. They do not realise that there are others in greater need who have a higher priority. A deserted wife with two or three children would certainly be allocated a higher priority than a person finding it a little difficult to meet his financial commitments.

It would be wonderful if cheaper rental housing could be provided. It would be even better if the private sector could provide it. But, unfortunately, housing is very expensive and, if those who provide housing cannot defray their costs, neither the commission nor the private sector will be able to meet the demand for rental accommodation. The commission is to be commended for the encouragement that it gives to people to own their home.

I commend the Federal Government on the initiative that it took to introduce the first home buyers scheme in October last year.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr STEPHAN: It has been a success, but why is the Federal Government trying to dismantle it? As soon as the bird starts to fly the Federal Government wants to clip its wings. The introduction of the scheme had a great impact on the building industry. There was an 11 per cent increase in the number of houses built in the quarter ended 30 June this year compared with the number built in the quarter ended 30 June last year, but the increase is only about 2 per cent for the quarter ended 30 September this year compared with the quarter ended 30 September last year. That is a direct result of the cut-back in the scheme.

It would have taken a great deal of courage for the Federal Government to introduce the first home buyers scheme. It should have realised that a large number of people would take advantage of the scheme. That is what has happened.

It is encouraging to note that the Queensland Housing Commission is continuing its interest subsidy scheme. However, the amount of money available under that scheme is not sufficient to meet the demand. A large number of people, particularly in the younger age groups, are making inquiries and applications for assistance under the interest subsidy scheme. It is enabling people to obtain their own home. I commend the commission for continuing with the scheme and I point out that the assistance is appreciated.

The present trend is to provide accommodation for elderly people in detached houses or pensioner units. Even though pensioner units may be small, they certainly are suitable for older people who do not want to spend a great deal of money on furniture or a great deal of time in keeping the units clean. Pensioners are able to live in them in reasonably comfortable surroundings, and their friends are able to visit them. If, after the death of a spouse, the remaining partner wants to take a good deal of furniture into one of those units, he might find that it is too small.

There is certainly a great demand for pensioner units. There is no great problem in filling them. In fact, there is no problem in filling any subsidised housing.

Mr Vaughan: How do you get them?

Mr STEPHAN: It depends on the demand. Some people in the city seem to think that the demand for pensioner units or subsidised housing exists only in city areas. The demand is everywhere. There are as many housing problems in provincial areas as there are in city areas.

I commend the Minister for allowing the money that has been paid in rent to be credited towards the purchase price when people freehold Housing Commission leases. However, I am concerned about the number of people who will be able to take advantage of this freeholding arrangement, bearing in mind the value that will be placed on the land. I believe that there is a problem in this area. Land values have increased dramatically, and I wonder whether the correct procedure is being adopted. The purchase price is the market value of the land.

I cite as an example a case in which a house, but not the land, was bought from the Housing Commission. When the house changed ownership the new owners found that although they owned the house, they did not own the land on which it is situated. To rectify that anomaly, they must pay market value for the land. I am concerned that the market value of land is so high that some people may not be able to meet it.

I compliment the Minister on the introduction of the Bill and I wish him success with it through the House.

Mr FOURAS (South Brisbane) (5.46 p.m.): I was appalled to hear the leader of the Liberal Party (Sir William Knox) state—if I may paraphrase him—that public housing was a socialist plot. That statement is typical of a true conservative—not a liberal. He was wearing ideological blinkers. From this side there is no argument against the contention that people prefer to own their own home and want to choose where they will live in rental accommodation. Housing Commission accommodation is situated mainly in the wrong places.

Does the honourable member for Nundah suggest that people in my electorate who are on social security benefits can afford to buy or rent in the private market? Perhaps he is not in his office long enough to talk to these people, but does he not understand that the real poor in our society are not those on social security benefits but those who have to rent a home while on social security benefits? The concept of public housing involves subsidising rents. Does the honourable member for Nundah not accept that the

right to shelter and security, which comes with a secure roof over one's head, is a fundamental right in our society? Does he not accept that any society that does not do everything to minimise and mitigate the social disadvantage of a lack of housing cannot claim to be truly democratic?

A Liberal parliamentarian who does not subscribe to that philosophy is not a true liberal; he is a tory. It is no wonder that the Liberal Party in this State is without direction. Because it does not know what it is, it does not know where it is going. That is a shocking indictment of the Liberal Party.

Governments should be innovative and they should support community initiatives and give people the best possible chance to participate in making decisions on problems affecting them. One of the Government's major thrusts should be the development and strengthening of community housing programs in which local community groups, consumers and tenants participate directly by managing housing, which is financed or provided by the State, and by the provision of services to determine local or regional housing needs.

In Queensland, it is unfortunate that community housing has been neglected totally by a generation of conservative Governments preoccupied with a centralised and bureaucratic model of housing provision that has patently failed. It is time to experiment with decentralised management because it offers enormous potential for the future development of more flexible, responsive and satisfactory housing policies. The Queensland Government has allocated $340,000 for community housing in this year's Budget, but States such as Victoria have been allocating tens of millions of dollars over a number of years.

Rental housing associations that are based on the Victorian model are community-based and tenant-managed forms of housing with strong ties to the local community and local authority. As the experience of the pioneering Fitzroy/Collingwood Rental Housing Association shows, cost-efffective ways exist to provide secure housing in a context that enhances housing satisfaction and the opportunities for participation of the tenants.

The Fitzroy/Collingwood Rental Housing Association was initiated by community groups and local councils. It was convened by the Brotherhood of St Lawrence and supported eventually by the then Liberal Government. If one draws an analogy between the comments of Sir William Knox and the actions of the Liberal Government in Victoria in implementing such a policy, one can understand the difference between true liberals and hard-baked tories.

It is time that the State Government piloted a program for a number of rental housing associations in areas in which both a need and an expressed community interest are present. I am involved with a community centre in East Brisbane. Because of concern for two aged people, who for 20 years had lived in a house whose owner was forced to sell, and because their church, senior citizens group, local pub and friends were close by, the community centre bought the house and kept those people on as tenants. They would have been totally destroyed emotionally if they had had to shift. The same community centre has acquired an unused convent for use as emergency housing. That is an example of the concern and goodwill that is shown by the community. If that concern and goodwill were supported by proper funding, as occurred in Victoria, a good deal could be achieved to alleviate the problems that confront many people in need of housing.

With a view to the possible extension of present public housing estates, a special policy unit to monitor development of rental housing associations ought to be set up. In the long term, if pilot programs are effective and people understand that they can control their housing by proper application of the rules and by making sure that the rent is paid, the quality of housing and standard of upkeep will be improved. That could

result in breaking down the bureaucratic maze that presently exists in the Queensland Housing Commission.

It is very important to do that, but even more than that should be done. Funds should also be provided for the establishment of a rental housing advice service, such as the one that exists in Victoria. The service could offer help and advice to groups interested in forming associations. It is very important for people who are seeking housing and have experienced problems—in many cases, many of them are low income earners who attend my office and the offices of my colleagues—have access to inexpensive and unbiased advice. Lack of readily available advice is a problem.

In Queensland, no such Government advice is provided. Its provision has been left to a few community-based groups. A tenant advice service is urgently needed. Although other State Governments fund such services to varying degrees, the Queensland Government ignores the plight of tenants.

A case study carried out by the Fitzroy/Collingwood Rental Housing Association reads—

> "From the Fitzroy/Collingwood experience, it is clear that where tenants have security of tenure and control over their own housing, not only are they happier, but they are also willing to put time, effort and their own money into improving their houses."

That demonstrates what can be done by breaking down a monolithic structure.

I concede that that cannot be done overnight. Nevertheless the Government should set up pilot programs that would allow community groups, such as the one I am involved with in East Brisbane, to gain access to funds to establish a core of public housing. The groups should be allowed to manage it. The Government would get its money back.

It is time that the Government did more than allocate a small amount of money as first-off funding. The problem requires more than initial funding; it also requires resources to go with it. It is vital that the Government move towards the concept of providing public housing in response to people's needs. It should distribute facilities to the community generally. I hope that, as time goes by, the Minister will do something about that.

Mr PRICE (Mount Isa) (5.53 p.m.): I shall be specific, parochial and pragmatic. The Bill is commendable, and its introduction is not before time.

This particular section of the Minister's portfolio is wide-ranging because it has psychological implications and enters into the welfare field. Nothing is more emotionally charged than the plight of a homeless family. Enormous changes have occurred in society following the advent of quickie divorces and marriages, the huge threat to the very corner-stones of society and the wide-ranging implications for both adults and children. The importance of this section is underrated. It is certainly underfunded.

As the member for Surfers Paradise (Mr Borbidge) said earlier, more funding is not necessarily the answer. Elevation of its importance in the Budget is certainly needed. The thrust of my comments will be along the lines of the utilitarian aspect of the houses that come under the administration of the Department of Works.

Two Opposition members mentioned catering to the needs of the occupiers. Apart from giving them shelter, their other needs must be considered. I refer to houses north of the 26th parallel and west of the Great Dividing Range. Recently, public service housing in those regions was allocated one portable air-conditioner for each bedroom. That is a good start. With the haranguing that went on between members on both sides of the House over those air-conditioners, I wonder whether it was worth while. The Department of Works spent approximately $330,000 providing those air-conditioners for public service housing. I commend the Minister for making a start in that direction.

I contacted the Minister's office and tried desperately to get him to think twice about the matter. By the time I knew about it, it was far too late. Because of their

uselessness, those portable air-conditioners of that type were discarded approximately 15 years ago in the western region in which I live. The air-conditioners were hand-filled, and a jug was used to place water in the back of the unit. If one wanted a cool room or to use the air-conditioner in a room overnight, one had to get out of bed virtually every hour to place a jugful of water in the machine. If the door was closed and the air-conditioner was turned on, the humidity in the room gradually increased, particularly in the north-western areas of the State where the average relative humidity was around 16 per cent and the day-time temperature often exceeded 40 degrees.

Last year, for a three-month period the temperature in Mount Isa was higher than 40 degrees. Under those conditions, once an air-conditioner is operated in a closed bedroom, the relief is only minimal. The relief lasts for only a couple of hours. One must then consider the alternatives—get out of bed and refill the machine, or change the humidity in the room by opening the window, which, of course, starts the cycle all over again. The air-conditioning unit must be directed at a person so that some relief can be obtained. If one's wife is working at a sewing machine, if one is lying in bed, or if one has a baby to cool down, the machine must be turned to the highest setting in order to provide any relief.

At the time, I mentioned in my criticism the particular logistical problem that would be faced by the Works Department in shifting the machines from place to place. I cited an example of a teacher who was transferred from the coast to Mount Isa. He telephoned me and said, "With my furniture, I have six bags of cement. What do I do?" When the teacher left the house that had been allocated to him on the coast, the officers of the Works Department were laying a concrete floor. The removalists come in, saw the six bags of cement underneath the house, packed them up with the teacher's luggage and took them all the way to Mount Isa. Fortunately, the Works Department knew exactly what to do with them. That is the type of situation that will arise——

Mr Innes: Would you call that a concrete example?

Mr PRICE: Yes. That is a concrete example of what can happen with those machines when one tries to trace them throughout the State. There are hundreds of them.

Despite that, quite a few public service houses already had air-conditioning of one type or another. The more inventive of the teachers or the public servants who had been in the west for some time had already installed some form of air-conditioning. The public servants or teachers who stayed or the new staff who came in took over the ownership or bought from the previous occupier of the house the air-conditioning unit that had been installed. Not very many houses have refrigerated air-conditioning. Of course, that is ideal in western areas. With such a low relative humidity, a humidifier is sufficient. When I refer to air-conditioning in the west, I mean a simple humidifier—something to put moisture into the air to lower the temperature. A basic unit has been built and made popular over the years in western areas. It operates on a cubic-feet-per-minute basis. A normal three-bedroom home would have a 6 000 CFM unit.

Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.15 p.m.

Mr PRICE: Before the recess for dinner, I referred to the inadequacies of Queensland Housing Commission facilities in areas north of the 26th parallel and west of the Great Dividing Range. I referred to the department's delivering portable air-conditioners to public service houses approximately a month ago. During that exercise, many units, still in unopened cartons, found their way into downstairs laundries and storage rooms.

I have written to the Minister—I hope to receive a reply shortly—about the use of the surplus portable air-conditioners. They could be put to use in schools in my part of the north-west that are not air-conditioned.

I have been harping about one school—Kalkadoon High School—since I entered Parliament last year. It is a very attractive brick school building, obviously designed for the coast of Queensland. It is probably the envy of many schools in south-east Queensland.

It is unreasonable to expect children to participate in class-room activities in that school without air-conditioning. I have spoken continually about the temperatures that are experienced. The children and teachers sometimes take lessons outside the school building, even chasing the shade around the building, in order to obtain some relief from the debilitating effects of the heat. As I have mentioned previously, last year the temperatures in that region were in the 40s for three months.

There might be a surplus of about 100 portable air-conditioners. If they were to be returned to the Works Department—and this is a suggestion only—they could be installed in the schools for at least three months, providing temporary relief.

This year, the heat at Kalkadoon High School is so bad that I have had to obtain air-conditioned premises in which the senior classes can sit for their examinations at the end of the year. It has been necessary not only to ask the p. & c. association for educational necessities but also to ask outside organisations to accommodate the school kids for their examinations in the hotter months. The parents and citizens association of Kalkadoon High School has already brought in whatever portable air-conditioners it could scrounge in the district. However, the number so far is not enough. I ask the Minister to consider the matter. Perhaps the surplus portable air-conditioners could be used in that school.

As I mentioned before, approximately $330,000 was spent on portable air-conditioners. For that amount, approximately 200 homes could have been air-conditioned in the correct manner—not with portables—with lasting benefits.

In my maiden speech last year, I mentioned that it would be possible to establish an industry in the western region to manufacture portable air-conditioners. It would certainly create jobs. Mount Isa has facilities that could be utilised to manufacture humidifiers on the spot. The ducting could be built on the spot, too.

Humidifiers for Housing Commission houses and schools in those regions are supplied by tender. However, for Housing Commission houses, the State Stores Board could make a bulk purchase of them. Most humidifers are made on assembly lines in places such as Adelaide. If large numbers could be purchased by the State Stores Board and if the ducting were done locally and installed in Housing Commission houses, a rental of only $10 per week could be charged. That would not be a great burden on the occupiers of these homes and would cover the cost of supplying the humidifiers. Over a period the outlay could be returned to the Government. If humidifiers are looked after correctly, they will give a lifetime of service. After a 10-year period the cost of any maintenance could be paid for out of the $10 levy.

The survey I conducted in Mount Isa resulted in a 100 per cent agreement to the $10 levy. So the people in Housing Commission houses would accept that impost to obtain relief from the heat. Really, to appreciate the need for humidifiers, honourable members would have to experience the heat in Housing Commission houses, which are ill-designed for western areas.

Of a summer afternoon, when the temperature is 40 degrees and the kids have come home from school, I have watched mothers trying to get them to do their homework. The kids have sweat streaming down their faces and look at their mothers with a stupid, far-away look. They really do not understand why they have to suffer those conditions and why they do not want to do their homework. They do not know why their mother is always harping at them. They cannot get anything done. Of course, all of that is the result of the inadequately designed Housing Commission houses.

I never cease to wonder at their architectural design. I know they are of simple design, that the materials required to build then are probably the cheapest available, and that the Government obviously wants value for money. Perhaps the three-bedroomed houses with fibro roof and fibro walls are apparent value, at least for people in the south-east corner of the State. However, in the north-western areas of the State those houses shut out all the available breezes and are totally impractical. They are not

insulated. I am sure that the architects who design them must come from some other country, because there is no way in the world that they are designed for western regions.

Recently on television I saw an advertisement for the bulk purchase of insulation batts at a dollar a piece at K mart or somewhere else. Not more than 100 of those would be needed to insulate the ceiling of one house.

