Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 1985

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

PARLIAMENTARY HANDBOOK

Mr SPEAKER: I inform honourable members that tomorrow at 11 a.m., immediately after prayers, photographs for the new edition of the Parliamentary Handbook will be taken in the Chamber. It would be appreciated if honourable members be present prior to 11 a.m. to minimise any disruption to the sitting.

PAPERS

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

Reports—

James Cook University of North Queensland for the year ended 31 December 1983

Mackay Harbour Board for the year ended 30 June 1984

Gold Coast Waterways Authority for the year ended 30 June 1984

Bundaberg Harbour Board for the year ended 30 June 1984

Port of Brisbane Authority for the year ended 30 June 1984

Beach Protection Authority for the year ended 30 June 1984

Rural Reconstruction Board for the year ended 30 June 1984.

The following papers were laid on the table—

Proclamations under—

Forestry Act Amendment Act 1984

Beach Protection Act and Another Act Amendment Act 1984

Agricultural Standards Act Amendment Act 1981

Orders in Council under—

Barrier Fences Act 1954-1984

Forestry Act 1959-1982

Grammar Schools Act 1975 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982

River Improvement Trust Act 1940-1983 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangments Act 1982-1984

Water Act 1926-1983

Harbours Act 1955-1982

Harbours Act 1955-1982 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982

Canals Act 1958-1984

Harbours Act 1955-1980

Agricultural Bank (Loans) Act 1959-1981

City of Brisbane Market Act 1960-1982 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangments Act 1982-1984

Fisheries Act 1976-1984

Fishing Industry Organization and Marketing Act 1982-1984

Fishing Industry Organization and Marketing Act 1982-1984

Fish Supply Management Act 1972-1976 and the Fishing Industry Organization and Marketing Act 1982-1984

Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Act 1926-1984

Queensland Grain Handling Act 1983

Stock Act 1915-1984

Regulations under—

Traffic Act 1949-1982

State Transport Act 1960-1981

Land Act 1962-1984

Forestry Act 1959-1982

Ambulance Services Act 1967-1983

Health Act 1937-1984

Food Act 1981

Hospitals Act 1936-1984

Education Act 1964-1984

Irrigation Act 1922-1983

Water Act 1926-1983

Harbours Act 1955-1982

Pollution of Waters by Oil Act 1973

Canals Act 1958-1979

Queensland Marine Act 1958-1979

Beach Protection Act 1968-1984

Canals Act 1958-1984

Agricultural Chemicals Distribution Control Act 1966-1983

Agricultural Standards Act 1952-1981

Fisheries Act 1976-1984

Fishing Industry Organization and Marketing Act 1982-1984

Fruit and Vegetables Act 1947-1972

Hen Quotas Act 1973-1981

Meat Industry Act 1965-1983

Stock Act 1915-1984

Tobacco Industry Protection Act 1965-1974

By-laws under—

Railways Act 1914-1982

Optometrists Act 1974-1984

Education Act 1964-1984

Harbours Act 1955-1982

Harbours Act 1955-1982 and the Port of Brisbane Authority Act 1976-1982

Harbours Act 1955-1982 and the Gold Coast Waterways Authority Act 1979-1982

Statutes under—

University of Queensland Act 1965-1984

Griffith University Act 1971-1984

James Cook University of North Queensland Act 1970-1984

Reports—

Dumaresq-Barwon Border Rivers Commission for the year ended 30 June 1984

Queensland Peanut Growers Co-operative Association Limited for the year ended 30 June 1984.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Bogus State Government Public Relations Officer

Hon. Sir JOH BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah—Premier and Treasurer) (11.8 a.m.), by leave: In the past week officers of my department have received several complaints from the public about a man claiming to be a senior State Government public relations officer who is soliciting financial support for a new Government publication.

This person has contacted businessmen in Rockhampton and Townsville. My department has not authorised any person to act on its behalf in this regard.

Members of the public who are approached by any person in this regard are advised to contact my department before committing themselves financially.

"Silver Plains" Pastoral Holding

Hon. W. H. GLASSON (Gregory—Minister for Lands, Forestry and Police) (11.9 a.m.), by leave: Whilst I do not want to unduly delay the business of the House, I believe that, as a result of widespread media interest and speculation in the development of the "Silver Plains" aggregation on Cape York, I must put certain matters to the House to clarify the situation.

Mr Scott: Tell the truth about it all. Let the people know what is happening.

Mr GLASSON: If the honourable member will listen, he will find out the truth, which is different from what he has been saying.

Mr Scott interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr GLASSON: At the outset, let me say quite clearly that Queensland is a free enterprise State, and the development of Queensland's vast areas of land in the remote far north and west is welcomed.

Mr Scott interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I give the honourable member for Cook his final warning.

Mr GLASSON: In most instances, such development is far beyond the financial means of any but the most wealthy individual. The high cost of this work confines such areas to companies with substantial financial backing and access to risk capital.

In every instance, "Silver Plains" aggregation notwithstanding, the Lands Department imposes what it believes to be achievable development requirements. These must be balanced between the need to improve the land involved towards its optimum production capabilities and, at the same time, bearing in mind the ability of the developing company to finance such work in the time scale required of it by way of lease conditions.

"Silver Plains" aggregation, by its very history of difficulties encountered by the current lessee, his father before him, and previous lessees, to turn it into a profitable cattle station, indicates the poor type of country involved. At present, it is subject to a number of proposed lease changes, which are currently under consideration by the present lessees, Mr Richard Rand and Princess Charlotte Pastoral Co. Pty Ltd.

I point out that this situation came about following an application by the lessees in November 1982 for a more secure tenure over the leases. At that time, the latest

development report on file, furnished by the Lands Commissioner in Cairns in August 1981, stated that the conditions of lease were not being satisfactorily complied with. Having regard to this, Mr Rand was informed that favourable consideration could not be given to the application, and he was also advised to improve the overall management of the property.

Following a subsequent application, in May 1984, a further inspection of the area was carried out by a senior field officer of the department. This inspection revealed that the aggregation was then being operated in a bona fide manner, and it was considered that the completion of the improvements proposed would ensure the proper development of a remote area of the State.

Accordingly, owing to the not inconsiderable cost of the proposed works by the lessee, and bearing in mind that the leases over the largest part of the aggregation fell due in 1993, the department agreed to consider a more secure lease or more secure leases over those areas not required for public purposes. This led to the current proposal. About 70 000 ha for two new national parks has been excised from the aggregate, with another two sections under the control of the Mines Department and the Forestry Department, and provision has been made for an esplanade along the coastline and river mouths to satisfy the requirements of the Beach Protection Authority. This strip effectively isolates the leases from direct access to the beach area, and major coastal watercourses, which come under the control of the Harbours and Marine Department.

I point out that although in the past there has been talk about the possibility of establishing some type of tourist development on part of the aggregate, no such firm proposal has been put to the department. In fact, the conditions of the proposed new leases have been set with a view to establishing a successful cattle-grazing enterprise on the aggregation.

Developments required by the department under the new leases are estimated to cost in excess of $900,000, excluding stock. Mr Rand has reported to the department that the company has already spent more than $750,000 on developments and improvements of the existing holdings.

The new lease proposals by the department involve a priority special lease over 24 300 ha, subject to the lessees accepting additional development conditions estimated to cost in excess of $600,000. These include not less than 8 000 ha to be developed to improved pastures, which should lift stocking capabilities considerably; the erection of not less than 50 km of new cattle-proof fencing; provision of three new permanent water facilities (earth tanks and/or dams); erection of new cattle yards and the erection of suitable employee accommodation to the value of not less than $100,000.

Upon compliance with those and other conditions within a period of 12 years, the land can be converted to freehold at a purchase price equal to the value at the time of offer, or not more than $5 per hectare, whichever is lesser.

I point out also that it has been brought to my notice that an advertisement was placed in a southern newspaper last week, seeking a joint venture backer or, alternatively, offering "Silver Plains" for sale for $4,500,000.

I bring to the notice of the House that, as the current negotiations for the new lease proposals have not yet been finalised, such sale could take place only on the existing lease areas and conditions. These, of course, would be subject to renewal, in most instances, in 1993.

I point out also that if and when the current proposals are accepted by the lessees, under condition 11 of the special lease involving the 24 300 ha block, its subsequent transfer to another lessee will not be allowed until all developmental and improvement conditions have been complied with in full. Such a transfer would also require the approval of the Minister of the day.

Mr Davis: How long are you going to go on for?

Mr GLASSON: If the honourable member for Brisbane Central would be quiet, I would get through it much more quickly.

The only exception to this would be in the case of illness or other urgent circumstances, which would be subject to special ministerial approval. Non-compliance with lease conditions will render such lease liable for forfeiture. On the remainder of the aggregation, two areas would be changed to 30 and 10-year non-freeholdable special grazing leases. The largest proportion of what is left is to be offered under a 50-year pastoral development lease, again with substantial conditions attached. As with the special 24 300 ha lease, these will be tied into a time schedule. This involves the completion of another 50 km of cattle-proof fencing and the provision of two permanent water facilities, additional suitable employee accommodation, development of improved pastures and destocking of feral cattle.

In the type of country involved, these conditions are considered quite adequate to ensure the continuing development of the land to the department's requirements, and within the lessee's financial capability.

An indication of the poor type of country involved is given in a story in "The Courier-Mail" on Saturday, quoting local bushmen in the Cape area describing much of the "Silver Plains" aggregation as "mongrel country".

I draw to the attention of honourable members the photograph which accompanied that story. The photograph shows the mouth of the Annie River, but I am told that it is indicative of the type of coastal country on "Silver Plains", much of which comprises tea-tree scrub and salt-pans, criss-crossed by a maze of tidal waterways. In fact, the Valuer-General's 1978 unimproved capital value of the overall aggregate was $4.56 per square kilometre, or about 4.56c per hectare.

Next month a new valuation is to be completed, but I doubt very much whether it will be anywhere near the $5 per hectare specified by my department in the new lease proposals, even allowing for a 12-year escalation in its unimproved capital value.

As honourable members will realise, the value of improvements on the land involved cannot be tacked onto the unimproved capital value for freeholding purposes, as they have already been paid for by the lessees.

I repeat that the Land Administration Commission maintains a close watch on developmental leases over a huge area of this State, and imposes conditions aimed at optimising the productivity potential of the widely ranging types of country involved.

However, at all times it bears in mind the high cost of such developments, particularly in remote areas, and stock-carrying capacities under average rainfall conditions.

The acceptable risk level for investors and potential investors must also be weighed against the land's potential earning capacity and ultimate developed market value.

If the Land Administration Commission had ignored these criteria in the past, vast areas of this State's poorer type country would have remained untouched, and our current pastoral earning capacity vastly reduced, which would be to the detriment of the whole of this State's economy.

LEAVE TO MOVE MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE

Hon. Sir WILLIAM KNOX (Nundah): I seek leave to move a motion without notice.

Question—That leave be granted—put; and the House divided—

In division—

Sir WILLIAM KNOX: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker, I draw to your attention that you called a division after there was a call of "No" from the Opposition. However, Opposition members are sitting on the "Ayes" side.

AYES, 37	
Braddy	Milliner
Burns	Palaszczuk
Campbell	Price
Casey	Scott
Comben	Shaw
D'Arcy	Smith
De Lacy	Underwood
Eaton	Vaughan
Fouras	Veivers
Gibbs, R. J.	Warburton
Goss	Warner, A. M.
Gygar	White
Hamill	Yewdale
Innes	
Knox	
Kruger	
Lee	
Lickiss	
Mackenroth	
McElligott	*Tellers:*
McLean	Davis
Miller	Prest

NOES, 41	
Ahern	Lester
Alison	Lingard
Austin	Littleproud
Bjelke-Petersen	McKechnie
Booth	McPhie
Borbidge	Menzel
Cahill	Muntz
Chapman	Newton
Cooper	Powell
Elliott	Randell
FitzGerald	Row
Gibbs, I. J.	Simpson
Glasson	Stephan
Goleby	Stoneman
Gunn	Tenni
Harper	Turner
Harvey	Wharton
Henderson	
Hinze	
Jennings	*Tellers:*
Katter	Kaus
Lane	Neal

Resolved in the negative.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Brisbane City Council Bus Services to Bracken Ridge

From Mr Casey (601 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will ensure reconsideration of the Transport Department's decision not to allow city council bus services to Bracken Ridge.

Penalties for Alcohol-related Motor Vehicle Accidents

From Mr Comben (2 858 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will impose sufficient penalties in respect to alcohol-related motor vehicle accidents.

Importation or Production of Pornography

From Mr Elliott (30 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will prohibit the importation or production of pornography.

[A similar petition was received from Mr Turner (20 signatories).]

Standard-gauge Rail Link, Acacia Ridge-Fisherman Islands

From Mr Shaw (53 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will take immediate action to abandon the concept of the standard-gauge rail link between Acacia Ridge and Fisherman Islands.

Petitions received.