Because requests for Housing Commission houses come from a variety of areas, the department should have four or five different designs. There is a need for Aboriginal housing in areas such as Dajarra and Mornington Island. The Housing Commission houses built on Mornington Island are the same as those built in Mount Isa. Somebody mentioned that the cyclone that went through Mornington Island caused $1m worth of benefit. That is probably true because all the old humpies were blown away. The type of three-bedroomed Housing Commission houses that are supplied everywhere else in the State were built on Mornington Island, the only difference being that the flooring was of marine ply. In a humid area, marine ply absorbs moisture, begins to bulge and, after a while, breaks up, leaving holes in the floor. Of course, kids are always kicking holes in the fibro walls. The commission must consider the suitability of the houses for the areas in which they are placed.

That item was mentioned in the House by one of my colleagues the member for Ipswich (Mr Hamill) on 11 October. Now that he has visited that region, he is appreciative of the difficulties. Perhaps Mr Wharton might take a trip there. If he comes to Mount Isa, I will gladly fly him to Doomadgee. It would be no trouble at all.

Mr Wharton: Any time.

Mr PRICE: I will hold the Minister to that.

The money is already being spent, and the only thing that is needed is a little imagination to overcome the problems in the first instance. Because of the isolation of the north west, the Government believes that Murphy's law applies. No matter what material is sent to the area, it always seem to cost twice as much, and there is a feeling within the Government that if something can go wrong, it will.

I have been told by the department that it is reluctant to build houses in the Mount Isa area because it is a mining region. Although it has a population of only 25 000, the waiting-list for Housing Commission homes is 160 and, in what is probably a record for the State, 60 per cent of those on the list are single-parent families. Yet little regard is paid to the building of one-bedroom fully contained flats.

As I said recently, on Mornington Island and at Doomadgee the ratio of people per dwelling is about 10 to 1 and 12 to 1 respectively. It is almost impossible for metropolitan members to comprehend the one-bedroom humpies in which the people there have to live. There are really galvanised iron shacks with no doors, windows or lights, only one tap outside and a concrete block floor. Of course, there are no sewerage facilities. Yet 10 people live in and around them. A hammock is slung from the back of the building to a nearby tree. In the winter months wind-breaks are built and a fire is built outside so that everbody can crowd round it and benefit from the warmth.

I challenge anybody to show me a more deprived community than Doomadgee anywhere in Queensland, or even Australia. I really have never seen anything as bad. People live inside and outside the dwellings. They really use the dwelling only for a bit of shelter when it rains. Because the shacks are built on the river-bank, they are flooded out, anyway, and the people have to go back into the bush. They are only looking for a little security and some home comforts; at least a decent roof over their heads to keep out the rain.

Within the last month I have mentioned the township of Gunpowder. I believe that a number of departments, including that of the Minister, are looking at the 91 houses in that township that are to be sold on the 14th and 15th of this month. Tenders are being called at the moment. The Minister's department would do well to acquire some

of those houses. The majority are Planet homes which can be split down the middle and easily transported. Considering the high cost of building at a place such as Doomadgee, those homes could be re-erected on stumps in Doomadgee for half the cost of an ordinary house. They are sturdily constructed, even though some of them are kit homes. There will be keen competition for them, and I believe that some are destined for Mount Isa. I cannot see why the Government could not obtain some for Doomadgee.

The home-building program there is sufficient only to cater for the normal yearly population increase and does not solve the overall problem. If all of those 91 homes were given to Doomadgee, the housing problem would be just about solved. But I understand that there will be competition for those homes from Mount Isa, Dajarra, Cloncurry, Doomadgee and Mornington Island. I am crossing my fingers and toes in the hope that the Government has enough wisdom to buy as many of these homes as it can.

In conclusion, I ask the Minister, firstly, to look at the whole housing situation in the north west; secondly, to conduct an architectural study of the style of housing suitable for western conditions, taking into account the life-style of the people who live in the houses; and, thirdly, to provide a basic need in the west, which is the air-conditioning of homes.

Hon. C. A. WHARTON (Burnett—Minister for Works and Housing) (7.31 p.m.), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their contributions and for their general acceptance of the Bill. Housing is important, and those honourable members who spoke in the debate emphasised that point. Many members did not confine their remarks to the Bill; indeed, they talked about many matters outside the Bill, the provisions of which are not very wide.

The honourable member for Rockhampton North spoke about the conversion of leasehold land to freehold land. He had no complaint about the provision in the Act. However, he expressed concern that the rent rebates would apply to businesses on leasehold land. I assure all honourable members that no businesses are involved. The leases are town leases on which houses have been built. It is true that a few houses have been purchased and the leasehold land held converted to business purposes. I do not know how many properties fall into that category, but I believe that fewer than five properties are involved. As I said, they are exceptions and the commission will write to those businesses and seek agreement to convert the leases to freehold title.

There are 1 140 leasehold residences throughout the State. There are 90 in Brisbane, of which 80 are of the old workers' dwellings type, and 400 in Mount Isa. We want to try to get those people to freehold their properties. Many acquired a perpetual lease property, assuming that the land was freehold.

The honourable member for Rockhampton North also criticised the income-based rent system in operation in Queensland. He spoke of a maximum rent of $135 a week. Let me put the picture straight. The facts are that 77 per cent of all tenants pay less than $50 a week. It may surprise the honourable member to learn that only 7 per cent of tenants pay more than $80 a week, and of that percentage only 1 per cent pay more that $110 a week. That is hardly the disaster situation that the honourable member suggested. My colleague the honourable member for Surfers Paradise has responded to the criticism of the income-based rent system. I thank him for his contribution.

As honourable members know, this Government believes in giving help when it is needed and progressively withdrawing it as the needs pass. I know that the Opposition has other views and that the new Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement reflects those views. However, there is no escaping the fact that someone must pay for such policies. Most responsible members realise that we are running out of people who can pay.

The honourable member for Rockhampton North spoke about everything except the Bill that we have before us. Obviously he supports its clauses and has taken this

opportunity to launch into other issues which, even though irrelevant, require an answer from me.

The honourable member spoke on the mortgage and rent relief scheme. Honourable members must appreciate that one-third of the funds has been spent on the purchase of crisis accommodation.The Government is increasing the availability of this type of housing, and the demand for tenancy establishments is increasing every week. More crisis housing is being added to the stock and, with the recently extended rent assistance, the allocation for 1984-85 should be spent in full. I suggest that the honourable member should look at the details of the scheme in Queensland and admit that the guide-lines are soundly based and adhere to the basic principle of welfare distribution, which relates to the provision of help where and when needed.

The honourable member for Rockhampton North also spoke about rentals bonds, probably without appreciating that the mortgage and rent relief scheme has been extended to include bond guarantees for persons wishing to establish private tenancies.

The scheme has been in operation for only one week, but the Housing Commission already has received 20 applications for bond guarantees. The bond board is a matter for my colleague the Honourable Minister for Justice and Attorney-General. However, I must say that the bond boards in other States are not the success stories that Opposition members lead us to believe. My department has considered bond boards from every angle and I cannot accept that they do a better job. In Queensland, the bonds are guarantees, and problems do not arise with trying to get money back from the bond issued.

Mr Yewdale spoke also about the letting of contracts, especially house/land package tenders in the Chappell estate in the Ipswich city area. Let me put the record straight. The successful tenderer was G. Barry Kelly for 16 houses at an average cost of $47,300 per house. The tender from Action Centre Realty Pty Ltd was for seven houses on the same land. Action Realty's price was $49,472.78 per house, which is $2,100 more than G. Barry Kelly's tender. I fail to see how the honourable member can suggest that favourtism occurred when, in fact, the lowest tender was accepted. I do not know what else I can do. I do not think that it had anything to do with Greg Chappell or anyone else. I think that the honourable member is a little bushed in north Rockhampton.

I do not know what the honourable member for Rockhampton North knows about rental co-operatives. However, it is obvious that he has not researched this subject. Can he assure the House that more housing will be provided for money spent? Does he realise that the only way to distribute housing equitably to low-income persons is from a common wait-list? That happens in Victoria, but it is not generally realised in Queensland by rental co-operative organisations. I have said on a number of occasions that Queensland will consider rental co-operatives if it can be shown that they are an economic and viable alternative and that more housing will be provided. That is the key issue.

I will be interested in the results of the research that is proceeding into rental co-operatives in Victoria. Queensland needs more houses to solve the housing shortage. The Government is proceeding towards that objective.

I ask honourable members to consider the Government's record. The rental housing provided has increased each year as have home-ownership loans. Under the Government's policies, all of that housing is going to people in need.

The honourable member for Surfers Paradise brought sweet reason back into the debate. I applaud him for his contribution. He has his feet on the ground and can recognise fact from fiction.

The contribution by the honourable member for Townsville South did not relate to the Bill and had nothing to do with the Queensland Housing Commission. I will not waste the time of the House by commenting further.

The honourable member for Cooroora reminded the House of the necessity for the community to act responsibly and to do as much as possible for itself. The commission exists for the benefit of those who cannot meet the commitments demanded by the community.

The honourable member for Cooroora reminded us also of the place held by home-ownership in our society. Most people want to own their own home. Research has shown that over 74 per cent of all persons seeking State rental accommodation want home-ownership. The percentage would be even higher if those on low incomes had sufficient confidence to express themselves. The commissions's home-ownership scheme gives families who would otherwise be renters of public housing the opportunity to be home-owners. Without doubt that scheme has eased the demand for rental housing. The provision of a house under home-ownership finance is just as effective as providing a renter with a house. Opposition members do not accept that fact. They speak only about the provision of rental housing on the basis of dollars per head of population. The money that is provided for home-ownership should also be included.

The honourable member for Bundaberg spoke about the mortgage and rent relief scheme. I will repeat the comments that I have made on that scheme. Far from being unworkable and ineffective as the honourable member claims, the scheme has already provided valuable assistance since it came into operation approximately one year ago. Welfare agencies helping homeless people into welfare accommodation have generally acknowledged the positive role that the rent relief scheme has played.

During the last financial year, the State Government, through the Queensland Housing Commission, spent a total of $3.05m in the mortgage and rent relief scheme. Of that, $2.1m was for the purchase of additonal crisis accommodation that has been made available to community groups helping homeless people into more stable housing situations.

By the end of the financial year, the total number of crisis houses made available to these bodies throughout Queensland stood at more than 100. That is more than double the number of a year earlier.

In the 12 months to the middle of October this year, the commission also approved rent relief for a total of more than 500 applicants. At present, the commission is making available approximately $6,500 a week in rental subsidies to help such people. Through the scheme that has operated until now, the commission has 287 rental bond guarantees with a total value of $82,500. That sum has been approved for assistance to people who have moved into rental premises following housing crisis situations. That is the situation to date.

The Government's new initiatives have been taken as part of an ongoing review of the scheme. These new steps will provide even more assistance to those in need of housing. The scheme has operated until now with very little delay being experienced by people in smaller country areas who are seeking assistance. With the expansion of the assistance scheme, my department is planning to handle applications for assistance through local regional offices of the Housing Commission.

The honourable member for Bundaberg said that the rental relief scheme had failed because it had not been publicised. I inform honourable members that I have continued to publicise the moves taken to provide housing through this scheme, and at the end of September, the latest action taken in Bundaberg was to publicise the fact that two more residences would be purchased for crisis housing purposes. Of course, the honourable member has his story in the "News-Mail" every week.

Mr Campbell: The Minister does not use paid advertisements.

Mr WHARTON: The honourable member does not have to advertise. He merely has to go to the "News-Mail", and his story is published pronto—incorrectly half of the time, too.

The purchase of two additional residences will bring the total number of crisis houses provided in Bundaberg to five.

I wonder whether the honourable member for Bundaberg realises that people cannot legally enter into any agreement until they reach the age of 18 years. Provided that one applicant in the group is 18 years of age or over, the scheme provides that the group can enter into a tenancy agreement.

The need for bond guarantees in the case of young people was discussed with youth officers from the Division of Youth Affairs. At least 17 church and associated organisations are satisfied that a need exists for bond guarantees for youths, and that the bond guarantees will suffice.

The honourable member for Nundah spoke about bond boards, and I am pleased to note his remarks. I thank him for helping Opposition members towards gaining a better understanding of the problems that arise from the operation of these boards. The honourable member also supported the benefits of home-ownership.

Like his colleagues, the honourable member for Cairns ignored the Bill and spoke on general housing issues, particularly on mortgage and rent relief and income-based rent. I have already dealt with the mortgage and rent relief scheme in some detail. However, the honourable member has asked about the new bond guarantee provisions of the scheme, which is aimed at assisting those persons sharing accommodation to move into private rental housing of their own. As I have said, even though the scheme is only a week old, and complete details are still to be forwarded and displayed throughout Queensland, over 20 applications have been received.

It should not be forgotten that over 100 crisis houses have been provided throughout Queensland and that the number will be more than doubled during this financial year. The number of crisis houses should also increase through the extended scheme offered to extend bonds and rent subsidies to local authorities and community organisations.

Research into the scheme before it was extended showed that the majority of organisations and persons who responded were in favour of the scheme and that it was effective.

The honourable member is concerned about the formula for the income-based rent system. He considers that the income of children should not be taken into account when calculating a tenant's rent. However, he fails to acknowledge that the child's rent is a percentage of his income and is added to the tenant's rent. A working child under 19 years of age is asked to pay $8.50 rent, and between the ages of 19 and 25 the amount is $17 per week.

I do not subscribe to emotional statements that these additions to rent drive children away from homes. I know many children who, having made no financial contribution to the home, elect to leave home and go to private rental accommodation that costs at least twice the sum required by the commission under the formula.

Through the commission's efforts in both the rental and home-ownership schemes it has made real progress. One of the signs of this progress is the reduction in the commission's rental wait-list. The latest available list puts the total number of applicants on the list at 10 085. This is down by more than 600 on the figure seven months earlier and is 200 fewer than 12 months ago. The Government has done a good deal through the Housing Commission, and this financial year it is doing more.

This year, the home-ownership assistance scheme will provide $105.4m, which is an increase of 14.6 per cent on last year's figure. The Government will spend $76.3m on more land and housing for the rental scheme, which is an increase of more than 28 per cent on the figure last financial year.

The Government has also introduced a new second-loans scheme to help people facing deposit gap problems in the home-ownership area. Further, it has broadened its

rent relief scheme to provide more assistance for homeless persons, including families and youths.

Let me say that the changes to this legislation are part of a positive program of assistance to people seeking housing. The Government has long held the belief that people on lower incomes should not only be assisted but should also be provided with an option: either rental accommodation or assistance into home-ownership. Some Opposition members have attacked the Government for helping people into their own homes. However, a recent servey taken by the Housing Commission amongst its rental applicants showed that the overwhelming majority of the 500 people surveyed—74 per cent, in fact—said they would opt for home-ownership if given the opportunity and assistance required.

Queensland's policies in both the rental and home-ownership areas have been not only highly innovative but also highly successful. Its rental policies have ensured that those who need most assistance receive the most help.

The home purchase scheme—the income-geared scheme pioneered by Queensland two years ago—is now being lauded by the Commonwealth Government and copied by other States such as Victoria. These legislative amendments, therefore, are part of a very progressive program of housing assistance provided by the State Government through the Housing Commission.

I was pleased to hear that the honourable member for Townsville recognises that Queensland's rental situation is much more favourable than that of other States. I consider that Queensland home-ownership schemes have contributed considerably to this situation.

The honourable member referred to the construction of good houses. Surely people accept that the brick veneer homes that are being built by the Housing Commission are of good quality. Over the years, the Housing Commission has improved the quality of the houses that have been constructed.

The honourable member for Gympie brought some sanity back into the debate by returning to the provisions of the Bill. I appreciated his remarks, particularly as he reminded honourable members of the reason why this legislation is being debated.

I have taken on board the comments of the honourable member for South Brisbane and the honourable member for Archerfield. I was surprised that they were critical of other members. I know quite well that the Deputy Premier and Minister Assisting the Treasurer (Mr Gunn) and the member for Fassifern (Mr Lingard) are doing their job very well. Even though the member for Archerfield said that the honourable member for Wolston does a great deal of work, he does not pass it on.

I will give consideration to the comments made by the member for Archerfield about the development that is taking place in his electorate. On about 23 November I will open an extension to a shopping centre in that district, which I have visited many times. I am sure that the area is going forwards, not backwards. The Housing Commission will do everything possible to ensure that it is improved.

The honourable member for Mount Isa raised a matter that had nothing to do with the Bill, but it made him happy. It was a story at any price. He referred to air-conditioning units and housing. I am aware of the problems that he has encountered. Honourable members will recall that for years there was no air-conditioning in this Chamber. The member for Mount Isa made a great song and dance about the air-conditioning units provided. At the time, expense had to be considered. Some quick decisions were made to spend money in certain areas. First of all, he said that they were no good. He said that they were terrible and that he did not want them. Now he wants those air-conditioning units to be provided in schools. I would say that the air-conditioning units that were provided were of use to some people. I assure the honourable member that the Department of Works is giving consideration to the provision of air-conditioners in

western areas. I realise that might not be all that is desired. However, the honourable member must accept that they are doing some good for many people.

Consideration is being given to the purchase of properties in other areas. All the matters referred to by the honourable member are under consideration. I am sure that the Government will look objectively at the matter.

A point raised by a number of Opposition members related to the eligibility for assistance under the rental relief scheme. They asked particularly whether persons still had to reside in emergency crisis centres or caravan parks before being offered tenancy establishment assistance under the scheme. Tenancy establishment, of course, includes bond guarantees, rent subsidy and, in special circumstances, a cash payment to cover removal expenses, etc.

Mr Campbell interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Bundaberg may be allowed to interject only from his usual place; he is not allowed to interject when he is not in his usual place.

Mr WHARTON: The extended scheme still requires a person to have had residency in caravan parks or crisis centres before he or she becomes eligible. That condition has been maintained to ensure that the assistance goes to those most in need of such help. If the condition was forgone, equity of distribution would be impossible and the scheme would be open to uncontrollable abuse, such as occurred in Victoria, following which rent subsidy was discontinued.

It is very important that honourable members realise that the scheme that I announced recently ought to be considered in its entirety. It effectively covers those in most need in our community. It must be acknowledged also that an increasing amount of crisis accommodation is being provided. The increased turnover of occupants made possible through the section of the scheme dealing with tenancy establishment is placing increasing demands on funding.

Motion (Mr Wharton) agreed to.

Committee

The Chairman of Committees (Mr Row, Hinchinbrook) in the chair; Hon. C. A. Wharton (Burnett—Minister for Works and Housing) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 5, as read, agreed to.

Clause 6—Repeal of and new s. 26; Letting or leasing of houses to eligible persons—

Mr YEWDALE (7.51 p.m.): I did not clearly hear the Minister's initial remarks in reply relative to leasehold land and eligibility in the letting of leasehold houses. I ask him to repeat what he said or to elaborate on the reasons for the amendment. Were the people to whom he referred—obviously, he has records of them—concentrated in business areas, or were they in private homes? What were the categories? As I was unable to hear the Minister's opening remarks, I would like the matter clarified.

Mr WHARTON: None are businesses; they are tenancies. The State only has 1 140, with approximately 90 in Brisbane. It is not difficult to understand that those people desire to convert to freehold. Some of the properties were purchased many years ago on perpetual lease land. However, when a property has been bought and sold a number of times, it is more or less expected that the land is freehold.

Rental is paid on the basis of valuation. It increases yearly. As the valuation increases, the sum required to convert to freehold is considerably higher. The scheme proposed is that, on freeholding, a rebate will be allowed on the basis of rental paid. Because of the low rate in the earlier years, that part would not be great. However, recently the rentals have been significant, so the amount of the rebate would also be

significant. The measure provides for those who have recently acquired properties the opportunity to take advantage of the rebate, small though it may be.

Mr Yewdale: Will you make that known to those concerned? Will they be allowed to make their decision in accordance with the amendment?

Mr WHARTON: I understand that they will be advised. When the Bill proceeds through its remaining stages, we will be able to take action to advise them.

Clause 6, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 7 to 10, as read, agreed to.

Clause 11—Amendments of s. 8; Terms and conditions of freeholding lease—

Mr YEWDALE (7.55 p.m.): I regret, Mr Row, that I have nominated the wrong clause to which I wish to speak. Would it be possible for me to call the previous clause, or may I ask the Minister for an explanation?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I am prepared to accede to the honourable member's request. Provided he does not wish to move an amendment, he may speak about the previous clause.

Mr YEWDALE: I wanted a clarification of clause 10, part of which states—

"(a) the applicant together with another person (who is now deceased) was the lessee; or

(b) a person other than the applicant (which person is now deceased) was the lessee,

if, upon the death of that person, that person's interest passed (whether by way of survivorship or succession) to the applicant."

Will the Minister explain how that will operate?

Mr WHARTON: I did not clearly understand the honourable member. That was not the honourable member's fault; I just could not hear him properly.

The Act does not allow for land rent payments made by a lessee to be credited towards the purchasing price of freeholding. In fact, that is expressly prohibited. However, the Bill provides that a rebate can be given as a credit for rent paid. If a person has been renting a piece of land for a number of years, the amount of rent paid over those years is credited towards the price that he has to pay for freeholding.

The honourable member for Bundaberg raised the matter of giving an interest-free grant similar to that given by the Lands Department. He needs to understand that this is a commercial proposition. Many people have bought land over a long period. Some people bought land that already had freehold title; some bought land with a perpetual lease. The principle is to make the purchase of the land less arduous. If the purchase price of the land is $15,000 and a person has already paid a deal of money in rental, the amount of rental is deducted from the purchase price, which lowers the price considerably.

The honourable member for Bundaberg mentioned a purchase price of $9,000 for a piece of land in Bundaberg. I do not know the precise piece of land to which he was referring, but I would have thought that that was not a bad price for the freeholding of a piece of land. Possibly it did not cost a great deal of money in the first place. However, that is beside the point. The principle under this scheme, which is designed to help people to freehold their land, is that they receive a rebate for the rent paid, which reduces the cost of freeholding.

Mr CAMPBELL: Lands Department land, which is commercial land, may be freeholded by an individual with no interest rate. However, if a person wishes to freehold Housing Commission land, the interest rate is 11.5 per cent. How can the Government

justify that? Why are some people treated in one way and others treated differently? I do not see how the Government can justify that.

Mr WHARTON: I accept the point made by the honourable member. This new scheme might have been thought to be comparable with schemes under the Land Act. A great deal of discussion has taken place. The provision under the Land Act applies to payments made after the valuation date in 1981. The Bill applies to rental that has already been paid. The difference is that under the Bill a person receives a rebate for the rental that he has paid. In a way, it is a back payment. That is not in keeping with the provision under the Land Act, which provides for a certain price at a certain time from which the owner benefits.

Clause 11, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

ELECTRICITY ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading—Resumption of Debate

Debate resumed from 9 October (see p. 1236) on Mr I. J. Gibbs's motion—

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

Mr VAUGHAN (Nudgee) (8.1 p.m.): Before dealing with the contents of the Bill, and since this is the second major change to the structure of the State electricity industry in eight years, I believe it is desirable to refer to the changes that have taken place in the industry over the last 10 years and the effects of those changes.

Prior to the introduction of the Electricity Act in late 1976, the electricity industry in this State consisted of the State Electricity Commission, the Southern Electric Authority of Queensland, the Brisbane City Council department of electricity, The Northern Electric Authority of Queensland, the Wide Bay-Burnett Regional Electricity Board, the Capricornia Regional Electricity Board, the Central Western Regional Electricity Board, the Mackay Regional Electricity Board, the Townsville Regional Electricity Board, the Cairns Regional Electricity Board, the North Western Electric Authority and eleven shire councils.

The Southern Electric Authority of Queensland, the Northern Electric Authority of Queensland and the Capricornia Regional Electricity Board, through the power stations under their control, were responsible for the generation of most of the State's power needs, with the balance being supplied from small power stations located in the Wide Bay and western areas of the State and controlled by the small electric authorities and, of course, Mount Isa Mines.

Because the Southern Electric Authority of Queensland franchise ran out in 1975, and for a number of other reasons, the Government decided in August 1972 to review all aspects of the future organisation of the electricity industry in the State and a committee, the Reorganisation Advisory Committee, under the chairmanship of the State Electricity Commissioner and comprising representatives from the various electric authorities, was established.

In October 1973, in a report to Cabinet, the committee recommended—

(1) The reconstitution of the industry with all existing electric authorities, including the department of electricity of the Brisbane City Council, being absorbed into five new electric authorities.

The responsibility for the distribution of electricity to final customers throughout the State was to be vested in four electricity boards, the only exception being the

Queensland franchise area of the North-West County Council of New South Wales where existing arrangements would stand.

The responsibility for generation, main transmission and bulk supply of electricity to the four distribution authorities and major bulk supply customers throughout the State was to be vested in a single central generating board.

(2) The State Electricity Commission would remain responsible for planning and co-ordination of the industry as a whole, exercising regulatory functions under prescribed statutory powers and providing the link between the Government and the industry but that its staff be removed from the State public service and integrated with the rest of the industry.

(3) The legislation pertaining to the industry would be consolidated into one Act, the necessary Bill being prepared for presentation to Parliament in the August sitting of 1974.

(4) The industry adopt as an objective the equalisation of retail tariffs throughout the State.

In December 1973, the committee's report, including the recommendations approved by Cabinet, was presented to a meeting of representatives of all Queensland electric authorities which accepted in principle the proposals for reorganisation.

In April 1974, because of strong objections from the Cairns area, and to a lesser extent from other areas, State Cabinet decided to have seven distribution authorities in lieu of the four proposed by the Reorganisation Advisory Committee.

Further consultation with the industry took place over the next 12 months, and in April 1975, the position was finalised by the then Minister for Mines and Energy (Mr Camm) at the annual Queensland Electricity Authorities Conference.

On 14 September 1976, the then Minister introduced the Electricity Bill, which was subsequently passed, and the reorganisation of the industry took place from 1 July 1977.

Mr Speaker, as I indicated, there were a number of reasons behind the reorganisation of the electricity industry. One of the main reasons was finance. At that time it was estimated that capital expenditure over the 10-year period 1973-74 to 1982-83 would amount to approximately $1,200m and it was considered that, because loan funds to this extent would most probably not be available, a higher level of total industry self-financing would have to be applied in the future.

However, electricity authority revenue was almost totally obtained from retail tariffs and, despite substantially higher tariffs in regional board areas, that is, areas outside the south-east corner of the State, only the Brisbane City Council department of electricity and the Southern Electric Authority of Queensland had been able to undertake any degree of self-financing.

Because of its greatly superior financial position compared with that of other electric authorities, the Government wanted to get control of the Brisbane City Council department of electricity, which represented a large source of potential revenue.

Since the reorganisation of the industry in 1977, there has been an astronomical increase in electricity charges, particularly for consumers in Brisbane and south-east Queensland who, along with consumers throughout the rest of the State, now are not only paying a capital works levy equal to approximately 22 per cent of their electricity bill, but also providing the necessary funds for equalisation of tariffs throughout the State.

However, the Minister, in his second-reading speech, told us that the Government wants to have even more control of the State's electricity industry, particularly with regard to issues such as prices, industrial relations and forward planning.

He told us that what the Bill proposes is a simple two-tiered structure consisting of a Queensland Electricity Commission, which will be formed by the amalgamation of the

State Electricity Commission of Queensland and the Queensland Electricity Generating Board, and seven electricity boards.

As justification for these changes, the Minister referred to the structure of the electricity industry in the other States and the problems that have occurred in recent years in those States, particularly New South Wales. Interestingly enough, notwithstanding the capital the Government tried to make of the problems that the New South Wales Government had a couple of years ago in the State's power industry, the new Queensland Electricity Commission will be a body identical to the Electricity Commission of New South Wales.

Although the Opposition does not disagree with the establishment of the Queensland Electricity Commission, it does believe that the abolition of the Queensland Electricity Generating Board in June 1982 was a hasty decision. After all, the board had been in existence only a mere five years, during which time many problems resulting from the amalgamation of several generating authorities stretched over the length and breadth of the State had had to be overcome.

Since the reorganisation of the electricity industry in 1977, the Government has, of course, through the State Electricity Commission, exercised considerable control over the industry. Prior to the reorganisation, the extent of that control was restricted to the regional boards. That was another reason the Government wanted to get its hands on the Brisbane City Council department of electricity.

These amendments to the Electricity Act give the Government, through the Queensland Electricity Commission, almost complete control of the Queensland electricity industry.

The provisions of the Bill which deal with the powers, functions and duties of the new Queensland Electricity Commission spell out in detail the extent of that control which covers, among other things, the price of electricity, the organisation of the distribution authorities, including the amalgamation of any of those authorities, special agreements for the supply of electricity at other than standard tariffs, and industrial relations in the industry.

Regarding the commission's powers in relation to industrial relations in the industry as set out in the proposed new section of the Act headed "Industrial awards and proceedings" I point out that the unions with members employed in the industry are extremely concerned about the extent of the commission's powers, having regard to the way in which they believe that industrial relations in the industry have been handled in the past.

They have pointed out that whereas, up to now, the Act has provided that the State Electricity Commission may provide an advisory service for electricity authorities on matters related to industrial awards and conditions of employment and may co-ordinate the formulation of policy of the electricity supply industry on such matters, the Bill provides that the Queensland Electricity Commission shall co-ordinate the formulation of policy, etc. However, my understanding of industrial relations in the industry is that, since the reorganisation of the industry in 1977, the State Electricity Commission has virtually had control of industrial relations in the industry.

As the Minister indicated, a large part of the Bill is devoted to the electricity industry's financial arrangements, such as borrowing by, and similar financial arrangements of, the commission and the electricity boards, and investment of moneys by the commission. That is very interesting because, as I pointed out in a speech that I made in the debate on matters of public interest of 8 February this year, during 1982-83, the State Electricity Commission had an average of $366m invested daily on the short-term money market at an average interest rate of 15.15 per cent. That is a substantial sum of money to have invested in that manner, and an explanation should have been forthcoming as to why so much money was available.

The Bill amends the section of the Act that deals with the Queensland Electricity Supply Industry Consultative Council. The constitution of the council has been changed

by replacing the general manager of the generating board with the chairman of each electricity board, thereby increasing the numbers on the council from nine to 15.

Instead of at least three meetings of the council each year there will be two and the period between meetings will not exceed seven months, compared with four previously. Eight members will now constitute a quorum, compared with five previously.

As the Minister has not commented on these changes, I can only assume that it is considered that, because of the extent of the control that the Government will have over the electricity boards, there is no point in the council meeting as frequently as in the past, particularly in view of the increased number of people to be transported to meetings.

As it is the duty of the Queensland Supply Industry Consultative Council to assist and advise the commission and the electricity boards on matters relating to the electricity supply industry that are referred to it by the commission or an electricity authority or matters that, on its own motion, it brings forward for discussion and consideration, and as it is its duty to set up committees to investigate and report to it on any matter referred to it for such investigation and report, the Opposition believes that there should be an employees' representative on the council. It is considered that such an input to council deliberations would be extremely valuable and constructive. I am sure that the Minister's advisers in the industry would be more than willing to inform him of those industry committees on which there are employees' representatives and the value that such representation has been in resolving or preventing problems in the industry. Accordingly, I give notice of an amendment that I propose to move in this regard. I will be interested to hear the Minister's comments on this part of the Bill in his reply.