QUESTION UPON NOTICE

A question submitted on notice was answered as follows—

1. Classifications and Salaries, Departmental Heads

Mr HAMILL asked the Premier and Treasurer—

With reference to the recent Cabinet decision to alter the classification and salary of each departmental head—

What is the new classification and salary of the following positions (a) Co-ordinator-General, Premier's Department, (b) State Ombudsman, (c) Auditor-General, (d) Chairman, Public Service Board, (e) Under Treasurer, (f) Commissioner of Stamp Duties, (g)

General Manager, SGIO, (h) Director, Department of Local Government, (i) Commissioner, Main Roads Department, (j) Director-General, Works Department, (k) Commissioner, Queensland Housing Commission, (l) Director-General, Mines Department, (m) Commissioner, State Electricity Commission, (n) Director of Industrial Development, (o) Commissioner of Transport, (p) Commissioner of Railways, (q) Chairman, Land Administration Commission, (r) Conservator of Forests, (s) Commissioner of Police, (t) Under Secretary, Health Department, (u) Director-General, Health and Medical Services, (v) Director-General of Education, (w) Director of Harbours and Marine, (x) Commissioner of Water Resources, (y) Director-General, Department of Primary Industries, (z) Under Secretary, Department of Employment and Industrial Affairs, (aa) Surveyor-General, (bb) Valuer-General, (cc) Under Secretary, Department of Justice, (dd) Solicitor-General, (ee) Public Trustee, (ff) Director-General, Welfare Services, (gg) Under Secretary, Department of the Arts, National Parks and Sport and (hh) Under Secretary, Department of Community Services?

Answer—

Late last year Cabinet examined the grouping of permanent heads within the five approved salary levels. It was decided to eliminate the level 1 salary, and positions identified at that salary level were varied to either level 2 or level 3 and positions at level 2 were varied to level 3. No variation was made to the salary levels of those officers who were on levels 3, 4 and 5.

The current salaries for the respective levels are—

Level 5	$73,340
Level 4	$71,336
Level 3	$65,610
Level 2	$59,672.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Increased State Taxation

Mr WARBURTON: In directing my first question to the Deputy Premier and Minister Assisting the Treasurer, I refer to the statement in this House yesterday by the Minister for Mines and Energy in which he foreshadowed increases in State taxation to make up losses in Government revenue incurred as a result of the power industry dispute. In view of that comment, and because of the seriously damaging consequences of the dispute on Queensland's already fragile economy, I ask: Has the Queensland Treasury prepared a detailed assessment of the effects of the dispute on the State's economy, a dispute that we all know could be settled today if the Government were prepared to allow that to occur? If so, would the Minister care to table that assessment immediately? If not, when does the Treasury intend to carry out such an assessment, especially in view of the ongoing nature of this dispute?

Mr GUNN: The Leader of the Opposition has a hide like a rhinoceros. He comes into this Chamber and talks about great losses being sustained, when he and his cohorts on the Opposition benches are the prime causes of this dispute. They have supported the law-breakers.

It has been reported in every newspaper that, up to the present, the losses to the Treasury would be approximately $25m, and those losses will continue until full production is restored in this State. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to do something for Queensland, he should go out and tell the people concerned, particularly those working on trains and in the mines and elsewhere, to return to work. He did nothing more than encourage those people. He should not be very proud of the part that he and his colleagues have played in this dispute.

Electricity Distribution System, Brisbane

Mr WARBURTON: In directing a question to the Minister for Mines and Energy, I point out that yesterday I outlined the serious problems facing the 11 000-volt distribution system in Brisbane and the imminent danger of extensive black-outs——

Mr Gunn: That is wishful thinking on your part.

Mr WARBURTON: We have all listened to that.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to continue with his question.

Mr WARBURTON: I was referring to the imminent danger of entensive black-outs unless urgent repair and maintenance work is carried out immediately. I ask the Minister in all sincerity: Is he personally aware that the electricity distribution system in Brisbane is currently cluttered with shattered lightning arresters, welded-in high-voltage airbreak switches and blown-up pole cable-boxes? The Minister would be well aware of what I am talking about. In view of the serious situation facing electricity consumers in Brisbane, is the Minister prepared to make a personal visit to the Bowen Bridge Road system control room, talk to the people who run it and see for himself the full extent and seriousness of the problem facing Brisbane's consumers today?

Mr I. J. GIBBS: In reply to the Leader of the Opposition, I remind him of the actions of Mr Madden when a major storm blacked out 80 000 residents in the Brisbane area. Although State Emergency Service people were working for nothing, Mr Madden continued to argue in the Industrial Commission at 9 o'clock at night against an order that the members of his union return to work. It is well known that the Leader of the Opposition is still a member of the Electrical Trades Union and that one time he was an official of that union. The important thing is that he is part of the organisation, and he must take as much blame as the striking workers.

Certain people in the electricity industry have mounted a fear campaign. I do not believe one word of what they have said. The substations and switching stations have been built to the highest possible standards. It has been said that the machinery and equipment are worn out because they have been over-used. I do not accept that. It has also been said that, if machinery of that type was not used regularly, it would decay at a much faster rate than if it was used properly. It has been said that the equipment is used only four times a year.

I point out to honourable members that SEQEB employs highly qualified contractors. As yet, they have not been harassed very often by members of the organisation that the Leader of the Opposition supports. Later I will bring to the attention of the House a number of instances of harassment. There is no doubt that the Leader of the Opposition knows about such instances. He has been part of the deal all his life and he knows just how the organisation works. Although he may stand up in this place and claim that harassment does not occur, I will inform the House in detail of the thuggery carried out by the unions. Some of these people are going round at night attempting to cause problems. The other night they were almost caught, and I assure the House that the next group that tries something similar will be caught.

Some people involved in the fear campaign have made attempts to damage machinery and equipment so that the warnings made by people such as the Leader of the Opposition can be said to have come true. I assure the House that they will not be successful.

In this morning's paper, another advertisement calling for contractors appeared. The longer this dispute goes on, the more contract labour the Government will employ. Some of the best contractors in the world can be found here. It is worth noting that they are members of the Electrical Trades Union. The main issue in the strike is the use of contract labour. The unions have supported the ETU members who are employed by SEQEB and have said that ETU members employed by private contractors should

not be given work. That is the issue that must be faced. A division has occurred within the union and it is taking an anti-private enterprise stand. As far as I am concerned, the community faces no problems. I suggest to the Leader of the Opposition that he should not worry about the issue because the Government will look after it. He should go home and sleep easily.

Union Curtailment of Services to Government Departments

Mr NEAL: I ask the Premier and Treasurer: Can he advise the House of the position regarding the cutting off of postal services to SEQEB and the curtailment of telegram and telex services to him and his Ministers resulting from directions from union boss law-breakers?

Sir JOH BJELKE-PETERSEN: A very concerted campaign by Commonwealth unions to cut off telex, telephone and telegram services to Government departments has been aided and abetted by honourable members opposite. Many problems have resulted from such action. However, by using other means, the Government has largely been able to overcome those problems. Because legal action may be pending, I have nothing further to say at this stage. However, later today I may receive further information.

Fluctuations in Value of Australian Dollar

Mr NEAL: I ask the Deputy Premier and the Minister Assisting the Treasurer: In view of the Hawke Labor Government's decision to float the Australian dollar, at which time the Minister stated that from that point on the movement of the Australian dollar was unpredictable, can he comment on the recent fall in the value of the Australian dollar and the likely repercussions?

Mr GUNN: Throughout the world it is well recognised that the best barometer of a nation's economy and stable government is the value of its currency.

Mr R. J. Gibbs interjected.

Mr GUNN: The member for Wolston would not know.

The value of the Australian dollar has fallen to a very dangerous level. In 1981, against the American dollar, it was worth $1.15; a couple of weeks ago it was worth 66.5c. That has happened under a Labor Government. Why? Because the nation does not have stable government in Canberra! That is the problem. In addition to that, in 1970 the nation's gross external debt was $3.5 billion; in 1980, it was $13.5 billion; in 1984 it was $43.5 billion.

Mr Casey interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr GUNN: Everybody knows the history of the member for Mackay and how he treated the people whom he employed.

This nation currently has the second highest account deficit that it has had in 30 years. That is very serious and will lead to an increase in interest rates. The situation in Canberra is one big hell of a mess. The people of Australia will have to pay. That has been caused because the nation does not have stable government. Mr Hawke changes his mind as often as he changes his shirt.

Mr R. J. Gibbs interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Wolston.

Mr R. J. Gibbs: What did I do?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member knows what he is doing. He is constantly interjecting. I can assure him that, if he wishes to take me on, he will come off the worse.

Mr GUNN: The old drover's dog is pretty torn and tattered, and Mr Hayden keeps on saying that. He is absolutely right. That gives some idea of what is happening in Canberra. The people of Australia will have to pay the price of this socialist experiment. If Mr Hawke had gone his full term under the old electoral boundaries, he would not now have been Prime Minister. However, one thing that is certain is that he will not last the full term this time.

Fluctuations in Value of Australian Dollar

Mr BURNS: I thank the honourable member for Balonne for asking that Dorothy Dix question, because I have a question about devaluation.

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

Mr BURNS: I refer to the devaluation just spoken about by the Deputy Premier and Minister Assisting the Treasurer and his answer to questions by me last year about borrowings by the State Electricity Commission, which had lost $17m on foreign borrowings. I now ask the Deputy Premier and Minister Assisting the Treasurer: Does the State Government hold 60 per cent of its foreign borrowings in American dollars? What is the net foreign exchange loss to date incurred by the State Treasury resulting from the 24 per cent decline in the value of the Australian dollar? What action has the Government taken to minimise the high risk associated with holdings of such high proportions of the State's foreign borrowings in American dollars?

Mr GUNN: The answer is quite simple. In a similar situation Mr Cain answered a question and spoke about a paper loss of $100m.

Mr Burns interjected.

Mr GUNN: The honourable member asked the question and I will answer it. We make our borrowings from a basket of international currencies. Obviously those borrowings are subject to fluctuation depending on the strength of the particular currency. At the present time, there could be a slight loss; next week, it might be a gain. The State's borrowings are in different currencies. The Government borrows in Swiss francs, German marks——

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr GUNN: If the Opposition would give me a chance, I could answer the question.

The Government also borrows in American dollars.

Mr Burns: Is 60 per cent of our borrowings in American dollars?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Does the Minister wish to accept the interjection?

Mr GUNN: I do not mind. I know that Opposition members do not want to hear the truth.

Recently, the Premier and Treasurer (Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen), on behalf of the Queensland Treasury, borrowed $100m in Euro dollars. In Australia, that is now worth $10m more. The Opposition cannot have it both ways.

Mr Burns interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lytton has asked a question; he will listen to the answer.

Mr GUNN: Last year, the Queensland Government raised an additional profit of $250m in offshore transactions.

Mr BURNS: I am far from satisfied with that answer. I will table the question so that the Deputy Premier and Minister Assisting the Treasurer can ask his advisers to give him a factual answer.

Mr SPEAKER: That is the honourable member's second question.

Rights of Individuals

Mr STEPHAN: In directing a question to the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs, I refer to pleas from union personnel to back their mates in the present power dispute for rights to excellent conditions. I ask: Do a large number of other persons also have rights; for example, the rights of the producer to harvest and market his crop; the rights of the business operator to maintain quality of stock and to supply his customers; and the rights of a housewife to feed and clothe her family? By the taking of such action in essential services, have not more rights been taken away from the people than have ever been given in return?

Mr LESTER: I think that all honourable members could simply ask: What about the rights of each and every Queenslander? Approximately 2 500 000 Queenslanders were held to ransom by the actions of just a few persons. What about the rights of the young mothers who were unable to do their washing when the power was turned off through no fault of their own? What about the rights of persons on kidney dialysis machines? Honourable members know the problems experienced by them. They had to be herded into certain areas so that they could obtain necessary treatment.

The Australian Labor Party has shown that it is a party that supports the rights of those few law-breakers and not the rights of the majority of persons. In fact, it encourages a de facto Government run by the unions and not a Government elected by the people, for the people.

Declaration of State of Emergency

Mr PREST: I ask the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs: Does the declaration of the state of emergency under the State Transport Act 1938-1981 prevent the State Industrial Commission from making orders relative to all parties, including the Government, engaged in an industrial dispute?

Mr LESTER: The honourable member knows the rules as well as I do. It was necessary for the Government to declare a state of emergency. I make it quite clear that the Queensland Government, including all members of Cabinet, entirely supports the declaration of a state of emergency. Why should 12 000 people be allowed to be left without power? Does the honourable member suggest that the Government should not have declared a state of emergency when the unions would not return to work? The employees were given the whole week-end to return to work to ensure that power lines would be connected. Clearly, the unions did not agree to do so. The Government had no alternative other than to put off those employees and replace them with workers who would do the work.

Requirement of Power Station Operators to Sign No-strike Contracts

Mr PREST: I ask the Minister for Mines and Energy: In the light of previous statements during the height of the power dispute requiring all power station operators to sign no-strike contracts, will he assure the House that the Government now considers such action to be unnecessary?

Mr I. J. GIBBS: When I became a Minister, much work was done in an endeavour to achieve a no-strike situation concerning the power station operators in this State. That action was taken after they had pulled the pin several times and held two and half million Queenslanders to ransom.

The Government went to a good deal of trouble. Jack Lacey was the mediator. Union people from seven unions accompanied Government members south and dealt with union people. Finally, after a lengthy period, because of a rise in wages and additional goodies such as a 2½ per cent loading, an agreement was reached by all seven parties. However, ultimately the ETU would not sign that agreement. So, the document containing six signatures became registered, without the signature of the ETU.

Over the last two or three years the Government has been in that position. Perhaps that agreement has averted a strike or two. However, it has really done nothing for the community. Of course, most power station operators are responsible people. When union leaders, as they did recently, pose a secondary boycott and order the men to reduce power output by 50 per cent, the stage has been reached where Queenslanders will accept only one thing, and that is nothing less than a non-strike situation in the electricity industry. I can assure honourable members that that is how the matter will finish up.

Government Loans to Small-businessmen

Mr BOOTH: I ask the Minister for Industry, Small Business and Technology to inform the House of the number of applications that the Government has received from small-businessmen for loans to support them following damage to their businesses as a result of the power strike.

Mr AHERN: Approximately 3 000 applications have been received. The Government has placed 30 Treasury officers on standby to process applications as quickly as possible. Temporary accommodation has been provided in the MIM building to enable them to get together and process the applications as quickly as possible. The Government had hoped that the first cheques would be mailed within a fortnight. However, yesterday, the Government was advised by the Australian Telecommunications Employees Association that its members refuse to connect the necessary telephones—an absolutely ludicrous situation! The Government is endeavouring to expedite small business loans and provide a fast-track system——

Mr Davis interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I point out to the honourable member for Brisbane Central that honourable members are listening to a detailed and very responsible reply.

Mr AHERN: The Government is attempting to provide a fast-track method of assessment of these claims. The Australian Telecommunications Employees Association has decided to sabotage the Government's efforts in that regard. It is absolutely ludicrous.

Honourable members opposite have said that no-one will get any loans. That is arrant nonsense. The criteria that the Government is using are the same as those used all round Australia in relation to such disasters as drought, floods, cyclones and hail. Those criteria are supported by other Governments round Australia and have recently been affirmed to us in writing as part of the natural disaster arrangements of the Hawke Labor Government. In fact, the criteria have simply been tightened up.

The Hawke Labor Government is not financing this project at all. It is totally a State initiative. Those same criteria apply right across the nation, and it has always been accepted by State and Federal Governments that in such circumstances the needy people will be assisted. That is what the Government is doing. Many small-businessman will be eligible to receive loans.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Electricity Supply, Roma

Mr COOPER (Roma) (12 noon): The subject-matter of my speech is not intended to be an extension of yesterday's debate on the power dispute, but it is most certainly related to the dispute. My comments are directed specifically to the area supplied by the Roma power station, which has been relatively free of problems for a considerable time. Queensland's electricity supply grid does not offer the same degree of stability and continuity of supply.

I am concerned about the centralisation of power generation in Queensland, for two reasons. The first is the incidence of strikes, from which we have suffered over the

past few weeks. The Roma power station has been relatively free from that problem. I refer to strikes generally and not just to those by members of the Electrical Trades Union. Industrial action by coal-miners affects power supply. I am told that at least 15 unions are involved in the generation and distribution of electricity in Queensland. The State is very vulnerable to disputation, particulary that involving demarcation.

The long distribution lines extending throughout Queensland from the coastal power stations are more likely to be affected by acts of God than are the small distribution systems. The Government ought to be considering alternative sources of power generation, from either natural gas of hydroelectricity. The Roma power station, of course, operates on natural gas, a plentiful supply of which is available. I am fully aware, however, that it is more expensive.

Mr Hartwig: Do you think gas will take over from electricity as a result of the strike?

Mr COOPER: Gas has to be considered as an alternative, even though it is more expensive than coal. Consideration must be given to alternative fuel supplies for the generation of electricity.

The Roma power station is a localised operation. For obvious reasons, I prefer not to dwell on the freedom from disputation in that station. In 1986, however, Roma is scheduled to be connected to Queensland's power grid. People in the area are concerned about it. It could even be said that they are dreading it. Although large and expensive power stations are excellent sources of electricity supply, the reliability of supply is doubtful. The people of Roma should be pleased about being connected with the grid, but they are not.

I realise that the large Queensland grid allows for an equalisation of tariffs and that coal is definitely a cheaper source of power than gas. I am not attempting to stop Roma being connected to the grid. The extension will go from Chinchilla to Roma and then farther out to Charleville and beyond. I seek the support of the Government, however, in having the natural gas power station at Roma maintained in working order so that supply is assured until there is stability in the electricity supply industry. The Government must try its utmost to ensure that the supply of electricity is regarded as an essential service and removed from the threat of strikes.

Mr Davis interjected.

Mr COOPER: It would not be unique. I understand that that happens in Britain, Canada, the United States of America and many other countries. The same should occur here. There should be no argument at all about it. It is my belief that most members of the ETU—and most employees of SEQEB—genuinely want to work. Strike moves come from a handful of union bosses. I am told that for every 14 employees there is one shop steward, and that most shop stewards have Scottish or English accents and belong to an alien army taking orders from Moscow or Trades Hall. Those people control the rank and file by fear, terror and intimidatory tactics. They are Stone Age tactics. Such unionists are coming to the end of their rope. The vast majority of people, whether they belong to unions or not, are absolutely fed up. The business community and people in the wider community realise that the limit of tolerance has been reached. Whereas the dispute is a matter of real principle and is extremely costly, it will eventually be resolved. The Government will remain rock solid and ensure that the electricity industry will be regarded as an essential service, and I believe that the people in the Roma area, who have enjoyed a constant electricity supply for 20 years, will go on to the grid with confidence. At the present time, people do not enjoy that confidence.

An Honourable Member interjected.

Mr COOPER: The people in Roma would probably be happy to stay off the grid. Unfortunately, the power supply provided by gas is slightly more expensive. The people

in my electorate need to be assured that a power supply based upon the operation of coal-fields will not be disrupted as much as it has been possible to do in recent times.

The supply of power through the grid system will involve costly expenditure because, when it comes into operation, people will have to buy auxiliary power plants. That is one of the first things that will have to be done if the current dispute is not settled in finality. The purchase of auxiliary power plants will be extremely expensive in a rural area because an enormous number of livestock—sheep, cattle and pigs—are supplied with water that is pumped by electricity.

People in my electorate know that they will be in dire straits when the power supply is interrupted, either because of strikes or by acts of God. The simple fact is that stock cannot exist very long without water. Because people who live in the metropolitan area are suffering, people who live in a rural area should not suffer as a natural consequence. The opportunity has arisen for the Government to realise the needs of rural people. In the name of security, stability and continuity, the Government should use a more decentralised and a more diverse source of power.

I now revert to the topic of the current dispute. It has been pointed out by honourable members that some sections of the press have acted most improperly and irresponsibly. That is not to say that all journalists fall into that category, but the Government knows the ones who do. I know of feature-writers who are well known for their hatred and vindictiveness towards the Government. It is obvious that those feature-writers let their hearts rule their pens, and they report in a most biased and defamatory fashion. Moreover, biased reporting is a dangerous course. The overkill that has been indulged in has damaged the credibility of the journalists I refer to. I urge the Government to at all times seek out responsible and dedicated journalists and assist them in disseminating news and facts. There are many journalists of high calibre but in a number of instances, facts have been deliberately twisted and distorted by journalists whose political views are probably diametrically opposed to the philosophies of the Government. Because some of the feature-writers are very bitter and twisted, they will eventually destroy themselves.

I reiterate my full support for a voluntary system of unionism. I belong to an organisation of employers, the United Graziers Association of Queensland, and I believe that voluntary unions do a great deal of good by lifting standards and assisting people in business to advance themselves and enhance their lifestlye. However, I am totally opposed to compulsory unionism. No-one should be forced or coerced to take action that is against the will of the individual, and that is the stand that the Government has taken for quite some time. Because Australia is supposed to be a free country, that is the correct stance for the Government to take.

It is deplorable that people have union dues automatically deducted from their pay. I realise that many unionists, regardless of the industry in which the union operates, have become very annoyed about the Government's action to prevent such a practice from occurring. If the Government persists and remains strong in its attitude, the Government's stance will eventually prevail.

Unions should never be in a position to usurp the role of a Government that has been democratically elected by the people of the State. Elections take place every three years, and the National Party Government obviously has a right and a mandate to govern. Action taken by the Government has been exactly what the people of Queensland wanted during the recent industrial dispute, and the vast majority of the people demonstrated support for the Government under conditions of extreme pressure. One would have thought that, after 15 days, the will of the people may have commenced to crack, but it held very firmly. A number of business people have contacted Government members to say that the disruption of electricity supply had hurt them, but they have implored Government members to maintain the Government's stand so that the dispute can be finished once and for all. It is my sincere belief that the Government will achieve that goal.

In addition, although those people can feel that they have put up a tremendous fight and their will has held well under very dire circumstances, the fight is not over and they will have to remain strong and firm.

Time expired.

"Silver Plains" Pastoral Holding

Mr GOSS (Salisbury) (12.10 p.m.): On behalf of the Opposition and all Queenslanders, I rise to protest against the plan by this Government to sell out Queensland and Queenslanders. This Government and the Minister for Lands, Forestry and Police (Mr Glasson) are selling out Queensland and, worse than that, at bargain basement prices so that American property speculators can reap a fat profit from a deal that is not offered to other north Queenslanders, graziers or, for that matter, any Queenslanders.

I refer, of course, to the offensive proposal to hand over about 2 000 sq. km of prime Cape York land to Richard Rand and the Princess Charlotte Pastoral Company which, according to records at the Townsville Corporate Affairs Office, had not, up to last week, lodged an annual return for the last two years and had, by 1982, an accumulated loss of $80,045.

It gets worse than that. Not only is the Government selling out Queensland cheaply to foreign property developers, but it is also selling it freehold. Now that the Government has been caught out it is trying to deceive the Queensland public about the American plans for the property so that it can avoid criticism over the disgracefully low price being paid for the land.

Let me first outline briefly what the Americans are to be given. The deal includes a special lease, with eventual freehold, over two areas totalling 24 300 ha or 60 000 acres. It also includes a 50-year pastoral development holding lease over the balance of "Silver Plains", and other leases and licenses. Overall, through this package deal, Rand and the "Silver Plains" company will get control of an area of 2 000 sq. km of pastoral holding and Crown land on the Princess Charlotte Bay coast on the eastern side of Cape York Peninsula.

The Minister might try to tell members that it is just grazing property and that the property is not that good. "Mongrel country" he called it. Let me give members a description of some of the potential of this prime Queensland land—

> "The property has 80 km of sandy beach front, next door to the Great Barrier Reef, with permanent fresh water, rivers and lakes—a great location with development potential."

Mr Cooper interjected.

Mr GOSS: The honourable member would do well to stand up for Queenslanders instead of abiding by this sell-out.

The words I quoted are not mine. They are the words used by the Rand family to describe the property when they put it on the market last Wednesday in "The Australian Financial Review" on a joint venture basis, valuing the property at $4.5m.

Looking at the freehold section alone—the Government intends to charge Rand $5 per hectare for 24 300 ha of freehold Queensland land—prime coastal land. Who else in Australia can buy that sort of land for $5 per hectare? It is offensive to me, it should be offensive to Government members, and I am sure that it is offensive to all Queenslanders.

How good is the deal being offered to Rand? In 1977 and again in 1983 the Land Administration Commission—the Government's commission—complained to Rand that he had not honoured conditions to which he had previously agreed in relation to managing and improving his leases. He has not kept his bargain in the past—he has not kept his promises—yet the Government is offering him 24 300 ha of freehold land

and justifying it on the basis of new conditions. His word is not worth the paper it is printed on.

A letter of 28 March 1983 from the secretary of the Land Administration Commission reads—

> "In the main the improvements on the area have not been satisfactorily maintained and are generally in a poor state of repair. Also it is considered that the property is not being properly managed, due mainly to the condition of the improvements and the lack of permanent personnel employed thereon."

That letter went to Rand's solicitors. So much for the conditions that the Government imposed on him. It did not enforce them and he treats them and the Government with contempt.

The Minister for Lands, Forestry and Police says that he will be imposing a condition requiring $600,000 worth of improvements on the proposed freehold. He also talks about $300,000 worth of improvements on adjacent leases. To top it all off, freeholding will cost a maximum of $5 per hectare. It could even cost less. That totals $1,021,500 over a period of 12 years, which makes it worth even less than that in today's money terms. Yet in "The Australian Financial Review" of last week the property was advertised at a price of $4.5m.

What a remarkable change in fortune for Ricky Rand who, in the early '70s, was convicted in the Coen Magistrates Court on a marijuana charge! Where is the Government, and where are the people, such as the Minister for Environment, Valuation and Administrative Services (Mr Tenni), who scream about druggies infiltrating the north? Here the Government is giving Rand 24 300 ha of freehold rain forest. Where are the double standards? I have demonstrated them clearly here today.

I come back to the deceit in which the Government has engaged and the true purpose to which the land will be put. The Minister for Lands, Forestry and Police has stressed in headlines in "The Cairns Post" and "The Courier-Mail" his denial that the property will be used for tourist development. He stresses the cattle property aspect and that Rand will get the freehold only after developing it as a cattle property. I am not saying that the Minister is lying, but what he says is not true. The reason that he must deny the tourist development is that he is justifying the cheap price on the basis that it is only a grazing property. It is disgraceful that the Government should flog off the property for that price, and even more disgraceful that it should do so for an international tourist and resort development.

I do not believe the excuses that the Government has given, and I do not believe that the people of Queensland should be fooled by this smokescreen. The lie does not lie in the carefully chosen words of the Minister; it lies in the carefully constructed impression that it will be a grazing property and not a tourist development.

Rand is advertising the property on the international market for its tourist potential for $4.5m, when the total cost to him has been little more than $1m. The Government might say that it is mere speculation or a mere possibility that the land will be used for tourism. The price tag that Rand places on the land belies that suggestion.