As I have stated publicly every time electricity charges have been increased, since the reorganisation of the electricity industry in 1977, the Government has had control over such increases through the State Electricity Commission, which has had the power to determine electricity prices. However, until this Bill becomes law, a provision in the Act provides for a compulsory conference of the respective boards to discuss proposed price increases. I must point out that it is compulsory for the boards to attend the conference; not for the commission to call one. Because the electricity boards will have little or no say, the provision for such a compulsory conference is being repealed.

The Act will still provide for an electricity board to apply to the commission for a variation of the prices of, and methods of charging for, electricity supplied by it.

Since the reorganisation of the industry in 1977, a provision in the Act has allowed the Government, through the commission, to include in electricity charges a capital works levy. This levy is what I have referred to as the hidden tax that this self-professed, low-tax Government has imposed on electricity consumers since 1977.

This taxation by stealth that the Government imposes on the retail sales of the electricity boards—not the bulk sales of the generating board to the large industrial consumers—is calculated each year on the gross retail sales of the previous year. In 1977-78, the first year of the reorganisation, the levy was 9.17 per cent of gross retail sales. In 1978-79, that was increased to 17.5 per cent. In 1979-80 it was increased to 20 per cent and, since 1980-81, it has been 25 per cent.

In 1982-83 the capital works levy or hidden tax cost electricity consumers $153.7m, which works out at about $20 per quarter for the average domestic consumer. The figure this year will be close to $200m.

In addition to the capital works levy, the Act also enables the Government to impose a surcharge on consumers of certain electricity boards for tariff equalisation purposes. In 1982-83 consumers of the South East Queensland Electricity Board, Mackay Electricity Board and North Queensland Electricity Board contributed $10.3m for tariff equalisation purposes. It is interesting to note that at the end of June 1983, the State Electricity Commission had $41.1m in its Tariff Equalisation Reserve Fund compared with $9.3m the previous year.

Those sections of the Act which provided for a board to appeal to the Industrial Court against a determination of prices by the commission have been repealed by this Bill, which further confirms that from now on, what the Government says goes. All sections of the Act relating to the Queensland Electricity Generating Board have, of course, also been repealed. With regard to that part of the Bill that deals with membership of electricity boards, because the Opposition believes that employee and consumer representation should be on the boards, I will be moving an amendment along those lines.

Mr FitzGerald: Which union would you appoint?

Mr VAUGHAN: Appointment would be a democratic process.

The section of the Act dealing with the election of the chairman and deputy chairman of a board is being repealed by this Bill and replaced by a provision that provides that from now on the Governor in Council—that is, the Government—will appoint one of the members of the board to be chairman and another member to be deputy chairman. The Opposition believes that the Government has enough control over the boards without wanting to dictate who is to be chairman and deputy chairman, and therefore will be opposing this part of the Bill. For the same reasons, the Opposition will be opposing that part of the Bill that provides for the Government to even appoint an acting chairman of the board, instead of that being done by board members.

The provisions of the Act which cover the dissolution of an electricity board are being amended in the Bill. The new provisions refer to the dimissal of members of an electricity board and tidy up the procedures whereby the commissioner of the Queensland Electricity Commission can take over the electricity board. Obviously the provisions are fashioned on the lessons that were learned when the State Electricity Commission took over the Queensland Electricity Generating Board. Perhaps further take-overs are planned for the future.

The unions have expressed concern at that part of the Bill which requires the general manager of a board to submit a staffing budget to the board detailing the staff establishment, etc. They feel that such a requirement will result in an unnecessary reduction in employment, particularly in country areas, and, from time to time, could prevent a general manager exercising his discretion in relation to staffing needs. The unions claim that in order to overcome staff ceiling limits, temporaries or casuals would be employed instead of permanents and work would be contracted out instead of being performed by permanent staff. They claim that this has already happened and that it has led to disharmony and industrial disputation. As that is the last thing the electricity industry should want, I ask the Minister to reconsider this part of the Bill.

On page five of his second-reading speech, the Minister referred to a new provision to be inserted into the Act which will empower the Minister, through the commission, to issue a direction to an electricity board on a matter of policy. However, he admits that experience elsewhere has shown that when this power exists, there has been no need to use it because consensus has been reached by discussion. Having regard to the extent of the control the Minister has over the electricity boards elsewhere in the Bill and the Act, I wonder why such a provision is to be inserted into the Act. Relative to the part of the Bill relating to the supply of, and charge for, electricity by a consumer to an occupier of premises, the Opposition believes that in such circumstances the supply of electricity should be through a meter, and that the tariff should be determined by the electricity authority. This situation occurs particularly in caravan parks and shopping centres, and has been the cause of considerable disputation between the consumer reselling the electricity and the occupier.

Mr Smith: The Kern Corporation has been dictating orders in that area.

Mr VAUGHAN: It is not the only one.

As I will be moving an amendment to this clause, I will reserve further comments to the Committee stage. In that part of the Act dealing with the duties of an electricity authority with respect to a consumer's installation, the Bill provides for an installation inspector to inspect alterations or additions located within a defined hazardous area. This amendment is necessary, of course, because the Act abolished the requirement for all alterations or additions to a consumer's installation to be inspected.

Instead, where such work is performed by an electrical contractor and the Act does not require an inspection, the contractor is required to test his work prior to connection to the supply and issue a report on a prescribed form (Form 4) supplied by the electricity authority to the consumer and send a copy of that test report to the electricity authority. Unfortunately, although that is what is required to be done by law, very few electrical contractors are issuing such reports to consumers and sending copies to electricity authorities.

I understand that the State Electricity Commission itself has acknowledged that only about 5 per cent of these required reports are being forwarded to the electricity authorities but, for reasons best known to itself, has chosen to do nothing about it. As I understand that the Minister is well aware that this is going on, I would like him, when he replies, to tell me why electrical contractors have been allowed to blatantly break the law in this way and what, if anything, has been done to force contractors to comply with the Act.

I would also like him to tell me how many contractors have been prosecuted for that breach of the Act. If contractors are not submitting test reports of the work they carry out as required, probably they are not carrying out the tests, either, and therefore are jeopardising the safety of consumers.

According to the 1983-84 State Electricity Commission annual report (page 21), the total number of electrical accidents reported to the commission in that period was 487—32 more than in the previous year. The majority of those accidents occurred on domestic premises and were caused by lack of maintenance, unauthorised work and contact with overhead conductors.

The provision in the Bill that will now require a consumer to dismantle or maintain disconnected overhead lines that form part of his installation has, as the Minister said in his speech, been found necessary because of a triple fatality that occurred recently. Surely we do not have to wait till some fatalities occur before steps are taken to ensure the safety provisions of the Act are complied with.

As to that part of the Bill that now requires an electrical mechanic who has repaired a defect in a consumer's installation and reconnected the installation to the supply to endorse the notice issued to the consumer by the installation inspector—I consider that to ensure such work is carried out by a registered electrical contractor such endorsement should be done by an electrical contractor and not by an electrical mechanic. I point out that the Act provides in section 180 (3) that an electrical contractor or any electrical mechanic whose name is endorsed upon the licence of an electrical contractor is the person who is required to issue a test report to a consumer, not an electrical mechanic.

With reference to the section of the Bill that deletes the requirement that an electricity authority shall connect any meter supplied to a consumer and maintain that meter free of charge—I ask the Minister to explain the reason for this amendment and whether it means that, in future, all consumers will have to pay to have their meters connected and to have them repaired if they become faulty. As the new section now provides that an electricity authority may charge for supplying a meter, how will that affect consumers in general and the domestic consumer in particular?

I also ask the Minister whether the section that now provides that a separate charge for metering and control apparatus may be included in a determination of prices and methods of charge made by the commission foreshadows the introduction of a standing

charge as now applies to electricity supplied to consumers in that part of the State supplied by the New South Wales North West County Council.

As I understand that there have been a number of disputes between electricity authorities and consumers over the location of the meter box, I believe that the new provision that allows the commission to mediate is desirable. Although it is understandable that it may be necessary for a consumer in a remote or inaccessible location to read his own meter, the new provision in the Bill providing that an electricity authority may require consumers to do this does not spell out the circumstances under which this will be required. I believe that such a provision should be specific, and I would welcome the Minister's comments on that matter.

From time to time, the amount that a consumer is required to pay as a secutiy deposit is, of course, a matter of contention. Although the payment of a security deposit is necessary as a hedge against bad debts, I consider that since the money lodged as a security deposit is invested by the electricity authorities at rates substantially above savings bank interest rates, consumers should be paid higher than savings bank interest.

Disconnection of supply to a consumer who has failed to pay his account is another area that needs revising. The Bill provides that, in future, a consumer will be required to pay the prescribed fee for disconnection and reconnection even if the account is paid to an employee who goes to the consumer's premises to disconnect supply. Because there may be numerous valid reasons why the account has not been paid, I do not believe that the additional charge should be mandatory.

Because people who do not pay their accounts on time usually already have financial problems, their circumstances should be taken into consideration. I appreciate that if a consumer has difficulty paying his account, he should contact the electricity authority when he receives his account to arrive at some arrangement. But, for a variety of reasons, many people do not do so. I have also been made aware of instances in which a consumer's power has been disconnected without his knowledge, resulting in a loss of perishable goods, etc. Power should not be disconnected unless the consumer is first consulted.

The Opposition is opposed to the amendment that will give the commission the right to authorise the performance of live-line work by other than employees of an electricity authority. The performance of live-line work has always been a subject which, to my knowledge, has been discussed and agreed upon by the commission, the electricity authorities and the unions. As I understand that there has been no consultation on the amendment, it will be opposed. If the Minister wants to avoid an industrial dispute, he should not proceed with the amendment.

Although all of the States are revamping their existing laws relating to prescribed electrical articles to enable Australian manufacturers of prescribed electrical articles or importers of prescribed electrical articles to have such articles tested at one of the authorised testing laboratories rather than by a statutory approvals authority, I must express reservations about this change. With due respect to the NARTA laboratories, I suggest that the change does represent a departure from a well-tried and proven system of establishing the electrical safety of prescribed electrical articles and must represent a reduction in standards.

Although the Minister has stated that, as an additional protection to the public, the statutory approvals authorities will regularly select articles offered for sale and have them tested to ensure that the standards of safety established initially are being maintained, the fact is that such a check is supposed to be done at present. Unless the intensity of the checks is to be stepped up, I cannot see that there will be any additional protection. In addition, policing the number of prescribed electrical articles is no mean task. Any additional checks must surely involve more inspectors and expanded testing facilities. I would be interested to hear the Minister comment on the points I have raised so that honourable members might be assured that the extent of consumer protection that we have had to date is maintained in the future.

The Bill amends the section of the Act dealing with the granting of electrical contractors' licences by providing that an applicant for an electrical contractor's licence must intend to carry out electrical contracting work and that an electrical contractor's licence will not be renewed unless the holder of a licence can show that he is regularly carrying out electrical installation work as an electrical contractor. The Minister has indicated that the Government is not prepared to tackle the problem that part-time electrical contractors are causing to the industry and is not prepared to accept a proposal from the Electrical Contractors Association for a provisonal electrical contractor's licence for a period of two years to cater for persons with a genuine intention of establishing an electrical contracting business. However, the Minister has indicated that, in an endeavour to discourage the holding of electrical contractors' licences for status reasons or so that the holder can do a few odd jobs, the annual fee for a licence will be increased significantly and that, before a licence is renewed, a holder will be required to declare that he earns at least a prescribed amount each year from electrical contracting.

In relation to the Minister's proposals, I say firstly that I do not agree with the charging of any fee that is substantially more than the cost of the service given. An applicant for a contractor's licence at present is required to pay a fee of $50 and $40 for the renewal of that licence. I understand that the annual fee that the Minister is proposing is $250. Although those persons who hold an electrical contractor's licence but who do not do much contracting work will no doubt be forced to decide whether it is worth holding a licence, the full-time contractors will contribute significantly to Government revenue and pass the cost on to their customers.

I also have my doubts about the validity of setting a prescribed amount that a contractor must earn each year.

As the Electrical Contractors Association (Queensland) had pointed out to the Minister, the problems in the industry are being caused by those people who are holding down a good job and doing electrical contracting on the side. I am advised that such a large contracting operation is being run by people employed at one of the power stations that the amount of electrical material that is purchased each week from a local electrical supplier is far in excess of what any full-time contractor purchases.

Mr Miller: Could the unions do something about this? I mean, they are unionists, aren't they?

Mr VAUGHAN: The Electrical Contractors Association (Queensland) has tried to do something, but without success.

I also understand that a person holding a highly paid position at another power station is heavily involved in contracting on the side. I am sure that the reduced working hours in the power industry were not introduced for this purpose. This problem has developed since the introduction of the Electricity Act in 1977 when any electrical mechanic became eligible to obtain an electrical contractor's licence. The result has been that since 1977 the number of electrical contractors' licences has more than doubled. Many bona fide electrical contractors have seen their businesses slump and the number of available apprenticeships in the industry has dropped significantly.

Currently people who are holding down good jobs are also electrical contracting on the side. Because they have an assured separate source of income and low overheads, they are able to contract at lower prices than their full-time competitors. Although it may be argued that this is good for the consumer and that the competition is good for the industry, the fact is that such a situation is detrimental to full-time employment in the industry and, as I said earlier, as part-time contractors do not employ people, reduces the opportunity for young school-leavers to obtain an apprenticeship in the electrical trade. At a time when people are unemployed and young people are seeking an apprenticeship, job opportunities have to be created, not destroyed.

Although it is a fact that people in other trades are not restricted from contracting on the side, it is also a fact that there are certain occupations into which entry is

restricted. For example, a person just cannot get a taxi license, start out as a milk-vendor or a newsagent, or start a cane farm.

Although the Minister has indicated his attitude to the matter both in his second-reading speech and his statement to this House on 10 April this year, the Bill does contain provisions which prevent an installation inspector holding a contractor's licence, and rightly so.

As I indicated earlier, the Bill also requires that an electrical contractor's licence will not be renewed unless the holder of the licence can show that he is regularly carrying out electrical installation work as an electrical contractor. Of course it should be quite easy for the Electrical Workers & Contractors Board to check the amount of installation work performed by the holder of a contractor's licence by checking the number of test notices and test reports lodged with the electricty authority by that contractor. If the contractor was only lodging test notices for new work and not for alterations or additions, that would be to his detriment. Perhaps the board will pursue this line in the future. As the Minister has indicated that from now on electricity authorities will be required to enforce strictly the requirements for contractors to issue a test report to consumers for any alterations or additions, there might be some developments.

Consumers will, of course, have to be made aware of the requirements in this regard and any contractor found to be not complying with the Act will have to be prosecuted. However, if the contractor does not issue a test report to the consumer and the consumer does not pursue the matter, it will be difficult for the electricity authority to police the provisions of the Act.

I understand that the Electrical Contractors Association also has proposed that the electrical installation in domestic premises be inspected prior to resale to ensure that the installation is completely safe and I understand that another member may be moving an amendment along those lines. I think that this is a good idea and one which would go a long way to detecting unsafe electrical work and improving electrical safety.

Although there is an argument in favour of not changing the existing provisions in the Act relating to the granting of electrical contractors' licences, I believe that for the good of the industry overall it is desirable that people who are in employment and are therefore not able to undertake electrical contracting work on a full-time basis should not be entitled to hold an electrical contractor's licence. I will therefore be moving an amendment along these lines.

Regarding that part of the Bill which provides for the filling of consequential vacancies in the commission in the same way as is done in the public service, I am advised that the situation in the electricity authorities is different from that in the public service in that there is no provision for appeals and the amendment will mean that everyone will have to apply for every consequential vacancy. It is therefore considered that all vacancies should be advertised and I ask the Minister to reconsider this amendment.

Mr Scott: There is not a uniform range of positions, either. They vary from board to board.

Mr VAUGHAN: That is true.

As the Bill contains an amendment to that part of the Act relating to the making of regulations which will enable an electricity authority to charge a consumer interest on moneys owing and not paid within the time allowed, I ask the Minister to explain the reason such a provision has now been found necessary. I reserve any further comment on the Bill to the debate on the clauses.