If proof is required, I challenge the Minister for Tourism, National Parks, Sport and The Arts (Mr McKechnie) to deny that Rand asked for, and was given in May 1984, an assurance in writing that the National Parks and Wildlife Service would not promote a tourist or resort development that would conflict with such a development on the Rand property. So the deceit is exposed. We now know of Rand's true plans.

I challenge the Minister for Lands, Forestry and Police to justify this disgraceful sell-out to the public. I challenge him to go to a press conference and justify how he sells off this prime north Queensland coastal land for $5 a hectare. I challenge him to table in this Chamber the conditions on the proposal offered to Rand, which so far he has not made public, and the Government report on Rand's management of the property, which will disclose the truth. I challenge the Minister to table the undertakings that were

allegedly sought and have been complied with. If they have been complied with, why does not the Minister say what they were? Why does he not table them in this Chamber?

Who will stand up for Queenslanders and north Queenslanders? The faceless Ministers? Perhaps the Minister for Northern Development and Aboriginal and Island Affairs (Mr Katter) will. I understand that recently he appeared on north Queensland television, expressing his objections to this proposal. Good on him! Perhaps this special deal has been made because Wiley Fancher was Mr Rand's pastoral adviser for many years. We all know that he is another one of those sleazy hucksters that the Premier counts as his friends.

Rand claims to have carried out improvements. His neighbours and public servants in the north ask, "Where are they?" It is a lie; it is not true.

Mr Scott: Where does Mr Katter stand on this?

Mr GOSS: Who knows? Let him stand up in this Chamber and tell us.

Rand has thumbed his nose at the conditions imposed by the Government; yet it gives him more and even more land on the basis of new conditions, at which he will thumb his nose again. The Government is offering the land to him for $1m, which it says it believes to be the value. From what Rand is asking for the property on the international market, obviously its value is much more.

It is clear that there has been dirty work at the crossroads, that money has been passed under the table. Honourable members can make their own choice. It is either that or gross incompetence in selling out Queensland. That is what the Government is doing: it is selling out the birthright of every Queenslander, the people who the Government claims to represent. Who is standing up? The deal has been done in secret. The Government has been negotiating it in secret for a year, and, what is more, it will not table the balance of the material that will reveal the truth.

Electricity Strike

Mr LINGARD (Fassifern) (12.19 p.m.): Over the last three weeks the people of Queensland have been made painfully aware of the power and influence of the trade union movement in this State. Regardless of what our political attitudes or philosophies are, we must all recoil with horror at the power that union officials can obtain and which, unless controlled, gives us all a feeling of uncertainty.

Novels such as "Power Without Glory" indicate what was possible in early twentieth century Australia. No politician or senior administrator, or his family, can be sure of personal safety. A system has developed whereby workers belong to unions because they have to, rather than because they want to, and because of the benefits that a constructive union can achieve. It cannot be doubted that co-operative action by groups of people will always be adopted when an end result is required. Whether they are called unions or statutory bodies is an academic argument.

Mr R. J. Gibbs interjected.

Mr LINGARD: You could not take part in an academic argument. Your behaviour last night in this place could be likened to your football career. You ran away or walked out when the pressure was on. Fortunately, I never saw you play. You used to play at 11 o'clock on a Sunday morning, when the children play.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Row): Order! The honourable member for Fassifern will address the Chair. The House will come to order.

Mr LINGARD: Final control must rest with the Government so that it has power to ensure the safety of the public.

Mr Scott: Who wrote that for you?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Because I consider the honourable member for Cook to be disrupting the House, I ask him to desist, or I will warn him.

Mr LINGARD: As well as the many obviously disgraceful attitudes displayed by the unions during this period of industrial unrest in which union leaders have shown utter contempt for the law, the horrific aspect of the re-emergence of thuggery and victimisation has arisen. Union members and their families have been victimised by union leaders, union delegates and fellow union members who can only be described as thugs. They will stop at nothing to harass workers, their wives and their families. Families have been used as pawns in this conflict. TV films depicted groups of workers in picket lines acting like wild animals as workmates reported for work. Union leaders went to unbelievable lengths to ensure that those people who were due to work certain shifts did not report. They rang them and threatened them if they dared to arrive at work. Men generally feared for their lives and for the physical well-being of their families.

I warn the people of Queensland and the Minister for Education (Mr Powell) that not only is such victimisation happening in the electricity industry, it is also happening in the Education Department.

I have positive proof that teachers are being harassed by members of the Queensland Teachers Union. It has become so blatant and union representatives have become so blasé that they are prepared to put their threats in official letter form. I have with me a copy of a letter that was sent to a constituent in the electorate of Fassifern and blatantly states that, if the teacher does not obey the union directive, she will be considered for a transfer.

The teacher to whom I refer moved to Queensland from a southern State. Obviously, she was sick and tired of the unions, which have completely taken over down there. Strikes such as those attempted by the Queensland Teachers Union do not occur in Victoria. In that State, the principals belong to a separate union. As a result, when strikes are called, only a section of the staff goes out. One day it might be the maths department and the next the English department, and so on.

An Opposition Member: Who signed it?

Mr LINGARD: I will show the letter to the honourable member afterwards and he can see who signed it. It is signed by an industrial officer of the Queensland Teachers Union.

The teacher arrived in Queensland and was appointed to a Queensland school. She did not join the Queensland Teachers Union immediately and, as a result, she received this malicious letter, which was sent to her personally. The letter commences—

> "Without any attempt at humour I could not commence with Dear Non Member for obvious reasons."

It continues—

> "I make it clear that I want you to join the Union."

The letter then begins to get heavy and reads—

> "I personally do not believe in negative sanctions against non members."

It continues—

> "Should any member seek assistance because of difficulty with being transferred I would have no hesitation in providing the names of non members as alternatives."

Quite obviously the teacher is being told that she, and not a member of the QTU, will be transferred.

Mr R. J. Gibbs interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Row): Order! The honourable member for Wolston will cease his persistent objections or I will warn him under Standing Order No. 123A.

Mr LINGARD: What a disgrace! What a disgusting position the unions have put themselves into when a union representative can threaten a married lady with a family with a transfer to a remote area if she does not join the union.

Mr FOURAS: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member for Fassifern is misleading the House. Union members do not transfer teachers anywhere at all.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for South Brisbane will resume his seat. Yesterday I explained to this House that, as far as I am concerned, points of order must involve a personal reference by another member, otherwise I will not accept the point of order. There is no point of order.

Mr LINGARD: I will prove that the member for South Brisbane is wrong.

The letter concludes with the words, "It is not my intention to be threatening . " The letter is signed personally by the industrial officer for the Brisbane South Region.

As the member for South Brisbane has raised this matter, it is valid to ask whether this is simply an idle threat or whether that teacher is justified in being alarmed by what happens within the Queensland education system. I inform the House that the industrial officer is not making an idle threat because the Queensland Teachers Union has a representative on the selection panel that deals with the transfers of Queensland teachers. How ludicrous it is when a union representative sits down with the senior officers of the Queensland Education Department to give promotions and arrange transfers in both the primary and secondary areas, supposedly on the pretence that he is there to look after union interests.

It is similar to what has occurred in the recent industrial dispute in the electricity industry. Workers are being victimised and they are being threatened to make them join unions. Once they become members they are being harassed, either directly or indirectly. If they do not conform, they know that they will not be given a job elsewhere. It is their families who are facing the trauma. Clearly, the unions and the ALP show no regard for their members while they fight to obtain full control of the essential services of this country. The ALP supports that policy. Members of the ALP cannot get out from underneath that statement because I can quote from the 1983 election policy of the Queensland Teachers Union, which is a direct quote from the policy of the ALP. The union's policy states—

> "The National Party believes that a person should not be compelled to join a union and therefore cannot support that preference be given to unionists.
>
> The ALP has traditionally supported the principle of preference of employment for unionists."

Because of policies supported by the ALP, teachers who are not members of a union are to be transferred. I call on the Minister for Education to get rid of such an obnoxious policy.

I remind the community and members of the House that a fight similar to the one currently being waged between SEQEB and the ETU over the employment of contract labour for the benefit of the community is going on between the Education Department and the Queensland Teachers Union. Because I do not have sufficient time, I refer honourable members to an article by Robert Allan in yesterday's "Daily Sun", outlining that the Queensland Teachers Union has demanded the employment of permanent part-time teachers and that Cabinet has refused that demand.

That is not correct. The Education Department wants to appoint people to replace teachers who are absent on long service leave. The Education Department says that casual employees should not be entitled to superannuation. The union will not allow those people to be employed until they are included in the superannuation scheme. How ridiculous that is! Casual teachers are employed as and when they are needed. They are

not in continuous employment year after year. The union will not allow their casual employment, and the president of the Queensland Teachers Union blames the State Cabinet. That is ridiculous. Obviously events occurring within the education system are very similar to those occurring in the electricity industry.

Time expired.

White-collar Crime in Queensland; Courier Companies

Mr VEIVERS (Ashgrove) (12.29 p.m.): Government members always speak about people holding the State to ransom, responsible attitudes and so forth. I want to know when the Government will do something about the level of white-collar crime in this State and the dubious trade practices, con men, shysters, fly-by-nighters and bogus companies. White-collar crime is proportionately higher in Queensland than in any other State. Queensland is often referred to as the con man's paradise. Most consumer organisations will confirm that. Last year, the Australian Federation of Consumer Organisations stated that Queensland was a haven for the slick salesmen and companies skirting round the law. Queensland, for these types of individuals and companies, is ripe for the picking. Too many people are being taken for a ride every day in this State. What is the Queensland Government doing about that?

Mr FitzGerald: Give us the proof.

Mr VEIVERS: If the honourable member listens, I will give him some information shortly. Nothing has been done about the matters that I am raising today.

The Queensland Government's interpretation of "free enterprise" is that it means an open go for anyone or any company smart enough to get away with a dubious trade practice or is able to get round the law by devious means.

Today I wish to expose what virtually amounts to a racket that has been going on in the transport industry, specifically the carriage of goods and parcels by courier companies. Many courier companies conduct excellent businesses and provide a very important service to the community. They range from the well-known large companies to the smaller organisations, all of which carry on good legitimate businesses without resorting to highly questionable practices.

In November 1982, Mr Michael Robert Wallace formed a company called Target Couriers. His partner was Mr Alan Gough. More than 30 drivers were sold contracts at a minimum price of $4,000. They were required to purchase new vehicles from a firm nominated by Mr Wallace. The company lasted four months.

In the meantime, the 30 owner-drivers, now with heavy financial commitments, discovered that they were not being paid according to their contracts. Guaranteed work was not forthcoming and their overheads were far in excess of what they had been led to believe. Their legal advice was that the contracts were worthless. A total of 15 of the original drivers got together and decided to buy Target Couriers from Wallace and his partner, Gough. They found that Target Couriers was a $2 shelf company and that they had to change its name. So much for Target Couriers.

In August 1983, Mr Wallace formed another company called Flat Rate Couriers. Approximately 22 men paid $4,750 for a contract. The price had increased. Again, they were asked to buy new vehicles from a firm nominated by the company. That company lasted three months. During that time the drivers were taken to court by Mr Don Dodds of Road Runner Couriers, who claimed that Flat Rate was a trade name commissioned by his company. Mr Wallace was a main witness for Dodds. After Flat Rate Couriers folded, Mr Wallace apparently went to work for Road Runner Couriers.

Around May last year advertisements appeared for drivers wishing to join a company called Challenge. It portrayed itself as an established transport company. It had the boxing kangaroo as its logo. I am informed that Mr Wallace was a director of that company, which failed at the end of September last year.

This whole episode of failed companies and highly questionable trading practices has left many men and their families suffering great financial hardship and emotional despair. I am informed that one man lost his home as a result of the financial position in which he found himself.

I reported these matters to the Fraud Squad. I was advised that the companies and events that I have related in this Chamber are presently under investigation. I have no doubt that the Fraud Squad will do its best to see that some semblance of justice is afforded to those who have been the innocent and perhaps partially naive victims of those unscrupulous practices.

I have been informed also that the Fraud Squad cannot cope with the volume of investigatory work that it has on its plate in this State. It is hamstrung in its operations because of a lack of adequate legislation in respect to corporate affairs and trade practices. That is the nub of the problem.

In other words, the Government is turning a blind eye to these practices and, undoubtedly, many others of similar ilk.

Smart operators know that what they do is not exactly illegal, and they can therefore continually escape the net of the law.

It is time that the Government looked at its company laws and trade practices in this State.

Complaints are continually made about the building industry, the Builders Registration Board, used car companies and faulty products. What about the faulty and dangerous gas appliances that were permitted to be sold during the recent power crisis? Mail order fraud goes on unabated in this State.

The Government's record in this whole area is abysmal. The Product Safety Committee formed in 1983 has been non-existent. What has it done? No-one ever hears about it!

Some immediate steps should be taken to clean up the doubtful practices in the transport courier industry. Reliable sources tell me that it is too easy to get a licence to hire under the Transport Act for the carriage of goods. I am informed also that the Transport Department does not sufficiently police the industry, and that some fly-by-night companies can get away with not having a licence at all.

All trucks over 4 tonnes must have a machinery inspection twice yearly. Why are the operators not asked to produce their licence to hire when the vehicle is inspected? Presently they are not. Surely this would go some way towards sifting out the doubtful operators.

What is happening is that a crafty proprietor with little or no costs can take down unwary and unsuspecting drivers and, at the same time, prostitute the industry.

Owner/drivers entering the industry are really at the mercy of these unscrupulous operators, in that—

They are sold a worthless contract for a substantial sum of from $4,000 to $5,000.

They are forced to purchase a vehicle from a nominated truck company and hire purchase finance company.

Sling-backs to the proprietor from these sources are commonly suspected.

They find that guaranteed business is not forthcoming.

They find that the proprietor makes 20 per cent to 30 per cent off the top of their gross earnings for what he claims as administration costs.

On 4 and 6 September last, reporter Tony Barnett, on "State Affair", exposed a racket similar to that to which I have been referring today, about a transport company

named Epiway and its proprietor, a Mr Fred Fuller. In this case a respectable face was given to the company because a solicitor was acting as a front for the organisation.

On the surface, these companies' credentials appear impeccable but, with con men behind the scenes, even the most cautious individual can be taken down. Nothing is being done by the Government to fix the rackets in the industry.

I am told also that these individuals are still engaged in one business or another in Brisbane.

Unfortunately, many owner/drivers also look at their income as a wage and have little or no knowledge or training to enable them to run a small business operation.

Protection for the industry and the individual could be enforced at the point of joining, and by the Government's insisting on some small business course for owner/drivers before they are permitted to drive for a licensed courier company.

In that regard, two positive steps that could be taken should be examined immediately by the responsible Ministers. It is time that the Government not only acted to clean up the problems in the transport industry but also examined carefully its company laws and trade practices legislation in an endeavour to afford protection not only to individuals but also to reputable companies, so that industry and commerce can operate in a healthy, competitive environment.

Babinda Bypass

Mr MENZEL (Mulgrave) (12.39 p.m.): I will place on record recent events that have occurred in Babinda concerning the dispute about where the road should be placed.

On Friday, 8 February 1985, at 7.30 p.m. a meeting was called in the RSL Hall, Babinda by the Main Roads Department and the Federal Transport Department in order to hear the views of Babinda residents. That meeting was arranged jointly by the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Racing (Mr Hinze) and the Commonwealth Minister for Transport (Mr Morris).

Prior to the meeting, a display of the three alternative routes, namely, the western, central and eastern routes, was made available at the council library in Babinda, again jointly by State and Federal officers, and a pamphlet was sent to all Babinda householders. The pamphlet contained a coupon on which residents could state their choice and include their comments before they returned it to the Cairns office of the Main Roads Department.

The State and Federal Governments are to be commended for that action. The faction opposed to the western route published a pamphlet, independently of those Governments, asking people to tick the route of their choice. The faction describes itself as "Concerned Citizens". The action of the State and Federal Governments in issuing pamphlets, mounting a display at the Babinda library and calling a public meeting is to be commended. However, the manner in which the so-called "Concerned Citizens", a Mulgrave shire councillor and a prominent member of the local branch of the ALP conducted a blatant campaign of intimidation and lies is disgraceful. It is very disturbing that such gutter tactics are being used in Queensland.

Main Roads Department pamphlets were sent in the mail through the Babinda Post Office as a household delivery item with no names on the envelopes. Several people complained to me that they had not received the pamphlet in the mail. It is not surprising that the only people who made the complaint were well-known supporters of the western route. I sincerely hope that Her Majesty's mails in Babinda are not being tampered with, but it is noteworthy that the husband of the local branch secretary of the ALP is the postman. I intend to pursue the matter with the State manager of Australia Post in an endeavour to ascertain why some people did not receive the joint Commonwealth/State pamphlet.

The so-called "Concerned Citizens" rostered their members to attend the library during the week of the display to stand beside everyone who discussed the alternative routes with officers from the Transport and Main Roads Departments. They listened to all of the conversations. Anyone who expressed opposition to the central route and supported the western route was abused and shouted at by the organised intimidators. Understandably, people who received that abuse at the library were horrified. As citizens, they were prevented from being properly informed, as both the State and Federal Ministers intended.

Members of the "Concerned Citizens" group picketed the display in an attempt to give the impression to the Government officers that no-one wanted the western route. It was a carefully orchestrated political campaign of intimidation and deceit. Those involved were John Sheehan, Ken Jago, Ron Stager, Mary Jago and Barry Jago. The Gestapo and the KGB would be angels compared with those people and the tactics they used.

Councillor Shirley Harwood visited most houses in Babinda with pamphlets issued by the "Concerned Citizens". I have a bundle of them with me. She told people to attend the meeting on the Friday night to support the central route even if they preferred the western route because, she said, Mulgrave Shire Council rates would rise if the Government built the western route, for the council would have to assume responsibility for the bridge over Babinda Creek. Councillor Harwood shamelessly intimidated age pensioners and elderly widows in Babinda with those disgraceful tactics. All pensioners live in fear of their rates bill every year, and it was utterly disgraceful for Councillor Harwood to lie to old women pensioners by claiming that their rates would increase if the western route were adopted. It is doubly reprehensible for a shire councillor, who is presumably a responsible person, to do so. Because of those low, intimidatory tactics, Councillor Harwood induced many people to sign the pamphlets and tick a preference.

Councillor Harwood was not the only person to canvass from door to door with outright lies. In his usual way, Mr Bonny Corradi tricked people into signing pamphlets. One Sunday Mr Corradi approached any motorist who stopped at one shop on the Bruce Highway, saying, "Do you believe that this road should be upgraded?" Naturally, the motorist would reply, "Yes." Bonny Corradi would then say, "Well, the Queensland Government won't fix this road. Will you sign here to get it fixed?" Naturally, everyone wanted it fixed, so everyone signed. Needless to say, the true position was conveniently ignored by devious means.

I draw attention to the low tactics that were used to gain support for the central route. Several months ago, two petitions were distributed in Babinda—one for and one against the western route—and more intimidatory tactics were used by the concerned citizens group. That group went from shop to shop, demanding that everyone should sign. Many people were intimidated into signing. However, one businessman had the courage not to sign, and ordered the concerned citizens group out of his shop. What happened then? The concerned citizens group boycotted his shop.

I stress that at least half the signatures gained were obtained through intimidation and terror tactics that were carried out by a minority group in Babinda. As to the public meeting that was held in Babinda on 8 February—the full facts were not reported in the newspapers.

The supporters of the central route sat in the front rows, packed as a group. However, not one of the people who spoke in support of the central route could dispute that the western route is the only route not in a flood-prone area, and it could not be disputed that it is also the only route that measures up to national highway standards. All that was put forward stressed the importance of quality of life, access to the school and noise abatement in the proximity of the hospital, but the safety aspect of the western route was not disputed.

When Councillor Harwood asked all those who supported the central route to stand up, about half of the people present in the hall—mainly the front section—stood up.

To date, no-one has disputed letters that have appeared in "The Cairns Post" from people who were present at the meeting and stated that that took place.

When Dianna Santacatterina spoke on behalf of those who objected to Babinda eastern and central routes, the opposing group tried to shout her down.

Mr De Lacy interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Row): Order! The honourable member for Cairns is interrupting.

Mr MENZEL: No-one was game enough to stand up and support Dianna Santacatterina, although I heard two other speakers who appeared to be in support of the proposal for the western route. Again, heavy handed and carefully organised intimidatory tactics had worked.

I have a copy of a letter addressed to the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Racing (Mr Hinze) from a Babinda resident who claims to understand that the Babinda branch of the Australian Labor Party had written to the Federal Transport Minister (Mr Peter Morris) asking the Federal Government not to provide funds for the western route. I challenge members of the Australian Labor Party to come clean and deny that.

In her submission, Miss Santacatterina claimed that, since 1977, 84 accidents had occurred along the existing route and they had resulted in five deaths. However, it is obvious that the local branch of the Australian Labor Party wants the dangerous central route to adapt to what is basically the existing alignment. If that were to happen, more unnecessary deaths and injuries could result.

A misappropriation of Government funds will occur if the central route is constructed. It is not recommended by the Main Roads Department's engineers, who are the experts in this field. They have recommended the western route, and their recommendation has my support.

Many people who attended the public meeting were not residents of Babinda. They included a policeman from Cairns, people from Mareeba and a prominent ALP official from Gordonvale (Mr Bob Richardson). Most honourable members would know Mr Richardson. He was the last speaker at the meeting. Although the purpose of the meeting was to hear the views of Babinda residents, everyone knows that Mr Richardson is the secretary of the Gordonvale branch of the ALP in the Mulgrave electorate, and chairman of the Combined Railway Unions in Cairns. Before the last State election, Mr Richardson placed an advertisement in "The Cairns Post", asking electors to vote out the Minister for Environment, Valuation and Administrative Services (Mr Tenni) and myself. However, because both of us increased our majority, I can say "Thank you" to Mr Bob Richardson for the free photographs published in "The Cairns Post"

The degree of intimidation that has been used by the concerned citizens, the lies and the irresponsible way that Councillor Shirley Harwood has acted, and the assistance that the ALP has given in an attempt to force the Government to build a road that will be unsafe, are a public scandal. I repeat that, if the central route is constructed, it will result in a misappropriation of tax-payers' funds.

If the Federal Government decides that it will fund the construction of the central route, I shall call for a royal commission into that decision and the politics that have been conducted behind the scenes.

Time expired.

Precision Homes

Mr UNDERWOOD (Ipswich West) (12.50 p.m.): I rise today to bring public focus on the home-building racketeers Dixon and Eton and their company Precision Homes and—the lying, cheating and intimidation practised by them against their customers. I

do so, as there is very little that my constitutents and the good, honest people of the Ipswich and West Moreton region can do individually to achieve justice without great costs—timewise, financial and personal.

The quality of construction performed by building conglomerates Pat Dixon and Peter Eton has been questionable for some time. Prior to Mr Eton's partnership with Pat Dixon—the date of merger is not available—he had several run-ins with the Ipswich City Council dating back to 1978.

More recently, in January 1985, a Mr Henry Webb approached "The Queensland Times" with problems that he had encountered upon moving into a house purchased from Dixon and Eton. Mr Webb claimed that construction of the house had been delayed and that some aspects of the workmanship were questionable.

A reporter from "The Queensland Times" visited Mr Webb and found his claims to be factual. Photographs were taken by a staff photographer, editorial copy was compiled and the story appeared on 12 January 1985.

Mr Webb said that he approached "The Queensland Times" because he could not form a line of communication with Peter Eton to get repairs done. This comment has been echoed by Ipswich City Council alderman and chairman of works, Kev Dwyer, who has looked into the building practices of Dixon and Eton.

Mr Eton's attitude towards people is terrible. He intimidates people for contacting the council about complaints. One couple contacted the council because a building approval was given when it should not have been and Mr Eton intimidated them for doing that.

After the appearance of the article relating to Mr Webb, other home-owners who had purchased Dixon and Eton homes were contacted, and all had various complaints. Most houses had foundation problems, and house access points, such as driveways, had not been finished. The owners were forced to pay to have driveways formed.

Alderman Dwyer commented—

> "Dixon and Eaton bulldozed a track through here, O'Hanlon St, Woodend, when they started building in 1984 because they had a pre-existing sub-division approval they weren't required to put a road in.
>
> These people were in a terible mess without a road so the council had to put a road in. The developer would have to put the cross overs in though.
>
> There are tremendous water problems here to. We don't think it's very ideal at all because of the terrain this subdivision has been built on."

"The Queensland Times" queried three residents in O'Hanlon Street and received a statement of problems from one of them—

> "Dixon and Eaton adapt everything to suit themselves and not their customers. They don't return calls of complaint from their customers and are slow in getting repair work done.
>
> Eatons' buildings are basically sound but the finish is a big problem. He is building houses in all sorts of little pockets and gullies. I think he's the only builder building in Ipswich city."

In a random survey, "The Queensland Times" located seven Dixon and Eton home-buyers willing to come forward and make statements about shoddy workmanship on their homes. These people are naturally upset. Many are first home buyers and have never before entered into such a large investment. But the pattern of complaint is virtually the same. Something that Dixon and Eton seem to rely on is people ill-educated on housing construction who are eager to acquire their first home and are lured in by the low-priced house and land packages that Dixon and Eton offer.

I have received a number of complaints. The first example reads—

"home owner: Kevin Henderson
12 O'Hanlon St
Woodend

complaints: house is 7 months old.

1. bolts are missing from main support beans. bolts are bent from pressure as house has shifted. bolts were straight as seem by owner.

2. nails are pushing up through lynoleum in kitchen.

3. roof leaks and has done so since moving in. down pipes are also leaking

4. front veranda bracings are loose and have never been treated. wood is bowing and twisting.

5. flooring beams under the house are cracking. owner believes this to be the main support beam."

The second example reads—

"home owner: Graham Radunz
12 Bothwick St.
N. Ipswich

complaints: moved in November 23, 1984

1. driveway was too steep to enter home. going down was okay but going up was a problem. he paid to have the driveway cut out and leveled—$120.

2. he brought in dirt to support the stairs in his back yard. three loads for $100. he has ordered 8 more to extend the backyard at a cost of $120.

3. his stair handrail is loose.

4. paint flys off his veranda when water pressure hits it. (That is under hose pressure.)"

The third example reads—

"home owner: Neville Curtis
14 Murray St
N. Ipswich

compaints: moved in around December 24, 1984

1. there were no two-way light switches put into his house. was told there would be by J. Litzow, real estate manager.

2. carpet is faulty with bare patches visible. was told it was seconds by carpet layer. no backing provided for carpet.

3. has paid $50 for the grading of a driveway. expects to pay at least $200 to get the job finished.