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (8.36 p.m.): I will not attempt to cover all aspects of the Bill, as the member for Nudgee did. A number of members on this side of the House wish to speak to the Bill and I am sure that during the course of the debate this evening, and whenever the debate is resumed, they will raise many other matters.

I want to cover some aspects relative to power house development in Queensland and some matters pertaining to my area, including those of particular concern to people engaged in rural pursuits.

The annual report of the State Electricity Commission presented to Parliament shows that this year the demand for electricity has been 16.1 per cent higher than it was last year. That might be an indication of the continuing growth of Queensland; an indication that more people are using electricity; an indication that more development is taking place in Queensland or an indication that more people are coming to Queensland. The 16.1 per cent increase met consumers' demands which were not spread evenly across the community as the subdued economic conditions affected the commercial and light industrial sectors in the first half of the financial year. Growth in domestic consumption was also affected by economic conditions.

Coal-mining operations consumed 9.7 per cent more electricity in the 1983-1984 financial year than in the previous year. That was due to the commencement of new steaming coal mines at Tarong (which supplies coal for the power house there, of course), Curragh, Newlands and Blair Athol, and the build-up of the Riverside and Oaky Creek mines which commenced operations in the previous year. So it can be seen that the coal-mining industry itself has accounted for an increase in consumption. There was therefore an across-the-board increase in the various areas of consumption.

Opposition members often query whether Queensland has too much electricity capacity at present or, alternatively, whether there will be sufficient capacity in the future. That is a problem with which the Minister for Mines and Energy and those responsible for advising him are confronted on a regular basis. They have to look at present consumption and anticipated consumption next year, the year after and the year after that. It is a fact of life that to plan for an increase in consumption and to decide when to bring a power house on line requires looking quite a few years down the track. The Tarong Power Station is coming on line in stages. The first 350 MW generator came on line in May this year. The second generator will come on line in May next year, the third in May 1986 and the fourth in about December 1986. The Tarong Power Station will then be fully operational. The commission's attention will turn next to the Callide "B" Power Station, which will be powered by two 350 MW generating units, and then to the Stanwell Power Station.

The Opposition became upset about the letting of the contracts for the turbines for that station. But when the full facts of the matter were debated in this House the former Leader of the Opposition and now candidate for the Federal election, who has left this House, got egg all over his face. Anybody who reads that debate will find there that letting of tenders was done correctly. C. Itoh is supplying the Hitachi turbines and boilers at a very favourable price to this Government.

In addition, the Wivenhoe Power Station came on line earlier this year. The first unit is now in operation. Those people who recently attended the opening of that power station were able to see the Premier and Treasurer press a button to begin operations.

It is not easy to predict electricity demand. On 3 July this year, a very cold snap occurred throughout Queensland. When a cold change suddenly hits a subtropical and tropical State such as Queensland, electricity demand increases very rapidly. Snow fell over various parts of Queensland and heavy frosts occurred in the north. That cold snap tested the capacity of the electricity industry to supply electricity to house-holders in Queensland. On 3 July, there were no blackouts. The Wivenhoe power stations generated 250 MW on that occasion, and the other power stations were flat out. Peak consumption exceeded 3 200 or 3 300 MW.

Mr Davis: You have a brief.

Mr FITZGERALD: My notes are there if the honourable member wants to look at them. As I was saying, peak consumption exceeded 3 200 or 3 300 MW for a brief period. The system was able to supply electricity to all consumers in Queensland.

Yesterday and today, Queenslanders have witnessed strikes in the electricity industry throughout Queensland. The Government, the Minister and State Electricity Commissioner provided the capacity to supply electricity.

Mr Scott interjected.

Mr FITZGERALD: If the honourable member can tell the House how to stop the stupid, idiotic demarcation disputes that interrupt the best-laid plans of the Government, I will certainly listen to his contribution with great interest. I am sure that he will not be able to tell me that.

The Government is looking at the provision of electricity well after the Stanwell Power Station begins generating electricity, which probably will be in the mid-1990s. With the present rate of growth in Queensland, one additional 350 MW turbine has to be brought into service each year. I know that the Minister and the State Electricity Commissioner are looking at sites for the construction of another power station. There has been much speculation about sites, and various sites are available. A coal-fired power station requires coal, water for cooling and transmission lines to feed into the grid; also, reasonable access must be provided for workers.

Mr Davis: What about Millmerran?

Mr FITZGERALD: I shall refer to that later.

There is no ideal site. Naturally, coal could be transported to various sites along the coast and the plant could be cooled by water.

One of the limiting factors in siting a power station at Millmerran, which was mentioned by the member for Brisbane Central by way of interjection, is that water would have to be supplied to the site. Very few people appreciate that a fresh-water-cooled power station, such as the Tarong Power Station, requires 28 000 ML a year. I have been told that that is the equivalent of the combined yearly consumption of Rockhampton and Toowoomba. That amount of water is actually used in the generation of electricity. People who suggest that a water-cooled power station can be built on an inland site should consider the provision of water to that site. The Tarong Power Station gets its water from the Boondooma Dam, which is on the Boyne River near Proston, and it is delivered through 96 km of pipeline.

An alternative to a water-cooled power station is a dry-air-cooled power station. Technology has evolved to the extent that power stations can now be cooled by dry air. However, I understand that the efficiency of dry-air-cooled power stations is not nearly as high as that of water-cooled power stations. But if air-cooling costs are cheaper than the combined cost of providing coal and water to a conventional power station, a dry-air-cooled power station should be considered. I am sure that officers in the industry are considering the various types of cooling systems that can be employed at power stations.

The use of fresh water in inland areas of Queensland for cooling power stations is a waste of a natural resource. In the long term, the State cannot afford the luxury of using for that purpose such a precious commodity. I can see that the demands for agriculture and irrigation——

Honourable Members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Row): Order! There is far too much cross-firing and audible conservation in the Chamber. Honourable members will come to order. Interjections should be made separately, and if they are not responded to, honourable members should desist from making them.

Mr FITZGERALD: I shall now consider the Bill in detail.

Clauses 31 to 43 of the Bill deal with the borrowing and investment powers of the commission. The intention is to repeal the existing provisions relating to borrowing and

to replace those with arrangements that mirror the provisions of the Statutory Bodies Finanical Arrangements Act. This will give the commission, subject to the approval of the Governor in Council and the overall supervision of the Treasurer, very wide borrowing powers. These are necessary if the commission is to manage its huge debt wisely and well in the complicated financial markets of today.

The importance of this task should not be underestimated. The loan indebtedness of the Queensland electricity supply industry at 30 June 1984 was $2.744m. The debt was made up as follows—

	$
Loans Raised in Australia	2,236,000,000
Overseas Debt (converted to Australian dollars at 30 June 1984 exchange rates)	508,000,000
	$2,744,000,000

By comparison, the public debt of the State of Queensland is $2,290.8m. That gives honourable members an idea of the extent of the investment in the development of Queensland's power resources.

As long as the electricity industry debt is properly managed, there is no need for concern that it exceeds the State's public debt, because it is invested in income-producing assets such as power stations and transmission lines. The depreciated value of those assets is well in excess of the debt.

The onshore debt, which exceeds $2.25 billion, consists of money lent to the commission in Australia. The individual lenders are owed amounts from as little as $50 to debts to a single institution of $32m. This debt is managed by the commission's own inscribed stock registry.

Overseas borrowings and debt management are the joint responsibility of the commission and the Treasury, with the Treasury taking the lead role. This is a policy arrangement that has applied since money was first borrowed overseas. When Loan Council authorised overseas borrowings, the authorised borrowers in southern States set out to develop their own expertise more or less in competition with their State Treasuries. It was decided that Queensland could not afford to duplicate this expertise, so overseas currency and loans experts were appointed to the Treasury. There is, and always has been, close consultation between the Treasury and the commission. Although other States have seen fit to introduce central borrowing authorities and to include the electricity authorities within the mantle of those authorities, Queensland, through the good sense that prevailed early, has been able to establish both the State Electricity Commission and the Queensland Government development authority as first-class public authority borrowers both on the domestic market and overseas.

I now turn to matters closer to home. SEQEB, which supplies electricity in south-east Queensland, is a very large electricity distribution authority. It supplies about two thirds of the retail consumers in Queensland. Recently, a new general manager, Mr Wayne Gilbert, was appointed. He envisages ways of improving the efficiency of this very large organisation. I admire the way that he is going about it. Whenever he got his board's OK, the first people that he told were his staff. I have here a copy of his letter to his fellow-employees.

I have spoken to Mr Gilbert about various problems that arise in the electricity industry, particularly those that contractors have had with unions in the development of sites. In the early days of Mr Gilbert's administration, I gained an appreciation of the problems confronting him. I was very pleased with the reception that he gave me. He was a very good listener, and I felt sure that he appreciated the problem being discussed.

Under his management, this authority will fairly quickly solve most of the problems that arise in the industry. Mr Gilbert appears to be a man who is able to recognise where a problem lies, and I believe that is excellent.

It is my perception that, after a mild initial reaction, the employees want to be part of the new arrangement. The unions are also adopting a very responsible attitude of, "Don't knock the proposal which could be of benefit to electricity consumers; wait and see how it is implemented."

An Opposition Member: Careful.

Mr FITZGERALD: I am not talking about the generation of electricity. I am referring to SEQEB, and if Opposition members had a better appreciation of the electricity supply industry and the manner in which it has been set up, they would understand that Mr Wayne Gilbert, who is the general manager of SEQEB, has absolutely nothing to do with the generation of electricity.

I am afraid that I do not have time to go right through and brief the Opposition on that matter. Time is ticking away.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr FITZGERALD: I do not have time to explain everything to Opposition members. I explained it all to them before, and I thought that they would have understood that the distribution and generation of electricity in Queensland are carried out by two separate authorities.

The letter that Mr Gilbert sent to the employees explained to them that, as he had the experience of being with SEQEB for several months, he intended to examine the future role of SEQEB.

Mr Scott interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Row): Order! The honourable member is not in his usual place.

Mr FITZGERALD: In his letter, Mr Gilbert explained to employees that their main responsibility was to be customer-oriented. I was impressed by the way that he explained it.

SEQEB has various responsibilities that have been accepted for a lengthy period. However, unless it puts its customers first, unless it considers customer needs and unless it becomes more involved with its customers, it will not be successful, which is its primary task.

I also pay tribute to the local officers in SEQEB with whom I have come into contact. I deal with two electricity authorities in my electorate. SWQEB caters for the area in Toowoomba and to the north—places such as Crows Nest and part of the Rosalie shire—and SEQEB supplies the area of Gatton. Honourable members would realise that, with the development that has taken place in Queensland, demands have been placed on electricity authorities to supply electricity to various allotments and to various developers.

Many people who purchased blocks wanted their electricity connected, if not next month then the month after that. Some of them wanted it connected even sooner. It is difficult for consumers, particularly those who have purchased blocks that had already been subdivided, to understand how much planning is put into a new development. I realise that the Government has taken steps to ensure that people who purchase residential blocks will have electricity made available to them at the earliest possible time.

A few people who recently bought older blocks, for example in the Ballard area, which was subdivided in the 1800s, were not very astute. The blocks were relatively cheap. The Ballard and Murphys Creek areas are on the eastern side of Toowoomba in

the Gatton shire. Most people who purchase land that was subdivided in the last century realise that they are buying land without electricity.

Naturally enough, these purchasers went through the process of making an application for the immediate connection of electricity supply. When they were not satisfied with the price, they contacted me and I attended a meeting held in the home of one of them. Subsequently a public meeting was held in the area. The local manager of SEQEB went with me one night to explain to the people how many persons would need to be in a scheme and the guaranteed annual consumption. A proposition was put to the people who were interested. Last Monday a meeting was held with those potential electricity consumers in the area. I understand that an acceptable number of electricity consumers in the area indicated that they would be willing to accept a proposal. I understand that clearance is still required from higher authorities.

I am pleased to report that the people in the Ballard area should be provided with electricity some time next year. The main hold-up was not caused by SEQEB. It was caused by the rerouting of a secondary road through that area. Work on the main road is being carried out. At the end of 1983 I took the Minister for Main Roads through that area. He said that he would ensure that the road would be upgraded at the earliest possible date. The road had to be rerouted. It is important that the road be constructed before the power poles are installed, because their installation would interfere with the work on the road.

Mr Scott interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Row): Order!

Mr FITZGERALD: The people in that area will be better served once the electricity has been provided.

Mr Scott interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have already warned the honourable member for Cook. I now warn him under Standing Order No. 123A.

Mr FITZGERALD: A number of people in other parts of my electorate need electricity. It is unfortunate that the cost of erecting poles and supplying electricity to some subdivisions is very costly. Unless enough people can get together in a particular development, the cost will be beyond the reach of the average domestic consumer. I warn every person who is buying land in a residential area to check about the electricity supply as well as checking the roads and everything else.

Some people in my electorate use the time-of-day or F86 tariff on their farms. The Queensland Government Gazette dated 16 June this year notifies that an alteration has been made to the minimum requirement under that tariff. It came into effect on 15 June 1984. The required minimum annual consumption is 4 000 kWh. If the annual consumption is less than that the shortfall will be charged at the rate applicable between the hours of 8 p.m. and 6.30 a.m., which is the night tariff rate. Previously, a standing charge of, I think, $30 per quarter per metered position was made under tariff F86. Some people use a great deal of electricity during a couple of months of the year, and the motors that drive their irrigation pumps stand idle for a quarter or two, so they were rather upset that they had to pay a minimum standing charge of $30 and then pay what they considered to be commercial rates for electricity during the remainder of the year when they were consuming large quantities of electricity.

I point out that if anyone has a bore-hole pump connected to electricity and is under the F86 tariff, he should seriously consider whether or not he should have to be on that tariff. Those motors would be driving pumps on stand-by bores. Many farmers have bores on their properties that they are not using all the time. Encouragement was given by the electricity distributing authorities to farmers to connect to the time-of-day tariff, which was the F86 tariff.

According to my mathematics, a farmer with a bore on standby tariff who does not use any electricity at all, if he was connected to the F86 tariff, would pay a minimum of $186 a year. Farmers should carefully consider each metered position on their farms before deciding whether to connect to the F86 or F85 tariff.

It is very difficult for farmers who are consuming large quantities of electricity at irregular intervals, but during off-peak times during the day and at night, to accept a minimum charge under the F85 schedule of 9.38c per kilowatt hour when the consumer in Brisbane pays as a minimum charge for cooking the evening meals only 6.98c per kilowatt hour. Both the farmer and the housewife must use a number of initial units. I repeat that the minimum farm charge is 9.38c whereas the minimum household charge under tariff D50 is 6.98c. It is obvious that the housewife is charged a very attractive rate for her electricity. It is difficult to explain to a farmer who is using thousands of dollars worth of electricity in a year why he should be paying 9.38c when the housewife is paying 6.98c.

Many people complained when they received their last electricity bill. In a previous debate a member said that somebody had complained to him that electricity charges had risen by 30 per cent. By way of interjection, I said that charges had not risen by anything like 30 per cent. What happened? Consumers tended to use more electricity during the winter months. When they checked how many kilowatt hours they consumed, they had to admit that, in comparative terms, the increase was nothing like 30 per cent. People should be conscious of the amount of electricity they consume.

In the "Letters to the Editor" section of "The Courier-Mail" of 28 September 1984 is a letter from "Anne Warner, MLA for Kurilpa" stating that 71 per cent of people surveyed thought that the rises in the price of electricity were unjustified.

Opposition Members: That's right.

Mr FITZGERALD: Anybody who has received a bill, whether it be for motor vehicle registration or anything else, who is asked if he is happy with it will say that he is not.

Often a comparison is made of power costs in the different States. In a previous debate I pointed out the power costs for a family of four in each State. Tasmania is the only State that has cheaper electricity than Queensland.