4. metal shavings produced from the re-positioning of an ill-placed structural beam damaged the occupant's 1982 TE Cortina's windscreem. occupant was not home. eton's workers broke into garage to repair it. (Curtis) has claim with auto insurance agent but is having trouble as they want to know how house was passed with faulty beam in place.

5. maintenance problems are the overriding ones. put complaints in prior to occupancy and they are still being carried out.

6. on carpet car and its quality Eton said there was no guarantee. he didn't have to put it in. it was a fringe benefit, yet the contract states that carpet will be provided.

7. gutters and drainpipes were leaking. have been fixed except for one downspout.

8. shower tray has been chipped. was repaired twice but job is still unsatisfactory.

9. has had trouble getting maintenance work completed."

The next example comes from Phillip Kucks of 75 Brisbane Road, Riverview. The date of occupancy is unknown. His complaints were—

"1. Nails are coming up through linoleum. Seams are gaping when lino comes together.

2. Kitchen sink has been leaking. Called the plumber twice. Came out once. Problem still exists."

Three parties have taken legal action against Dixon and Eton. One party consists of the Francises of Redbank Plains. A copy of their statement explains why they are taking action. Apparently they have been through the courts twice. Their case comes up for mention in March. They are seeking about $25,000 from Dixon and Eton. The second party is a builder, Les Rafe, who claims that he has been underpaid by Dixon and Eton for a building that he built for them in Chatsworth Rise.

Dixon and Eton also were the subject of a dispute over the design ownership of a particular house. I seek leave to incorporate in "Hansard" two letters from a firm of solicitors.

Leave granted.

CLEARY & HOARE
Solicitors

7th February, 1985.

The Manager,
The Queensland Times,
26 Brisbane Street,
Ipswich, Qld.

Dear Sir,

Re: ADVERTISEMENTS BY DIXON & EATON (PRECISION HOMES) IN THE QUEENSLAND TIMES

We act on behalf of Rosemere Pty. Ltd. trading as Ultra Design.

Our Client has instructed us that on at least three occasions (January 5th, 12th and 19th of 1985) Dixon and Eaton Homes have placed an advertisement in your paper which, inter alia, holds out that a house design known as the "Alpha 2" design is one of their own.

We are instructed by our Client that he holds sole copyright in that design.

We are further instructed by our Client that he intends to bring a Writ action under the Copyright Act both for injunctive relief and damages against Dixon and Eaton for breach of the copyright in their passing off the design as their own.

We give you notice that our Client instructs us that he has suffered considerable damage as a result of the passing off.

On instructions from our Client, we have forwarded a letter to Dixon and Eaton on even date requiring them to, inter alia, forthwith cease and desist from passing off the "Alpha 2" design as their own.

We are instructed by our Client to give you notice that if any further advertisements appear un the Queensland Times from Dixon and Eaton or Precision Homes which contain any reference whatsoever to the "Alpha 2" design, then an injunction will be brought against your paper and your paper will be joined as a Defendant to any Writ action brought by our Client against Dixon and Eaton for damages for breach of copyright.

Our Client instructs us that he requires an unconditional agreement in writing to be delivered to our office no later than 12.00 on Friday the 8th February that your Client will not carry any Dixon and Eaton Homes advertisements containing any reference whatsoever to the "Alpha 2" design.

Our Client is concerned that the advertisement containing the reference to the "Alpha 2" Design will appear in your Saturday paper consistent with the recent pattern of advertising and so will not grant any extensions of time beyond the time and date noted above.

Yours faithfully,

CLEARY & HOARE

CLEARY & HOARE
Solicitors

11th February, 1985.

The Manager,
The Queensland Times,
26 Brisbane Street,
Ipswich, Qld.

ATTENTION: MR. G. SMITH

Dear Sir,

Re: ADVERTISEMENTS BY DIXON & EATON HOMES (PRECISION HOMES) IN THE QUEENSLAND TIMES
OUR CLIENT—ROSEMERE PTY. LTD. TRADING AS ULTRA DESIGN

We refer to our telephone conversation with you on the 7th February, 1985, and confirm your advices that your paper will not be carrying any advertisements from Dixon & Eaton Homes or Precision Homes or any related company which contain references to the Alpha 2 design.

The only exception to this is to be an advertisement which will be inserted by Dixon & Eaton in the following terms:—

"Our advertisement in the Queensland Times of January 5th, 12th and 19th may have given the impression that the house design known as "Alpha 2" is a design of Precision Homes. "Alpha 2" is the design of Ultra Design and is only available for purchase from Ultra Design of 22A Caxton Street, Paddington, Brisbane (Phone 369.3771)."

Of course, the prohibition sought by our Client is not a blanket one covering all advertisements by Dixon & Eaton Homes, Precision Homes or any of their related companies. It merely relates to those ads which contain references (save as noted above) to the Alpha 2 design.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours faithfully,

CLEARY & HOARE

Mr UNDERWOOD: As yet, more than two weeks after the date of the last letter, the apology/correction to be published by Dixon and Eton has not appeared in "The Queensland Times". "The Queensland Times" is the subject of a defamation writ by Dixon and Eton over the article referring to Henry Webb's house. Actually, there are two writs: one from Patrick Dixon and one from Peter Eton (Precision Homes). The writs have effectively prevented the newspaper from pursuing the issue further.

Dixon and Eton and Peter Kurts Pty Ltd have combined to prey on people wanting to buy their own home. I have a copy of a mortgage protection insurance policy from the Swann Insurance Limited that is provided by Peter Kurts (Developments) Pty Ltd to customers of Dixon and Eton.

I draw to the attention of prospective purchasers of homes from Dixon and Eton a speech made by the honourable member for Wolston (Mr R. J. Gibbs) in this Chamber on 19 August 1980, in which he referred to the extortionate financial practices of Peter Kurts Pty Ltd, and I warn all Dixon and Eton prospective purchasers of that.

I refer to a statement by Ray and Merin Francis in their dispute with Dixon and Eton Homes, which states—

"Approx May 1983, we contacted 'Peter Eaton Homes'

re:—house & land package—spoke to Jeff Litzow. Price range indicated by us was $50,000-$55,000 After some consideration, we decided on the 'Tudor' style. Litzow proceeded to show us a number of blocks of land. He also showed us through a 'Tudor' at cnr. Paice and Oak Streets, Bundamba. Original price of house quoted:—$41,000. Land (Lot 14 Gill Ct. Chatsworth Rise): $18,000. We signed contract with Peter Howard Eaton for house & land package totalling $59,000.

We paid $500 for plans to be drawn and council application (to be subtracted from Price). Upon return of plans from council, we were shown them, only to find that they differed in a number of ways from the house we inspected. Although we were told that the house in Paice St was the same as was to be built, after questioning Litzow when we received the plans—we were told then, that for—Brick pillars at

front—Cavity brick downstairs—Cupboards under stairway—Lined rumpus area—brick and bar & quarry tiles which the plans did not show, was to cost us extra.

We then, after much debating with Jeff Litzow and Patrick Dixon (who had only recently joined with Eton) reached an agreement with Peter Eton himself, that the house was to be built with all items above included, as well as a larger back patio and downstairs toilet and shower, banisters along stairwell (top and bottom) instead of walls and a raised entry, for the extra sum of $3,700.

Before construction was started, we excavated the top front corner of the block so as to prepare for a pool area. Whilst doing this, Dixon arrived only to tell us that the corner of land excavated did not belong to us. (Even though it was shown on the plan). Apparently an easement was put in— narrowing the block—but we weren't told until then. Due to this, the house had to be faced at different angle to fit.

However, by rotating house, Eton then said that it had to be on entirely different position—due to extra cost of foundations. Refusing, we overcame that small problem. Construction started (August 1983)—we were guaranteed completion in 12 weeks.

We personally inspected progress every afternoon. It wasn't far into construction that bad workmanship began to become obvious initially in framework. Suddenly Eton decided he wanted progress payments (which bank would not furnish due to the fact that deal was house & land package).

Therefore he demanded an extra $2000 for interest until payment.

Once again refusing, we overcame that by convincing him to advance us the sum of $10,000 as part payment on our present house at Raceview (which he had assured us by contract he would buy from us for $50,000 upon completion of house in Gill Ct.)

By doing this, the land was settled separately, and bank commenced progress payments. We also paid $4,000 as further deposit on house. As construction proceeded further, a number of mistakes were made;—walls were placed where banisters should have been—archways were put where square openings were to be—electrical points and outlets were placed in wrong places—doorways were put in wrong places—laundry window was left out altogether.

To rectify these mistakes—Eton wanted extra money (for his mistakes). Refusing once more (by halting progress payments) construction stopped.

Eton then began playing the heavy—issuing a summons demanding payment in full including extras of an unsubstantiated figure of $6,500.

He also took a caveat over our Raceview House. As he dug his heels in—we dug ours harder. Accompanied by our solicitor—Greg Ploetz (McNamara, Ploetz & Assoc.) we inspected the construction with 'fine toothed comb'."

Fourteen problems were found.

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 to 2.15 p.m.

PROPERTY LAW ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading—Resumption of Debate

Debate resumed from 25 October (see p. 1853) on Mr Harper's motion—

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

Mr R. J. GIBBS (Wolston) (2.15 p.m.): This is a nuts and bolts Bill that sets about fixing some drafting errors that have occurred under the Property Law Act. A couple of sections in the Bill deserve mention.

The intent of the Bill highlights the point that the conveyancing system in Queensland has become very highly commercialised, and my colleague the honourable member for Windsor (Mr Comben) will comment on that. Because of the intent of the Bill, I issue a warning to the public. When they sign a contract to buy or lease a home or property, people should be aware that the contract is legally binding. On my interpretation of the legislation, people will not be able to get out of such contracts on small irregularities. I am sure that all honourable members have gone to an estate agent or to a person who might be flogging off some property and have signed the standard Real Estate Institute of Queensland contract without reading the small print contained therein. Most people do not know the requirements of such a contract and, more importantly, they are not aware of the requirements that are imposed by local authorities for various consents. In his introductory speech, the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General (Mr Harper) gave as a very good example a local authority by-law that requires that a property must not constitute a health menace or must not be a fire trap.

In the past, people could get out of such contracts. I am led to believe that, as a result of a decision from the Supreme Court, the Minister was prompted to introduce this Bill. In future, such contracts will be legally binding on the people who sign them. As I understand it, any documentation or fixations required by the local authority concerned will have to be delivered or produced at the time that the deal is finalised for the final signing of the documentation. As a result, people will not be able in court to dispute their intent in signing contracts. It is timely that that amendment has been introduced. However, the public must be made aware that they will find it very hard to get out of such contracts if any loopholes can be found.

I take cognisance of the amendment to section 80. I welcome it because it would appear that the mortgagor will be protected by ensuring absolutely that the mortgagee has to produce titles or deeds to properties. In the past, they were not required to do so. In fact, the amendment goes further. If a mortgagee is not prepared to surrender or produce the title deeds, the Supreme Court can issue an order requiring him to deliver such documentation.

I welcome also the amendment to section 171. It will ensure that two copies of the power of attorney must be filed with the appropriate department and that a copy will be made available to the person responsible for doing that.

As I said, it is nuts and bolts legislation, and the Opposition has no hesitation in supporting it.

Mr INNES (Sherwood) (2.19 p.m.): As the honourable member for Wolston (Mr R. J. Gibbs) said, it is a nuts and bolts Bill. The Property Law Act in general is working well. It was a major piece of reform but, from time to time, refinement is necessary. In this case, the legislation is not being refined because of defects. Rather, it is being refined because of instruments of subordinate legislation, that is, the provisions of other Acts that require the tendering of certificates under town-planning legislation or under local authority by-laws.

The only caution I raise is that such is the incredible volume and complexity of modern subordinate legislation that perhaps all of the possible ramifications of the Bill and the types of subordinate legislation which might indeed have some very direct effect on contracts for the sale of property cannot be conceived. I do not apprehend any major problems, because basically the legislation states that a person's word is his bond and that a contract solemnly entered into should be valid and should be enforceable.

The Bill is an attempt to stop contracts being unwittingly unenforceable because of the combined effect of other legislation, particularly as in the illustration used by the Minister. So the purpose of the provision in relation to subordinate legislation is completely legitimate. A contract should be enforceable. People should not enter into contracts that they intend not to be enforceable. Clauses such as those for finance can be created to give some let-out, but, generally speaking, a contract should be binding,

and tangential or obtuse ways of getting out of contracts should not be supported or encouraged.

The other provisions of the Bill result from practical matters raised in court cases. There has to be an obligation to deliver up a mortgage to allow the contract to be endorsed so that other people can be warned and protected in cases of subsequent mortgages. In general, the Property Law Act works well, and these refinements are justified and should be supported.

Mr COMBEN (Windsor) (2.22 p.m.): Unlike the member for Sherwood, I am not totally convinced that the Property Law Act is working perfectly well, especially in the field of conveyancing, which is the prime consideration of the amendments now under discussion. However, all honourable members would know that conveyancing by solicitors is actually covered by section 68 of the Supreme Court Act of 1869.

I wish to address a few comments to the question of conveyancing in general, more specifically to whether lawyers in this State are happy with the present operation of the Property Law Act in relation to conveyancing and also to whether the public is getting value for money and is happy with conveyancing procedures.