I refer now to an article in "The Sydney Morning Herald" of 24 September 1984, under the heading "Wran power change plan upsets councils"—

> "The State Government will reintroduce electricity standing charges from October 1.
>
> On March 5, a day after the announcement of a State election, the Premier, Mr Wran, promised voters that the electricity standing charge of $12.84 per quarter would be dropped during the autumn and winter months.
>
> He predicted that this would save NSW householders up to $25 on their annual bill.
>
> However, the move to reintroduce the charges during summer months has angered county councils, which are expected to call for a review this week of the Government's energy pricing policies."

In other words, in New South Wales, Wran gave a discount the day after he announced an election. As soon as the election was over he said that he was sorry, that it was all off, that the standing charges would be cut out.

I congratulate the Minister on the way that he is handling his portfolio. I pay tribute to the officers who have worked so very hard in the electricity industry, not only for the present consumers but also for those who will require electricity in the future. They have the difficult task of accurately assessing the State's electricity needs in the future.

Time expired.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM KNOX (Nundah) (9.5 p.m.): The history of this legislation is, in fact, the history of the evolution of the electricity industry, which has progressed from a very minor operation to one that is huge and plays a very important part in the standard of living of the community. It is remarkable that a community of over two and a quarter million people spread over a huge area has been very efficiently supplied with electricity by an industry that is held in such high regard.

Nevertheless, the industry has had its problems. The problems that have occurred with the evolution of the industry are reflected in the legislation that we have had to face in this Chamber from time to time. I can remember the reports that were produced in the late '50s about the way the State ought to go in developing its electricity industry. That seems a long time ago. Some of the matters that were talked about in those days have long since happened and the State has moved into a new era in electricity generation.

Now that that has all been done, with the introduction of this legislation, which the Liberal Party supports, the State is reaching a new stage that heralds some of the problems that may lie ahead. The greatest problem that I see having to be faced is the establishment of a national electricity grid. That has political overtones. Great difficulties can arise. Already electricity is reticulated from New South Wales into the southern areas of Queensland, in the same way as it is reticulated on both sides of the New South Wales and Victorian border. Because of the Tasmanian dam issue, the possibility of electricity from Victoria being reticulated in Tasmania has been discussed.

Whatever happens, the question of establishing a national grid will inevitably be raised. I know that the Minister and the Government are concerned about this matter because, with it, come the control of the grid, the control of the generating authorities and the control of the destiny of regions of this nation. So great care has to be exercised in approaching this matter. I should hope that the Queensland Government would look after the interests of Queensland and the interests of the industry. I am sure it will.

Obviously some areas of Australia are more favoured than others for the generation of electricity, and other areas are more favoured for the use of electricity. For those reasons, tremendous political problems could arise. A few years ago, at the time of the Whitlam Government, a move was made to try to establish a national grid. The move was immediately resisted by various States, simply because the approach was made on the basis of a centralised authority. The danger lies in the fear that the State will lose its autonomy, will lose control of where and how it wants things to happen and will commence to lose control over the development of industries and the way that society develops generally.

Attempts to establish a national grid are around the corner. I can see evidence of it already in a couple of moves that have been made. I know that the Minister and the Government will resist any sacrifice, any subjugation and any loss of control over where Queensland has its generation facilities, where the electricity is used and the cost at which the electricity is supplied to industry.

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that the Gladstone aluminium works and the big coal industry development would never have got off the ground if there had not been complete political control over the electricity industry in this State. It just would not have been possible to produce a package to develop those industries without political control over the electricity industry. I am sure that everybody would understand that if there was centralised Government control of the electricity industry in Australia, some regions would be more favoured than others.

Mr Price: Isn't that a socialistic approach?

Sir WILLIAM KNOX: That is what the Whitlam socialist Government tried to do. It floated that idea, and the then Minister (Mr Camm) revealed it publicly and said that he would resist it. He had the support of the Government, and I suspect that although members opposite have a socialistic, doctrinaire approach to such problems, if a resolution of this House had been called for. he would have had the support of both sides of the

Parliament of Queensland. I have raised the matter because I can see that it will be the next big challenge to be faced, and it could be very serious.

This Bill deals also with the plight of electrical contractors. I am sure that every member has been lobbied by and received information from electrical contractors. In fact, I am surprised that some of their problems have not been raised already.

Any member who has spoken to electrical contractors will have discovered that their problem is quite serious. Firstly, the industry is losing tradesmen—that is, tradesmen are not staying in the industry because of competition from people who have contractors' licences although they are not in the contracting business full-time. There is some justification for that practice, although there are certain inhibitions that I will mention in a moment.

What is more serious is the loss of apprentices to the industry. It is true that the downturn in the building industry generally has led to the laying-off of apprentices in the contracting industry; but the fact that many employers who would have the capacity to employ a number of apprentices find that they have insufficient tradesmen to meet the ratio that is required between tradesmen and apprentices poses a serious problem for the future of the contracting industry. Employers must be encouraged to employ additional apprentices.

Because in the electrical industry it is almost impossible to become a qualified tradesman without practical day-to-day experience under the supervision of a tradesman, it is obvious that apprentices must receive on-the-job training. As I have said already, it is a serious problem that will lead in the long term to a shortage of people able to supply services in the contracting industry. The ultimate concern must be for the consumer, the house-holder and industries that depend on the supply and reticulation of electricity. That is the rub.

How can protection be provided for consumers? How can service be ensured if no tradesmen are being trained because apprenticeships are falling away?

In his opening remarks, the Minister said that it is hoped that the setting of a high licence fee might discourage moonlighting. The honourable member for Nudgee also raised that point. I have some reservations about whether a high licence fee will achieve the desired result. I am concerned that it might discourage the fully qualified tradesman who is in business in his own right but does not work in the industry every day of the week. He might come in and out of the industry depending on the demand for his services in a certain locality. A high licence fee might well be prejudicial to those people who are in business but who, for various reasons, are not heavily involved in the industry. Sometimes they live in remote localities or small towns in which the demand for their services is not as high as it would be in a large city.That is one inhibition in having a high licence fee. Nevertheless, the Minister is genuinely trying to meet the wishes of electrical contractors in that regard.

There are areas of the State in which electrical contractors are not in business as such. In those areas, licensed electrical contractors who work in sugar-mills, coal mines and other industries can, and do, provide private electrical services. It is no use ignoring that; it is a fact of life. People in any small town are able to say who those contractors are and where they can be located.

Unfortunately, that leads to some misunderstanding between employers and their tradesmen who are licensed under this Act. It has been brought to my attention that people who work for a contractor during the week are able, at the week-end, to take customers away from that contractor. I know that that has happened. I do not know how widespread the practice is, but I am sure that from time to time every member has received complaints about it.

If a person is entitled to hold a licence, he should be able to trade under that licence in the same way as other tradesmen—for example, plumbers—and even professional people in some areas. Although the ethics in some professions do not allow professional

people to engage in private practice, nevertheless, they do. On a number of occasions that problem has been brought to the Minister's attention. It has been raised in this Chamber frequently. Although I am sympathetic to electrical contractors, I do not see any easy solution to their problem. I do not think that the provisional licence system is a solution, even though the electrical contractors think that it is. There is room for provisional licences in areas in which there are no private electrical contractors. The Minister could consider that matter in the future. I do not see provisional licences as being a blanket answer to the question.

A very serious problem arises when the electrical contractors concerned are employees of an electrical authority, because the authority is also the supervising body for much of the safety work in the electricity industry. It seems to me that that is an anomaly. Public servants or employees of statutory bodies are not allowed to practise outside the departments or statutory bodies, yet employees of electrical authorities are permitted to engage in private practice.

The right to private practice is given to a very limited number of doctors in hospitals. They are identified, and people know who they are. Certainly public servants are not allowed to range at will with their particular skills. That is contrary to the Public Service Act. It seems to be an anomaly that electrical contractors, who are licensed under this legislation, are able to engage in private practice. That should be stopped. Although some people may deny that that happens, every member knows that it does happen, and it happens frequently.

I foreshadow an amendment to this legislation which, if carried, will legally prevent that practice from continuing, except in isolated areas of the State in which there are no private electrical contractors. In those circumstances the Minister should be able to authorise contractors to engage in private practice. That could overcome the problem facing isolated communities in which private electrical services are not usually available.

Another request made by electrical contractors dealt with the holding of public liability insurance. It surprises me that there are any electrical contractors in business who do not have public liability insurance. I do not think that legislation is needed; I would have thought that it would be prudent to have that insurance. Any person who goes into any sort of business dealing with the public and public utilities and does not have public liability is putting himself, eveything he owns and his whole family in a very compromising position. If any electrical contractors do not have public liability insurance, they should get it. The premium is reasonable and it protects the contractor and everything associated with him.

These matters are of concern to contractors. I have no doubt that industry in the private enterprise sector has faced serious challenges in recent years. An easy legislative solution does not exist to this problem. I fear that the attempts made by the Minister for Mines and Energy in this Bill to overcome some of these problems do not go far enough. However, I am not prepared—as others may not be prepared—to say that easy solutions can be found, because I know, having been involved in discussions over a long period, that it is difficult to find simple solutions.

Unless a positive approach towards helping electrical contractors is adopted, there will be a grave shortage of tradesmen and, therefore, a shortage in service to the community. It is very important that, in a State as vast as Queensland, the remote areas and provincial centres, which usually have these businesses, are adequately serviced. I hope that the amendment that I will move will be considered seriously and favourably by the Committee in due course.

Mr PRICE (Mount Isa) (9.22 p.m.): The member for Nudgee referred to most of the contentious aspects of the Bill, as did other speakers. I commend the Minister for amending the Electricity Act and for taking the time to pause and consolidate legislation that has become outmoded in various aspects.

Electricity plays a vital role in our daily lives. We are so dependent on it that, to recapture the life-style prior to the advent of electricity, we would have to force upon ourselves the privations of those times. The circle is now complete and the pre-electricity era has entered our recreation time—many people now take camping holidays.

I was pleased to note from the Minister's second-reading speech that Cabinet decided to bring the industry closer to the Government, and most of the thrust of the Bill is aimed in that direction. I might add that that is a nice, socialist touch. However, taking the industry as a whole, I fear that it may be defeating its own purpose.

Queensland has some of the world's largest coal supplies and I am sure that the concept of developing these deposits for the benefit of Queenslanders was uppermost in the mind of the Government when this Act was formulated. In other words, cheap coal, cheap power. The thinking behind that concept may be going astray in the Government's benefiting the few and in the apparent world parity pricing of the product for the domestic market.

Because it benefits the few—the industrial or big-user consumers—the majority of Queenslanders are missing out on what should be cheap power. By way of secret negotiations and the provision of power at cost—less the mark-ups, capital investment factors and interest and redemption factors—huge consumers are reaping the benefits of Queensland's finite resources at the expense of ordinary Queenslanders because those factors are loaded into the domestic tariffs.

A typical purchase of bulk power by an electricity board such as NORQEB, which is in close proximity to my electorate, might be 3.19c per kilowatt hour. That is very reasonable, and a comparison could be made with oil production in Australia, which is also covered by world parity pricing.

I have been told that the cost of getting crude oil out of the ground is 1c a litre. With the addition of the loadings imposed by the oil companies, taxation—60 per cent of the price is made up of taxation—and other Federal and State levies to meet the cost of road maintenance and so on, the price jumps to 48c or 50c a litre, or, as in Mount Isa, 54.9c a litre.

Electric power can be purchased at 3.19c per kilowatt hour. I suspect that that price is close to that which is offered to the industrial giants. In contrast, the domestic consumer pays anything from 7.2c to 24.69c per kilowatt hour. The average three-monthly electricity account for consumers in the NORQEB area is $120.75. I can assure honourable members that sometimes the electricity account for my family, containing five children—even with our solar hot-water system—is even higher than that. The original purchase price of electricity has many loadings added to it. Somewhere the Government is doing the wrong thing. The loadings are too high and the development in the electricity industry is going ahead too fast.

To reinforce some of the interjections that were made during the speech of the honourable member for Lockyer, I will quote from "The Australian Financial Review" of Friday, 26 October. Most of the article to which I refer deals with so-called free enterprise in Queensland. The article is headed "As Sir Joh says, 'Don't worry about that'." The portion of the article that caught my attention related to power and stated—

> "On reflection, the cost of electricity is higher in Brisbane than in other capital cities. For example, 1 000 units a quarter cost $77 in Brisbane, compared with $59 in Sydney. For 2 000 units the figures are $147 and $135. Something to do with equalising tariffs in city and country. The Government recently decided that as well as revenue having to cover interest and sinking fund contributions on past capital expenditure, it would also have to finance some current capital works. We shouldn't argue about these things just because we have to pay more for our electricity."

Of course, the writer is saying that with tongue in cheek.

The loading of the cost price to determine the domestic tariff includes a 20 to 25 per cent loading to raise revenue for capital works. That is also stated in the Queensland States Electricity Commission's 47th annual report.

I fear that the domestic consumer is being trampled. Some accounts have risen by as much as 200 per cent since 1977. Yet this Government continues the rush. Its higher-than-inflation loading of domestic tariffs pays for it all.

With those excesses comes the need to justify them to the public. I recall that the honourable member for Lockyer claimed that there was no need for concern, as Queensland's electricity industry had a money-producing debt, anyway. Of course, the matter could be taken to its extreme, and that in itself causes concern. The Queensland Government claims that this State is developing faster than any other.

Mr FitzGerald: Did you get a copy of this booklet?

Mr PRICE: Which booklet is that?

Mr FitzGerald: It shows that in 1977 the costs in Queensland went up by 98 per cent, in New South Wales by 129 per cent and in Victoria by 124 per cent. You mentioned a figure for 1977. Didn't you get a copy of this booklet?

Mr PRICE: As it bears the National Party's colour, I do not think I could bear to look at it. Anyway, probably it was printed by the honourable member for Lockyer.

In the electricity industry's rush to develop, the domestic consumer is being trampled. Since 1977, some accounts have risen by as much as 200 per cent.

Mr FitzGerald interjected.

Mr PRICE: That is also in the annual report of the State Electricity Commission of Queensland. I will admit that.

There were huge debt redemptions from excessive borrowings. In 1983-84, $517m was borrowed for new works, and $133m was open to the vagaries of overseas borrowings and $492m on the Australian market. The people are told that the cost of power in Queensland is still about the cheapest in the world. They are salved with comparative figures that supposedly show up the other countries as wilting under the high cost of their electric power. As with petrol-pricing, they are conditioned to pay the same as the rest of the world. Despite that, they are sitting on hundreds of years' supply and are being refused the benefits.

I fear that with the apparent restructure there will be an eventual take-over of the boards. Will the next amendment revert us to the Brisbane board-room syndrome and will, say, NORQEB or FNQEB decisions be made in a concentration of executive power? Will country representation be a thing of the past? Will this decentralised State revert further to south-east control? Where will the commission sit? It used to be that the elected representatives on those boards were the only ones able to fill the role of chairperson. That kept politics out of board-room decisions. It helped ensure that decisions were apolitical and that members of the board played the role that they were intended to play. But decisions were localised and grassroot. Sufficient Government control was ensured by the Government appointees on the board, while the chairperson retained the right of veto. Now that has gone. Government appointees can now take the chair and all the implications are there—stronger Government control, boards more amenable to Government pressure and all semblance of political independence gone.

In restructuring along the lines of our socialist sister States, in following the leaders in obtaining more accountability, I again commend the Minister. It is a pity that other portfolios do not follow suit. However, the individual amendments seem questionable.

Firstly, the repeal of and replacement by new section 160—"Supply of and charge for electricity by consumer to occupier of premises"—struck me as a move to placate

the large caravan park owners. The old section forbade the loading of charges payable by other occupiers. The Bill changes that. The consumer now has an option to add charges. Does it cover occupiers with or without meters?

Imagine the caravan parks in country areas, such as Boulia or Duchess. Of course, there are no metered sites there. The caravan parks are generally located behind the local hotel. In Boulia, the caravan park is across the Wills River on the other side of town. As there are no meters, what happens? What effect will the new section have on hypermarkets or shopping centres? What unbridled power can it put into the hands of landlords when power is a common cost and rentals are based on floor space?

At the moment, small stores are located in supermarkets such as K marts. The wiring in those small stores is separate from that for the rest of the store. Each store has a meter. What will happen with the hypermarket that is being constructed at Aspley? The rental will be based on floor space. I assume that the wiring will not be an independent set-up and that the cost of power will be part of the rental charge. How can that be policed? Surely all sites, particularly caravan parks, should have meters and a separate tariff charged. The ALP has such a policy.

The electricity authority is as wide as the boards allow. At present, this occurs throughout Australia. No matter where caravan parks are located in the State, there is no reason why they should not be metered separately. There is one exception to that, and I will refer to it later.

In accepting national standards for electrical appliances, are the Federal authorities to blame if anything goes wrong? Will the tested articles all be stamped accordingly? What happens when articles are tested? On import, are they tested by Australian authorities or will that be just a Queensland chore that has to be carried out by the State Government? Will a standard mark that people will recognise be placed upon them to indicate that the State and Commonwealth standards have been met so that people can determine that an article is safe before they purchase it?

I refer to the law relating to electrical contractors. The member for Nundah dealt with the subject rather well. I will speak parochially. How will the Bill control the electrician who does not have a contractor's ticket for work on Sunday and after hours?

In Mount Isa, because mine employees help out after hours, contractors are regularly left the scraps on the domestic market. Opposition members received from the Electrical Contractors Association a letter, which I suppose Government members also received. That letter stated that the association had been trying to make submissions to the Minister since the introduction of the Act in 1976. It said—

> "The amendment Bill does not address itself to the problems of the Industry and does not bring about the changes we have sought since 1976 and we see as required in the interests of Consumer safety, protection and Industry survival."

The association has sought members' support in amending the Bill to provide for the provisional two-year licence. I will not go into detail on that, because I am sure that the Minister understands it. I am amazed that the industry has not been involved in the preparation of either the Bill or any amendments to it.

Price equalisation is no big deal to consumers in the north-west, who enjoyed the cheapest power in the State for many, many years prior to the introduction of the Act. The power was sold directly to consumers by Mount Isa Mines, which provided the administration. Following the enactment of the legislation, an electricity board took over, a bureaucracy was imposed and local protestations were overruled.

I mention the Mornington Island episode. In my electorate, the township of Gununa is responsible for its own generation, reticulation and distribution of electric power. I stress that when the Electricity Act was introduced in 1976 the Government justified the seizure without compensation of the electricity assets of numerous shires and city councils, using the excuse that that loss of assets would enable people—and I stress the word "people"—in country areas to receive more power more cheaply and efficiently.

The Mornington shire was created in 1978. The Electricity Act was then in operation. The reticulation and maintenance by the coucil of electricity generation on the island is a significant drain on its resources. Owing to the extremely high cost of providing electricity in such isolated locations, the charges to consumers are also very high.

Because of increasing demand, the line work and ring mains will have to be upgraded in the 1984-85 year. The Far North Queensland Electricity Board has advised that it will be necessary to upgrade generating capacity before sewerage works can proceed. A sewerage scheme is proposed for the population of almost 1 000 people. That will involve a further capital expenditure of up to $400,000. That is a large sum for such a small community.

It is the council's wish, for a number of reasons, to have FNQEB take over the electricity undertaking. The community is disadvantaged by very high electricity charges. The extraordinarily high costs of operating the undertaking are a severe drain on the council's resources, and disadvantage the community in the provision of other essential services. FNQEB, an organisation with a revenue base many times that of the council, would have the capacity to provide a reliable service at less cost to the consumer through economies of scale and cross-subsidisation.

Prior to the formation of the shire, the Far North Queensland Electricity Board guided the electricity reticulation, but as soon as the Mornington shire was created, because of the lack of help from the FNQEB, Gununa was disadvantaged concerning the reticulation of electricity.

Correspondence was entered into immediately. Firstly, the shire council wanted to prepare a file on electricity reticulation on the island so that it could base its claims to the State Government on what had happened before the council was formed. The mission had not kept records on the electricity supply. They were kept by the FNQEB. Despite all the correspondence that has gone from the shire council, from my predecessors who represented the Mount Isa electorate and from me to the FNQEB, not once have any of the queries been answered. Phone calls have been answered, but I have not had an opportunity to speak to any responsible person about the problem.

I have a few letters from which I shall quote to indicate to the House the saga of events. On 3 September 1980, the then shire clerk (Mr Dwyer) wrote to the FNQEB stating—

> "Council is deeply concerned in relation to the extent of the costs of electricity supply on Mornington Island which are not covered by electricity sales ... I ... seek your advice on...
>
> . . .
>
> Details of any agreement between the Board and a former Administrator of the Council.
>
> . . .
>
> Details of the connection fees collected by the Board since the establishment of the Council.
>
> . . .
>
> Full details . . . of the operation and maintenance of the generation and distribution system at Mornington Island from 1st July, 1979."

That is the first letter written to try to establish contact with the FNQEB, but no reply was received. The then Minister for Welfare (Mr Doumany) visited the island and, after examining the problem, wrote to the then Deputy Premier and Treasurer (Dr Edwards) in the following terms—

> "The need for relief in this particular facet of life in that part of Queensland cannot be too strongly stressed—a need that could be alleviated, he says, by their being incorporated in NORQEB grid."

The islanders were grasping at straws. They were trying to get into either the FNQEB or the North Queensland Electricity Board, which supplied power to the Mount Isa region. In my opinion that would be the best board to monitor the conditions on Mornington Island, which is only one and a half hours by light aircraft from Mount Isa and two and a half hours away from Cairns. However, the FNQEB is still the authority that the island looks to.

On 24 April 1981 the council wrote to the Minister for Mines and Energy in the following terms—

> "During the days of the Mission, there existed an informal agreement between the Mission authorities and the Far North Queensland Electricity Board for the maintenance of the generation and reticulation system on Mornington Island. This agreement was only ever in a verbal form and no formal contract was entered into. Since the takeover by the Shire of the electricity undertaking, no better form of agreement has been achieved with F.N.Q.E.B.
>
> . . .
>
> In addition, by reason of the fact that the Shire operates largely on grant funding by the Government it is thought that economies could well be achieved if the electricity generation and distribution undertaking presently being carried on by the Council were taken over by a suitable electricity board."

Of course, once again the choice was FNQEB or NORQEB.

A similar letter was sent to Mr Hinze on 24 April 1981. Somehow or other, he just copied the reply given by Mr Gibbs. Again, on 19 May 1981, the new shire clerk in Gununa wrote again to Mr Gibbs pointing out the deficiences in the council trying to look after its own supply and stated—

> "Whilst the Council has fixed its tariffs in the current financial year at a level equivalent to those applied by the Far North Queensland Electricity Board for supply from isolated diesel powered generating stations in 1979-80 plus 40%, the charges levied are still insufficient to cover the costs of the operation."

I am starting to read between the lines, and I suggest that that is the real reason why the FNQEB will not go to the island.

As I mentioned earlier this evening, the north west is considered by the Government to be the home of Murphy's law. It is said, "Send anything over to the island and you can bet your life if something is going to go wrong with it, it will." Because Mornington Island is the most remote community in Queensland, the high costs also have to be considered, but why should anybody miss out? This community of Queenslanders on an island just off the coast cannot get the same support from an electricity board as is received by every other shire in Queensland.

Mr White, in referring to the cost of electricity in the area wrote—

> "The cost of electricity in this area is a severe impediment to the development of efficient industry and in turn to the general development of the economy."

A similar letter was sent to the FNQEB on 31 May 1981. At that stage the council had been writing for two years. As yet it has not even received the courtesy of an acknowledgement, let alone a reply. The letter states—

> "I am instructed, on behalf of the Council, to express its profound disappointment at the persistent lack of co-operation which it has experienced in its dealings with your Board."

The council was starting to get a bit stroppy, and that is very understandable. The letter continues—

> "The result of this failure to furnish the information requested has been that the Council has been deprived of the opportunity of recovering costs for which it carries insurance, with a resulting loss to the Shire as a whole and an increased

burden upon State Treasury which is obliged to provide funding for the Council's general fund by way of State Special Grant."

So it costs the Government whichever way it looks at it. It beats me why those people cannot be provided with an electricity supply. The letter continues—

". . . pointed out that telegrams seeking urgent information and assistance have frequently been ignored and requests for urgent visits have met with no response."

The letter continues—

"You will be aware that the Council has withheld payment of its accounts—"

it even tried that—

"for the past 12 months, in the hope that your Board would respond to the Council's requests . . ."

Of course, it is illegal for a shire to refuse to pay, so it sent off a cheque.

On 3 August 1981, Mr White received a reply from Mr Gibbs. I cannot say the same about Mr Gibbs as I did about Mr Hinze. He at least answered the letters. Mr Gibbs stated—

"Having perused all the correspondence I see that the contentions are:—

(a) that it is in accordance with Government policy to take this step—"

that is for equal tariffs and to look after the generating authority on the island—

"(b) that the introduction of tariffs uniform with those in the other parts of the Area of supply would encourage the establishment of a significant industry;

(c) that services provided by The Far North Queensland Electricity Board for the Council's Electricity Undertaking are less than satisfactory."

So Mr Gibbs agreed with the Islanders and the shire. The reason Mr Gibbs gave for not going to the island was—

"An important reason why I am not prepared to support the acquisition of the Mornington Island Electricity Undertaking by a public electricity authority is that pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government (Aboriginal Lands) Act, there are restrictions on access and ownership of lands which do not apply to other Local Authorities. The Shire is similar in many ways to closed mining towns, such as Weipa. The Electricity Boards do not supply individual consumers in these towns."

I suppose one could nominate any number of mining towns in Queensland that would fall into that category, but one could also nominate Doomadgee, which is not a shire at this stage but which receives the services of FNQEB in a manner similar to that required and requested by the Islanders. So in my opinion that is a mere technicality. If the board really wanted to act, I am sure that it could.

Mr White replied to the Minister in the following terms—

"1. Your observations with regard to land tenure and access to the Shire are incorrect.

. . .

2. The Shire is in no way similar to closed mining towns.

. . .

3. It is not intended that power should be supplied at subsidised rates to industry to exploit natural resources.

. . .

4. The arrangement between the F.N.Q.E.B. and the Council is informal.

. . .

5. Representations made previously by the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement have no bearing on the present situation.

. . .

6. The Government has failed to honour its promise to the people of Queensland.

As previously pointed out, at the time of the introduction of the Electricity Act, your Government used as its justification for the seizure without compensation of the electricity assets of numerous Shires and City Councils the promise that this loss of assets would be used to enable people in country areas to receive power more cheaply and efficiently."

He referred to people in country areas, not to shires, towns or mining communities. The letter continued—

"7. Power could be supplied more economically by an Electricity Board.

. . .

8. This Council is being forced to operate illegally in the generation and distribution of electricity.

The Council is not the holder of any licence to generate or distribute electricity under the provisions of the Act."

The Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Racing (Mr Hinze), the then member for Mount Isa (Mr Bertoni) and, finally, I got into the act. The only additional comment that I could make was—

"The present power system is antiquated, inadequate and potentially unsafe. Should trouble occur and it generally does in isolated, inadequately serviced areas like this, the cost to state finances would be astronomical."

Time expired.

Debate, on motion of Mr Wharton, adjourned.

URBAN PUBLIC PASSENGER TRANSPORT BILL

Hon. D. F. LANE (Merthyr—Minister for Transport), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for the co-ordination, integration and improvement of urban passenger services within Queensland and over waters by means connected with Queensland and of related facilities and for the co-ordination of the exercise of statutory powers in relation to such services and facilities and for related purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. D. F. LANE (Merthyr—Minister for Transport) (9.53 p.m.): I move—

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

The purpose of this Bill is two-fold: firstly, to repeal the Metropolitan Transit Authority Act 1976-1979; and, secondly, to provide for a more effective and up-to-date legislative framework for the planning, development, integration and co-ordination of urban public transport.

There is perhaps no other area of public administration that is so subject to rapid changes in technology, urban development, employment and leisure patterns, economic prosperity and the availability of fuel energy resources as that of public transport. Indeed, often the very quality of life of our young families living in the outer developing suburbs, or the elderly living in the inner suburbs, is intrinsically dependent on the quality, regularity and efficiency of our public transport system.

It is already well documented that only one in ten commuter trips within the Brisbane statistical division is made by public transport. The rest are by private vehicle. The figure is higher for people travelling to, or working in, the central city district. One in three journeys to the city centre is by public transport, while nearly 42 per cent of city workers commute on public transport.

Of the 317,000 daily commuter jouneys on public transport within the Brisbane statistical division, which includes Ipswich, Logan City and Redcliffe, approximately 38 per cent are by rail, 49 per cent on Brisbane City Council buses, 10 per cent on private buses and 1.8 per cent by ferry services.

The problem confronting urban public transport planners and administrators is perhaps best understood when one examines the number of route kilometres of scheduled services covered by each mode and compares that with their annual patronage share. For example, Brisbane's suburban rail services cover 194 km, or 7.2 per cent of all public transport routes, yet carry 36.8 per cent of all commuters. The Brisbane City Council buses travel 648 kms, or 24 per cent of all route kilometres, and attract 48 per cent of commuters. Private buses serving the outer developing suburbs travel 1 847 kms, or 68.4 per cent yet carry only 13.5 per cent of commuters. Ferry services travel 12 kms, or 1.5 per cent, and transport 1.7 per cent of passengers.

Containing the high cost of public transport at fare levels attractive enough to the travelling public, yet maintaining some responsible sense of cost-recovery of public moneys, is the greatest challenge facing urban public transport planners. It is a challenge fought with the weapons of new technology, better co-ordination and integration of services and facilities, computer scheduling and timetabling, skilful and progressive planning and administration, and enlightened industrial relations.

There is no doubt that public transport is expensive transport. The cost of running the Brisbane City Council buses for 1983 was $45.6m; yet the revenue earnings from the travelling public were only $18.1m, or 39 per cent cost-recovery. For the urban rail services, the cost was $50.4m and earnings were $14.9m or 29.5 per cent cost-recovery.

If cost-effectiveness or cost-recovery was the only criterion for providing urban public transport services and facilities, it would be doubtful whether there would be any services at all, except perhaps those by bus to certain inner city suburbs, and then only at selected times.

The importance of or need for an effective and efficient system of urban public transport cannot be assessed only in economic terms. Its implications have far wider considerations and go to the very heart of the quality of life available to many families and single people living in the community. Thus, the need for overall planning and co-ordination of urban public transport is critical if services and facilities are to be provided in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

The administration of urban public transport in Queensland, or, more precisely, Brisbane, has continually evolved since the impetus given by the Wilbur Smith report. In 1970, the Government established the Metropolitan Transit Project Policy Committee to progress on the objectives of that report. That committee was assisted by the Co-ordinator-General, the Commissioners for Transport, Main Roads and Railways, the Under Treasurer, the Director of Local Government, the manager of the Brisbane City Council Transport Department and a representative of the Commonwealth Department of Transport. As a result, an urban public transport committee was formed primarily to prepare a capital works program.

In 1974, the Metrpolitan Transit Project Board evolved to conform with the Commonwealth Government requirement that transport funding be through the auspices of a board. With the passage of the Commonwealth Transport (Planning and Research) Act by the Federal Government, the stage was finally set for the formation of the Metropolitan Transit Authority in 1976.

Honourable members would be aware that, in November last year, the Government took the opportunity of engaging a firm of management consultants to examine the past role and performance of the MTA, as well as its future role and structure. The inquiry came at an opportune time, as the first MTA five-year plan was coming to an end. The consultants' report, which was accepted by the Government on 12 June 1984, recognised a number of limitations which necessarily occurred because of the MTA structure, its removal from the mainstream of Government departments, and also its legislative basis that often gave it a responsibility to do something but failed to support that with the necessary powers.