Solicitors' concerns about conveyancing are covered in an article by Bill Duncan, a former lecturer from the University of Queensland, on the 1982 standard contract. The document produced from a continuing Legal Education Seminar consists of a series of contributions by lecturers. Part of Mr Duncan's article reads—

> "What follows is an assessment of the current situation. The conveyancing transaction is becoming slowly but surely over-regulated by overzealous government intervention and Queensland is no exception, trying to get political copy out of the consumer protection ticket."

That is being stated by a now-practising solicitor commenting on regulations such as those now being dealt with by the House. The article continues—

> "There is now a tendency to legislate for the exception and not the rule. No amount of legislation will save fools from folly. Draconian statutory duties cast upon vendors over and above usual contractual duties, which have been formulated and accepted through the centuries, will do nothing to regulate the relationship of vendor and purchaser and will surely push up the cost of marketing and ultimately increase the complexity of the transaction."

I do not agree with the views of that practising solicitor; nevertheless, they were legitimately put forward and should be considered by the Government if it intends to take one side or the other, although I have never seen the Government take the side of purchasers or consumers.

The article continues—

> "A cynic would riposte that this is a good thing: that it ensures our (the lawyers) grasp upon the process of conveyancing for many years to come. But, I do not think it even does that.
>
> In a place like Queensland where conveyancing is supervised largely by the legal profession on a standard form of contract drafted by practising solicitors, the need for such legislation is slight. Instead of letting the rules of law formulated in the courts of equity, finely tuned through successive generations of precedent, govern the rights of parties, we are slowly heading in the direction of places, like Victoria, where standard contract terms now form regulations to the equivalent of our Auctioneers and Agents Act 1971-1981. If our standard form of contract only changes every five years after deliberations of two years, then consider how long it will take to have regulations amended, if this practice is adopted. So much for freedom of contract. It would be remiss of me not to mention that unless the real estate agents and solicitors properly supervise the conveyancing operation in circumstances here where there is still considerable freedom of contract, even where a standard form is used, then it will be done by executive fiat."

I do not share that view. Nevertheless, some groups in society say that there should be total freedom of contract. Government members do not listen to those groups.

The present solicitors' conveyancing costs for the purchaser and the vendor are far too high. That contention is borne out by the present figures on conveyancing in Queensland.

The latest figures available to me show that for a house valued at no more than $40,000, which is not a large amount—the average price in Queensland should probably be $50,000—the solicitor for the vendor, on the recommended law society minimum scale, receives $331, and the solicitor for the purchaser receives $485.

That position could be compared with the position in South Australia, where for a number of years certified land agents have carried out conveyancing under the Torrens system, which is similar to the system that operates in this State. In South Australia, on the sale of a house valued at no more than $40,000, the solicitor or land agent for either party receives only $191.50. The transaction is carried out in the same diligent way as it is carried out in Queensland. The same type of searches are made. A business is able to operate profitably for a considerably lower fee. The people in this State should begin asking themselves, "What is happening to the extra money that is paid to private solicitors in the field of conveyancing?"

The Torrens system of conveyancing was introduced into South Australia in the 1860s. Similar schemes were adopted fairly quickly in every other State. When Torrens introduced the system into South Australia, he said succinctly that, compared with the old English system, the new system of land conveyancing would be a considerable simplification and save many people a great deal of money. He said that a person would need only to fill in two standard forms, go along to a land registry office and have the forms registered in that office. The original deed held in that office would be stamped appropriately. The conveyance would be completed in a few minutes. All the other problems, such as the root of the title, which for centuries had plagued England, would be removed. The system would be improved greatly. In England, if a person held a title that had been defective for 200 years, that defective title could continue down through the ages.

Now, 125 years after the introduction of the Torrens system, the lawyers have got their claws into the whole system. The fee charged for conveyancing is greatly inflated. Another system should be adopted, whether it be by means of a public conveyancer, a statutory——

Mr R. J. Gibbs interjected.

Mr COMBEN: One could have a system of some form of registration so that land is no longer conveyed from one person to another. One could have a simple set of titles in the Titles Office, where a person is registered as the owner. There would be no conveyance, because a person would walk in and say, "I have bought this property. Here is my money." The whole procedure would be simplified considerably. The system that operates in South Australia is an excellent one.

Mr Innes interjected.

Mr COMBEN: The advocate for the Law Society and the Bar Association says that it is stupid. The system works in South Australia and in a number of other places.

Mr Innes interjected.

Mr COMBEN: As the honourable member for Sherwood says, the basic system is very simple. I agree with that. Mr Torrens, when he introduced the system in South Australia, certainly agreed with that. The system has been upset by the introduction of lawyers. If it had been left to land agents, the system would have remained simple. A person could go into an office and have his title registered with no trouble at all.

At the present time, right across Australia, moves are being made to examine the monopoly—and that is the only way to describe it— enjoyed by lawyers in conveyancing. An article published in November 1984 in the "Commonwealth Law Bulletin" examines the need for law reform in relation to solicitors' costs and conveyancing. The author of that article suggests that a monopoly exists at the moment. That is obvious. In every State except South Australia, only solicitors can convey land, or an owner can do the work himself. A section of that article in the "Commonwealth Law Bulletin" reads as follows—

> "If the current monopoly is to be preserved, the following changes merit consideration. Indeed, they are relevant even if the monopoly is relaxed or abolished—"

The Minister should have given consideration to these matters when he brought in the amendments to the Property Law Act. That is the proper time to consider the abolition of the monopoly on conveyancing in this State.

The article continues—

> "(1) simplifying and improving conveyancing law and practice (especially by establishing a central register of restrictions relating to land, and by requiring vendors to disclose certain information to prospective purchasers before a contract is signed);"

At the present time there is a great deal of legal hoo-ha about the conduct of searches. People believe that their solicitors go off and conduct thorough searches and that they find out whether any building defects exist, whether a drain runs through the property and many other things that no solicitor does. A solicitor simply sends a form off to the local authority and the Main Roads Department, and that is the conveyancing. No expertise is required to do that.

Mr Innes interjected.

Mr COMBEN: Mr Innes is saying, "Rubbish"

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Row): Order! I remind the honourable member for Windsor that it is important for the recording procedure that he refer to the honourable member for Sherwood by his proper parliamentary title.

Mr COMBEN: At the present time lawyers are hiding behind a great deal of legal jargon and hoo-ha. Solicitors really do no more than an average clerk can do. They simply check the searches that come back. I was an average clerk, and each week I carried out many conveyances with no trouble at all. I can well remember trying to carry out conveyancing in which the honourable member for Sherwood was involved. We could never get the money out of him.

The article goes on—

> "(3) clarifying solicitors' rights to co-operate with non-lawyers who are providing conveyancing services (such as the so-called 'conveyancing companies');"

That is very important. No-one would say that lawyers are unnecessary in the transfer and registration of property. Problems will always arise. However, the average domestic conveyance does not require the services of people such as the honourable member for Sherwood, who charged exorbitant amounts for each line of his advice when he was briefed by solicitors on such a matter.

A standard, straightforward conveyance is needed, without the need to incur the expense of lawyers. However, lawyers could be available, as a back-up, as they are in the transfer of ownership of an expensive car. Every day of the week, the ownership of cars is transferred for the same amount as that involved in the transfer of a small house; yet, even though the same principles are involved, lawyers do not come into that.

Finally, the article states—

"(4) abolishing or modifying the Law Society's present power to prosecute persons for breach of the monopoly."

At the present time, the situation is that no-one says that Joe Blow, who has done a few conveyances for himself and decides to do a conveyance for his brother-in-law and be paid with a couple of cartons of beer, is not able to do it.

Lawyers are concerned that, if such a practice catches on, they might lose revenue. Their reaction is, "We will prosecute those people and stop them." It is purely and simply a restrictive trade practice and a creation of a monopoly that should be broken as soon as possible. I hope that, contrary to his usual attitude, the Minister will do the right thing by consumers in this State and introduce a form of public conveyancing or public registration of land to break the monopoly of solicitors on land transfers.

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (2.35 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I join in the debate. I note the difference in attitude of the two Opposition speakers. Its spokesman, the honourable member for Wolston (Mr R. J. Gibbs) supported the Government's Bill.

If the matter proceeds to a vote, it will be interesting to see on which side of the Chamber the honourable member of Windsor (Mr Comben) takes his seat. He seemed to be totally opposed to the legislation. In fact, he was totally opposed to solicitors having anything to do with the transfer of property. I agree with those who are of the opinion that, if land transfers were left to people of such capability as the honourable member for Windsor, Queensland's legal practitioners would have a mountain of work to do to clean up the mess. Those people who have a simplistic view of what at times can be very complex problems will certainly make a hash of their dealings. Such people believe that they are saving a couple of hundred dollars in effecting their own property transfers whereas, if they made an error, they could face a bill of many thousands of dollars and rue the day.

I agree that some solicitors are not as enthusiastic as others. Other honourable members have doubtless been acquainted with instances in which solicitors have not done their job properly. However, there is an avenue for dealing with such solicitors. A client may take action against the poor performance of a solicitor. A solicitor may be reported to the Queensland Law Society. However, the majority of solicitors are very enthusiastic in the performance of their duties.

A purchaser usually approaches the buying of a property enthusiastically. It is an important matter to purchase a home property. He may believe that he has the deal of a lifetime and decides to buy no matter what. It is imperative to have an unbiased person such as a solicitor to give advice and undertake all the necessary searches to ensure legal entitlements and access. The salesman would have sold the purchaser on the idea that the property is exactly what he needs, and it is advisable to have somebody to point out the pitfalls.

I refer to blocks of land along limited access highways. I had an instance of a person taken onto a property by a salesman who drove off the highway and through a gate, even though there was no legal access. The person bought the land and, after he began building his home, he was visited by officers of the Main Roads Department who explained that, because of the dangers of a limited access road, no legal access could be provided. It is in such circumstances that we as members of Parliament are approached for assistance. If the solicitor had been astute, he would have undertaken a search to obtain information about access to the property. The member for Windsor would be unaware of such pitfalls.

As the Opposition spokesman said, the provisions in the Bill are relatively simple. As a result of a few court decisions, it has been found that the law is not as it was intended to be. The Act ought to be amended to allow for the original intentions. The Solicitor-General and the Queensland Law Society consider that an amendment should be made to the Property Law Act to provide that the tender of a certificate of registration

at or immediately prior to the settlement of a sale shall be sufficient compliance with any by-law of a local authority which requires the tender of such a certificate at the time of sale. A contract shall not be deemed to be illegal or void by reason of the tender of such a certificate at a later date. Most people would realise that, if they have a certificate such as I have described, it would be current for a specified period.

The second major aspect of the Bill deals with the release of a mortgage, and that measure should put some teeth into the legislation so that courts will be able to obtain a mortgage. For instance, if a mortgagee refuses to release a mortgage so that a second mortgage can be registered, in the case of refusal or neglect, the registrar can issue a fresh certificate of title. That is a very important aspect of the Bill. Evidently, cases have been brought before the courts because an anomaly has been discovered in legal provisions that allow a person to retain a mortgage and refuse to release it. In such circumstances, absolutely nothing can be done to obtain that mortgage.

The legislation is clearly necessary, and I am pleased to note that the Opposition spokesman has pledged the support of Opposition members for the Bill. However, I would ask all honourable members to consider seriously the view expressed by the other Opposition spokesman who seemed to be waging a vendetta against the legal profession and seemed to have a very simplistic view on legal matters.

Mr SIMPSON (Cooroora) (2.41 p.m.): I rise to instil in the minds of people the wisdom of the old saying "buyer beware", not to cover any of the points that have been mentioned by other members, especially those mentioned in such an able manner by the honourable member for Lockyer. More often it seems to be the case that sales that seem to be very simple are in fact not simple. In many instances that is because people are devious or because of circumstances that obtain at the time.

If a person paid regard to the old saying "buyer beware", he would not rely upon the services of an inexperienced conveyancer. Undoubtedly, because of their own inability, inexperienced conveyancers would like to see the process simplified. The proper course would be to consult an experienced solicitor, who could lend expert assistance in the proper processing of the sale.

Mr De Lacy: The solicitor gives it to the girl in the office to do.

Mr SIMPSON: Experienced people at various levels of expertise are employed to do that work in the offices of solicitors.

Alternative services, in the form of do-it-yourself conveyancing, have emerged in an attempt to cut down on costs and generate a source of income. The schemes I refer to would be similar to those that operate in South Australia and which have been mentioned by another member. Although the schemes are not markedly less expensive, they do not offer the level of protection offered by a qualified solicitor.

Mr Comben: The contingency fund would protect the consumer.

Mr SIMPSON: That is not the same kind of protection offered by the Contingency Fund that is operated by the Queensland Law Society Incorporated.

In this day and age, buyers ought to be aware that contracts may appear to be simple. Buyers should in fact beware. For the want of spending a small amount of money, buyers have discovered that a contract is defective. Buyers have not been prudent enough, and that has resulted in a loss of interests and many thousands of dollars.

The technical aspects of the Bill have already been covered by other members. However, it should be borne in mind that contract documents can be processed at or before the stipulated time for settlement, and at the time of making the contract all the necessary documents need not necessarily be in front of the buyer.

I repeat—buyer beware. People who have visited my office have had problems because they have been naive and gullible when confronted with slick sales talk. People

should take contract documents home and think carefully about their clauses or perhaps rethink their terms, or else take the contract to a solicitor or a qualified conveyancer who will examine it professionally. A professional legal consultant would consider the contract, weigh up the terms and preserve the interests of his client. If that does not happen, the client has recourse to the legal system. However, I believe that the provisions of the Bill, by the provision of better guide-lines, will smooth the path of conveyancing.