To a large degree the work of the MTA has been completed. It was created during a period of capital growth when funds for public transport were relatively abundant. Within that context, the MTA successfully completed the bulk of the Railway Urban Electrification Program and began to embark upon its Interchange Construction Progam. As the consultants' report noted, the changes in the Commonwealth funding arrangement no longer required the involvement of such a statutory body.

The period of large capital expansion in public transport has ended; it is now a time for consolidation, better integration and co-ordination of public transport resources. This, however, should not be taken to mean that all capital expenditure will end. Far from it; there is now a need to capitalise on what has been achieved and this will necessarily mean that capital expenditure will continue—especially in the interchange area—but that this expansion will not be as extensive as that of the railways suburban electrification program.

The consultants' report on the role of the MTA acknowledged that, in the area of integration and co-ordination, ineffective working relationships had developed between the MTA and the major transport operators. A substantial degree of this resulted from the Metropolitan Transit Authority Act not being decisive enough in spelling out what powers it had to achieve its ends.

The Bill is designed to give more impetus to the co-ordination and integration of public transprt. While parts of the Bill resemble clauses contained in the Metropolitan Transit Authority Act, others propose new powers which, it is hoped, will enable the Government to bring into reality this new consolidation phase of urban public transport.

I now turn to the Bill in specific detail. As I mentioned previously, this Bill will repeal the Metropolitan Transit Authority Act 1976-1979 and bring the administration of urban public transport within the jurisdiction of the Commissioner for Transport.

The consultants in their report acknowledged the overlapping of responsibilities which already occurs between the MTA and the Transport Department—and they made the suggestion that future responsibility for this area should logically rest with the Transport Commissioner. Indeed, I am aware that this is also a view held by members of this Parliament on both sides of the political fence.

The Bill proposes that the Commissioner for Transport be made a corporation sole with perpetual succession and an official seal. This is because, under this Bill, the commissioner will also be a constructing authority with the capacity to acquire or resume land and also to borrow and invest money. The legal capacities of the commissioner as a corporation, as well as his powers of delegation of responsibility, are set out in the Bill.

It should be noted that specific mention is made in the Bill to ensure that the commissioner, as a corporation sole, is still regarded as a department within the meaning of the Public Service Act 1922-1978. This means that the provisions of the Financial Administration and Audit Act will apply to the administration of this legislation. For the purposes of the legislation, the commissioner is also taken to represent the Crown and as such can exercise all the powers, privileges, rights and remedies of the Crown.

Because this Bill repeals the Metropolitan Transit Authority Act, it is necessary to have savings provisions to protect, among other things, any rights, property or assets,

as well as liabilities or financial arrangements, which will now vest in the Transport Commissioner or be deemed to be made under the authority of this Bill.

A provision is also included for a final audit of the MTA's accounts to be undertaken by the Auditor-General and, in turn, laid before the House for scrutiny.

The broad functions or duties of the commissioner with regard to urban passenger transport are clearly outlined in the Bill. One of the more noticeable differences between this Bill and the Metropolitan Transit Authority Act spelt out in these functions is that the responsibilty for providing, developing, encouraging or assisting the integration and co-ordination of urban public transport services or facilities is not limited to the south-east corner of the State—as occurred with the MTA. The provisions of this Bill will apply to virtually all urban centres throughout Queensland.

The other broad functions of the commissioner spelt out in the Bill allow him to assist those concerned in operating an urban passenger service; to encourage and promote the use of public transport, to undertake research, investigations and planning for future requirments and priorities; and also to ensure and promote efficiency in the provision of urban passenger transport services and facilities.

In addition, the commissioner also has the duty to advise the Minister and carry out his directions. To undertake these functions, specific powers are allocated to the commissioner.

Although some of these mirror those already contained in the Metropolitan Transit Authority Act, additional requirements have been included. These include the power to conduct demonstration experimental and testing projects related to urban passenger transport, and also to publish and disseminate information. The powers also enable the commissioner to operate by himself, or in conjuction with others, an urban passenger service.

In reality, it is envisaged that such a power would only be used in an emergency; for example, if a private bus service were to suddenly cease, leaving residents without any immediate form of public transport. In such a case the commissioner could take over and run such a service until such time as a more permanent solution could be found.

Powers are included to allow the commissioner to acquire, use, sell, lease, let or will land, premises, rolling-stock, and facilities, and also to enter into agreements and acquire assets and undertakings. As well, he may provide monetary assistance, vehicles, business and storage premises and facilities to urban passenger transport operators.

The provision of modern facilities, such as interchanges, passenger terminals and car-parks (single level or multistorey) are an ever increasingly important aspect in encouraging the public to use public transport services. In order that these modern facilities can be provided, specific powers have been given to the commissioner to enable him to undertake such capital works as well as maintain and repair them. The Bill, however, specifically mentions that the commissioner shall not undertake such captial works without the approval of the Governor in Council.

It will be noted that considerable detail in the Bill is given to the power to enter and temporarily occupy a road and undertake road and capital works associated thereon. As honourable members will realise, such works often involve altering or temporarily removing sewerage, power, or water mains, so extra precautions for consultation and safety reasons have been included in the Bill. Similar provisions were included in the Metropolitan Transit Authority Act.

Because the Commissioner for Transport is a corporation sole for the purposes of this Act, his ability to enter into financial arrangements or invest moneys is governed by the provisions of the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982. Certain provisions of that Act have been excluded on the advice of Treasury because they are not relevant.

Provisions are also included to require the commissioner to furnish to the Minister, to be laid before the Parliament an annual report of the administration of this Act. Such a report, however, may be included in the Transport Department annual report, as required under the State Transport Act.

The Bill gives power to the commissioner to require information from a transport authority relevant to his functions under this Bill. This requirement is fundamental if any semblance of informed planning is to take place in urban transport. Integration and co-ordination cannot take place in a field of ignorance. The ability to gather basic data from transport authorities is a fundamental prerequisite to any sophisticated method of planning and administration. I should add that a similar provision was included in the Metropolitan Transit Authority Act with respect to Queensland Railways.

Likewise, provisions also existed in the Metropolitan Transit Authority Act to compel transport authorities to notify the Metropolitan Transit Authority of any policy decisions, developments or works which were likely to have an impact on urban public passenger transport. The reason for this was to allow the Metropolitan Transit Authority to comment on any changes from an overall co-ordination perspective before these transport authorities went ahead with their plans. That concept has been duplicated in this Bill. It makes sense that one cannot have various transport authorities throughout the State making transport decisions that could have a far wider impact on the community without their attention being drawn to that fact.

The purpose of this section is simply to allow for the commissioner, who after all will have the responsibility for overall co-ordination and integration of urban transport services and facilities, to monitor, scrutinise, and, if need be, comment on proposals by other bodies. It should be noted that the commissioner cannot force his views on these other bodies.

The Bill only proposes that these transport bodies take note of the commissioner's comments and, if they are rejected, inform him of the reasons. One of the shortcomings of the Metropolitan Transit Authority Act identified by the management consultants in their review related to the status given to development plans.

The Metropolitan Transit Authority had the responsibility of producing development plans; but, once they were completed, there was no obligation for transport authorities or operators to adhere to them. Needless to say, that resulted in capital works being undertaken with the concurrence of transport operators; yet, when completed, they were not fully supported or patronised by those very same operators. Obviously, if a serious attempt is to be made to promote an efficient system of urban transport through, among other things, the co-ordination and integration of services and facilities, ultimately there must be some means of ensuring adherence to such plans.

The Bill provides the introduction of an urban passenger transport scheme which, on approval by the Governor in Council and publication in the Government Gazette, would be binding on those persons and bodies to whom it applies. A scheme can take the form of a general regional plan or relate to a particular urban transport problem. It can specify timetables, routes, fares and types of vehicles to be used or require certain works to be undertaken. It is proposed that such schemes will apply notwithstanding provisions to the contrary contained in the Local Government Act, Harbours Act, Port of Brisbane Authority Act, Gold Coast Waterways Authority Act, Railways Act, City of Brisbane Act and City of Brisbane Town Planning Act. It should be noted that the Governor in Council, in approving such schemes, is obliged to have regard to any representations made by authorities affected.

In practical terms, the notion of using an urban passenger transport scheme to arrive at an intergrated and co-ordinated transport system would be contemplated only as a last resort. Co-operation and consultation between transport authorities and operators must be the hallmark, in the first instance, of achieving an efficient system of urban public passenger transport.

The Metropolitan Transit Authority Act contains provisions for the regulation of fares on public passenger transport services. Similar provisions have been included in the Bill, with the proviso of the prior approval of the Minister and only on those services specially prescribed. That provision would apply to all forms of urban public passenger transport except the railways.

At present, the Commissioner for Transport, under the State Transport Act, has the capacity to set fares for bus services. However, it is envisaged that the extended provisions in the Bill would override that authority only in certain prescribed circumstances. The Bill specifically allows the commissioner to determine that a single fare will apply on a multimodal journey. That means that, where a journey involves, for example, a bus and rail co-ordinating journey, the traveller will require only one ticket. In such instances, the portion of the railway fare will be determined by the Commissioner for Railways.

Because the Commissioner is a constructing authority, the power to enable him to acquire land has been included in accordance with the purposes specified in the second schedule of the Acquisition of Land Act. Specific provisions are provided for the vesting of land taken to be in the name of the Crown or the Commissioner; for the Governor in Council to alienate land to the Commissioner; and also for the disposal of land not needed for the purpose for which it was originally acquired.

A planning and advisory committee similar to that which presently operates under the Metropolitan Transit Authority Act and under the Traffic Act is also being proposed in the Bill. The committee is primarily a working group of departmental heads involving the Commissioner for Transport, the Commissioner for Railways and the Commissioner for Main Roads. However, provision is also made for the appointment of other persons. It is felt that, as urban public transport intimately involves those three departments, their commissioners would be best suited to advise on the practical operation of the Act as well as the future priorities for services, facilities, capital works and research or planning projects.

As mentioned earlier, a feature of the Bill is that it endeavours to extend the jurisdiction of urban public transport planning and administration out of the south-east corner of the State and into other urban centres, be they provincial cities or major rural towns. To reinforce that concept, provision is made for the Commissioner for Transport to establish and maintain other advisory committees to assist in all facets of the Act. It is envisaged that those committees would be regionally based and composed of representatives of the major transport operators, community groups and members of the public. In a sense, no-one knows more about public transport than the people who own it or operate it. It is the Government's intention, through the establishment of advisory committees, to tap that knowledge and expertise for the betterment of a more efficient system of urban public transport.

The evolution of urban public transport planning and administration has, until relatively recent times, been the responsibility of individual Government departments or local authorities. Consequently, a body of legislation has evolved whereby various Acts contain bits and pieces that claim authority for the administration of components of public transport. For example, the City of Brisbane Act gives the Brisbane City Council power in relation to ferries, omnibuses and other means of public transport.

Similarly, the Local Government Act contains provisions relating to ferry services and parking facilities. The Harbours Act has the ability to regulate ferry services plying for hire, and the Transport Act contains provisions relating to the licensing of bus services. In practical terms, if there is to be some overall effective planning, integration and co-ordination of urban passenger services, clearly the relationship between this Bill and those other Acts needs to be established.

The Bill proposes that in matters related to urban public transport services and facilities, the provisions or by-laws of those Acts shall not apply where the commissioner exercises his power under this Act.

As is usual, provisions have been provided for the making of regulations, and a schedule is attached outlining the subject matters for regulations.

Finally it will be noted that the Act requires the signification of Her Majesty. The reason for this relates to the competency of this legislature to make laws for the peace, order and good government of areas separated by waters beyond the low-water mark.

Following the invalidation of the water transport provisions of the State Transport Act in 1963 by the Full Court, advice was received that the legislation relating to water transport services must comply with the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894 of the Imperial Parliament. Under that legislation, a British possession (which Queensland legally is) acting to regulate water transport must contain a suspending clause providing that the Act shall not come into effect until Her Majesty's pleasure has been publicly signified. Such a requirement is not unique in this House and, indeed, applies to any changes made to the Queensland Marine Act.

This is an important Bill because it will help the future development of the urban public transport in this State. Because public transport is so diversified and, to a degree, fragmented, the Bill is necessarily complex and far-reaching.

I hope that honourable members will look upon this Bill as a means of ensuring that the legislative framework for the administration, planning, co-ordination and integration of public transport is sufficient to carry us forward into the twenty-first century.

I commend the Bill to the House and look forward to honourable members' contributions.

Debate, on motion of Mr Scott, adjourned.

CONSTRUCTION SAFETY ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Peak Downs—Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Construction Safety Act 1971-1982 in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Peak Downs — Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs) (10.17 p.m.): I move—

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

In 1971, this House passed a Bill to create the Construction Safety Act, which replaced the outdated Inspection of Scaffolding Act. The purpose of the Construction Safety Act was to introduce measures relating to the building and construction industry on a broader basis than was previously possible.

Since its inception, a number of amendments have been made to the Construction Safety Act and Regulations to clear anomalies and broaden its scope. The amendments now proposed are intended to streamline procedures and extend the Act to areas that are considered necessary to accord with recent developments in the building and construction industry.

In particular, the use of asbestos has become a matter of real concern. Alterations are proposed to the definitions under section 6 of the Act to bring the removal of asbestos under the definition of construction work.

In addition, the Bill provides for the clarification of the definition of a house which has caused some confusion in recent times.

Provision is made to require persons to give their true name and place of residence instead of just name and address. The use of box numbers has caused difficulties in the past.

The Act currently provides for the securing of injunctions from the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. It is proposed to streamline the procedures for obtaining an injunction. I stress that injunctions are sought only in extreme cases where a constructor wilfully disobeys an inspector's directions and there is danger to human life and limb or damage to property.

There are instances in which it is not practical to obtain certificated persons such as hoist-drivers to carry out work. It is proposed that provision be made to enable a permit to be issued to a competent person until he can obtain his certificate, or a certificated person can be engaged.

Penalty provisions have not been changed since the Construction Safety Act was first introduced in 1971. With the present level of penalties it is often found that it is less costly for a person to disobey the provisions of the Act and pay the appropriate fine rather than to comply with the requirements of the Act. It is therefore proposed to substantially increase the penalties as a deterrent. It must be remembered that we are dealing with a matter where the safety of many people could be at stake.

Maximum penalties of $100,000 for bodies corporate, and $25,000 or six months' imprisonment or both for individual persons are proposed. Hopefully the deterrent effect of possible imprisonment will in itself obviate the need for it to be applied as a penalty in any instance. However, the courts may consider invoking such a penalty in very extreme cases of blatant breaches having the most serious consequences for workers and/or public safety.

The incidence of threats, abuse, physical assaults and wilful disobedience of inspectors' directions has increased in recent times. Inspectors under the present Act have power to call a police officer to give them assistance. It is proposed that the authority of an inspector in terms of the Act will be extended to a police officer when called to a construction site by an inspector. For offences such as assault, threat, failing to state name and place of residence or failing to comply with an inspector's direction, the police officer can, of course, arrest the offender using his normal police powers and take him before a justice to be dealt with according to law.

Because of the problems experienced in the demolition of all types of buildings it is proposed to license demolition contractors. There will be six classifications of licences, including the removal of asbestos. Existing contractors will have a period of three months in which to obtain a licence. They will be required to produce evidence of experience in carrying out demolition work of the class or classes for which they seek a licence. At the expiration of the period of three months, prospective demolition contractors will be required to undergo an examination.

Licences will be subject to renewal every 12 months. Provision is being made for learner's permits to be issued and for permits for persons who desire to demolish their own houses.

The Act provides for revocation, suspension and appeals concerning certificates, and similar provisions are proposed in the Bill for licences.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Scott, adjourned.

The House adjourned at 10.24 p.m.