Mr PREST (Port Curtis) (2.45 p.m.): The comments made by earlier speakers cause me to rise to cite a number of problems relating to the Property Law Act that have arisen in my area. I will refer to one case in particular which I referred to the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General (Mr Harper) some months ago and about which I have still not received a reply.

I am concerned about what occurs in some local authorities when a property search is made after a contract has been signed but before settlement is achieved. A number of local authorities have such large numbers of staff that it is difficult to find work for them to do.

I have received complaints from real estate agents that after a contract is signed the local authority sends out inspectors to run a fine-tooth comb over the building. The building inspector might say, "This house will need all new stumps," and the plumbing inspector might say that more taps have to be installed. So many inspectors go through the house that in the end the purchaser is faced with having to pay for $10,000 worth of repairs or alterations immediately.

A purchaser should be informed of such requirements when the search is made. If any repair conditions have been imposed, they should be made known at the time of the search and before documents are signed.

During the boom years, a number of local authorities engaged more building inspectors, health inspectors and so on than were necessary. I am now concerned that, in order to ensure that they keep their jobs and do not become redundant, these inspectors make themselves active in some other sphere.

That has resulted in a house-purchaser being faced with problems with which he would not normally be confronted. On many occasions the imposition of conditions affects the sale of a house or at least imposes a great burden on the prospective purchaser, who, because he has signed a contract, thinks that he is committed and must go through with the purchase. In many cases purchasers do not find out until it is too late that conditions have been imposed by the local authority.

The member for Lockyer (Mr FitzGerald) said that people cannot do their own conveyancing; that that is a job that must be done by a very highly paid solicitor. He warned people against acting without legal advice; yet members of the legal fraternity do not actually do the conveyancing, they delegate it to the girls in the office. The member for Windsor (Mr Comben) said that legal advice is not necessary, yet the member for Lockyer said that it is.

I will cite a case handled by a very highly respected member of the National Party who stood as a candidate for the electorate of Port Curtis in the 1977 election. He is a solicitor who has now attained what he terms high office in a firm of solicitors.

Mr Barry Johnson of Barry Johnson and Company was acting for a client who wanted to purchase a house. Mr Johnson said to his client, "Everything is right. You can move into the house when the other people move out." His client said, "As soon as we get the money from our purchaser, we will be able to buy the property." Nothing happened until the client suffered a heart attack and died. It was only then that his wife discovered that Mr Barry Johnson had not done a thing in relation to the purchase of the house. The wife thought that, even though her husband had died, she would still have a home in which she and her family could live. Unfortunately, she found out that the contrary was the case. But Mr Johnson, with his very kind heart, said, "Oh, don't worry, I won't charge you a cent."

Mr FitzGerald: What did you do about it?

Mr PREST: I wrote to a former Minister for Justice and Attorney-General who is no longer with us, but I received no reply.

Another matter concerned a solicitor in Warwick, a solicitor in Gladstone and a property being sold twice. It involved a winery at Warwick, a block of land on the Gold Coast and a property at Tannum Sands. The people concerned lost about $140,000. I am still waiting for a reply in this matter from the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General.

I sincerely hope that the amendments to the Property Law Act will give some protection to those people who obtain the services of a solicitor. I sincerely hope that the amendments will benefit everyone.

Hon. N. J. HARPER (Auburn—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (2.51 p.m.), in reply: I thank those honourable members who have contributed to the debate. In particular, I thank the Opposition spokesman, the honourable member for Wolston (Mr. R. J. Gibbs), for his contribution and support. I repeat what I said when introducing the Bill: It provides ample protection to purchasers but it ensures that subordinate legislation does not interfere with the traditional conveyancing practices unless it is clearly intended to do so.

As the honourable member for Cooroora (Mr Simpson) said, certificates required by local authorities may be produced at or before settlement.

The honourable member for Sherwood (Mr Innes) made a sound contribution. Then we heard the contribution by the honourable member for Windsor (Mr Comben). I wonder whether he will ever be totally happy about anything. Incidentally, conveyancing fees in South Australia, in which land agents are employed, are not substantially less than those charged by solicitors in Queensland who adhere to the Law Society's recommended scale of fees.

The honourable members for Lockyer (Mr FitzGerald) and Cooroora (Mr Simpson) made worth-while contributions and canvassed the pertinent points of the Bill.

In his opening remarks, the honourable member for Port Curtis (Mr Prest) criticised the administration of local government. I suggest to him that he take up that matter in more appropriate quarters. He also referred to what could only be deemed to be malpractices by some solicitors. I draw to his attention that at present processes are available whereby clients who are dissatisfied with the functions carried out by solicitors may have recourse to the Law Society and seek some redress for any complaints that they make and which they believe warrant some form of redress.

The Opposition spokesman on Justice would be aware that it is my intention to strengthen the area in which people who are dissatisfied with services rendered by solicitors may air a genuine greivance and have it investigated.

Motion (Mr Harper) agreed to.

Committee

Clauses 1 to 8, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

DEER FARMING BILL

Second Reading—Resumption of Debate

Debate resumed from 11 October (see p. 1475) on Mr Turner's motion—

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

Mr EATON (Mourilyan) (2.57 p.m.): In supporting this Bill, I have a number of matters to mention. I must say that the legislation is long overdue. I realise that, because of the extent of this Bill, conflict will still arise between the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Department of Primary Industries. For example, feral deer will remain under the control of the National Parks and Wildlife Service even though the Bill does transfer much of the responsibility from the National Parks and Wildlife Service to the Department of Primary Industries.

For many years, the possibility of a deer-farming industry has been discussed. Even in the short time that I have been a member of Parliament, I have received several requests from people who are interested in setting up a deer farm. Sometimes it is wise to move slowly, and it must be said that the Government did not have the knowledge or the wisdom to establish this type of industry earlier. The deer-farming industry could become a growth industry for Queensland.

Mr Gunn: It has been in my electorate for about seven or eight years.

Mr EATON: I am aware of that.

As I have said, in the short time that I have been a member of Parliament, I have received a number of inquiries from people interested in establishing a deer farm. However, my inquiries of the various Government departments revealed that, because of the need for fencing and the safety precautions that must be taken, the initial cost of establishing a deer farm is very high, and that ruled out roughly half of the people who were interested in deer-farming.

I am sure that all honourable members are aware of the problems caused by the importation of animals from overseas. Four varieties of deer can be found in Australia, and deer-farming could have been got off the ground many years ago. Because the industry will produce venison, which must be inspected by meat-inspectors, the Government has done the right thing in transferring responsibility for the industry to the Department of Primary Industries.

Mr Gunn: That is happening at the Murgon meatworks now.

Mr EATON: I realise that.

Feral deer will still be controlled by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. My inquiries on behalf of my constituents who were interested in deer-farming showed that the bureaucracy was a major hurdle to overcome. Although deer farms have been established in Queensland for some time, the Government was reluctant to grant a permit for those farms and did not give any encouragement to the people who established them.

Until I became involved on behalf of some of my constituents who wished to take up deer-farming, I could not follow the department's reasoning. The department offered many excuses why deer could not be farmed in north Queensland. I think it was stalling for time because no-one knew much about the industry. I felt the department offered petty excuses. One was that the north Queensland weather was too wet, and that in other parts it could be too cold. One has only to look at the environment in which deer live in Europe, where in winter they come down from the snow-covered mountains to shelter in the valleys and then move back to the hills in the summer, to know that deer survive under such conditions in many countries. North Queensland has ideal conditions for deer-farming.

When that hurdle was overcome, the department gave the excuse that there was a danger of the deer escaping and becoming a danger to national parks and State forests. Anybody familiar with north Queensland rain forests would know that deer would not last very long in such an environment. I admit that they could probably survive for a reasonable time, but they would do little damage to such environmental areas.

However, the main point is that deer are a protected species. Those who wanted to begin deer-farming were told by the department that the deer would escape and become a nuisance, yet people who want to shoot deer have to get a permit to do so from the Government. The Government says that, because the deer herds cannot breed up, deer are protected.I have been told that some years ago two deer escaped in Papua New Guinea and that within a short time the wet plains of Papua New Guinea were carrying approximately 20 000 deer. I know that to be true, because friends of mine have gone to Papua New Guinea to shoot deer and export the meat, so I was familiar with the problem. However, deer in Queensland do not seem to breed at such a rapid rate.

Because many people made inquiries about becoming established in the industry, deer-farming should have been established much earlier in Queensland. Some people wanted to become involved on a commercial basis; some were hobby farmers. I can see nothing wrong with hobby farmers being involved in deer-farming, and I am pleased that the Minister has recognised that some people are interested on that basis and that they will be covered by the legislation. Because of the stringent conditions applying to the establishment of a deer farm, the high costs will mean that it will not be a poor man's hobby; in fact, deer farms will probably be commercial ventures. As well as the high cost of fencing and establishing everything to the satisfaction of the inspectors, deer will cost approximately $700 each. That is getting up to the price of pure-bred dairy cows. It is fairly high-cost industry.

Mr Newton: It is very dear farming.

Mr EATON: Yes, it is.

Queensland has four species of deer—rusa, fallow, chital and red deer. Last year, the Federal Minister for Health permitted the importation of deer into Australia.

The deer-farming industry has many aspects to it. The meat can be sold for human consumption. In most cases it will be sold to restaurants to be served as a delicacy, venison. Unfortunately, I have not had the pleasure of tasting it, so I do not know whether or not I like it.

As I said, Queensland has ideal conditions for deer-farming, which could be a growth industry; but the Government is only now beginning to move. With the Federal Government allowing the importation of deer into Queensland——

Mr FitzGerald: They were here when Queensland was founded. The deer is on the State's coat of arms. The Federal Government did not give Queensland deer.

Mr EATON: The honourable member cannot eat the coat or arms.

For many, many years people have been wanting to start this enterprise. Deer have been on some of the Torres Strait islands since a boat was wrecked up there in 1901 or 1902. Some of the resultant herd have been brought into north Queensland.

Over two years ago, a constituent of mine requested permission to commence a deer farm, but it was not until mid-January this year that he was able to put his first deer on his property. The first 18 months were taken up in arguments with the bureaucrats, who said that Queensland was too wet for deer, even though deer live in the rain and snow of European countries. When that argument was refuted, the bureaucrats said that the deer might escape.

Today, if a person goes to the Department of Primary Industries and gives three good reasons why he should be able to commence a deer farm, the bureaucrats will have

a thousand and one reasons why he should not. Those bureaucrats ought to be working in the interests of the people and in the interests of the State.

Mr FitzGerald: It's his money.

Mr EATON: That is right.

The capital cost of establishing a deer farm is very high. Recently, a man who wished to set up a deer farm had to fly from Cairns to Brisbane and then travel to Gympie. That can be confirmed by the honourable member for Gympie (Mr Stephan). Through the Deer Breeders Association, he made representations to Mr Stephan. He finally obtained his deer. Although it is a high-cost industry, in the past the farmers have received no Government assistance.

I hope that, when the Bill is passed, the Minister, in his wisdom, will ensure that the Government will help and not hinder those persons wishing to establish deer farms.

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie) (3.6 p.m.): I have great pleasure in joining the debate. The deer industry has been eagerly waiting for this day to arrive.

Mr Davis interjected.

Mr STEPHAN: I should imagine that the member for Brisbane Central would know all about reindeer and the leaping kangaroo. The Bill relates to a different breed of deer.

Many people have spent a great deal of time and money developing the industry. As the member for Mourilyan (Mr Eaton) said, the deer industry is a great industry. The high cost of the preparation of the pasture, the construction of fences and buildings and the collection of animals cannot be ignored.

Initially, deer were brought to Queensland by the early settlers as pets. They have spread further than originally intended. The number of deer in the Mary Valley mountains has increased. Although trapping of deer has taken place since 1978, the deer population has remained stable. A decision had to be made on whether the deer would be shot so as to maintain the crops and pastures that were being grown for beef and dairy herds or whether the deer would be farmed. The latter decision was taken, although the farmers knew that they had a long, hard row to hoe.

In the early 1970s the number of feral deer was proving a nuisance in that area. Now, 15 years later, the deer will come under the jurisdiction of the Department of Primary Industries and not the National Parks and Wildlife Service. In the interim, many deer-producers have been frustrated because they do not know under which umbrella they presently fall. Some ticklish decisions have had to be made.

The Bill should be commended. As the Minister for Primary Industries (Mr Turner) said in his second-reading speech, the Bill has been introduced to control the deer-farming industry. The increase in popularity of deer-farming in Queensland in recent years is an indicator of what its future holds. The domestic deer population will increase. The deer that have been kept in captivity have thrived in their environment.

Later I shall refer to the views expressed by the Animal Liberation movement.

Deer-farming in Queensland is relatively new, and certain husbandry guide-lines are essential to ensure the well-being of the animals and the smooth running of the farm. The main species of deer is the red deer. They have been in Queensland for quite some time. The fallow, rusa and chital deer have grown in numbers. Different species may be handled differently, but the welfare of these animals is paramount. The four major requirements are water, food, shade and shelter, and proper farm layout. Those matters must be considered when any person is considering deer-farming. It is all a matter of effective handling and management of the animals and the farm. The correct yarding facilities are also important, as is regular parasitic control and the protection

from injury of the animals themselves. They do get rather excited. Handling the deer in a way that is likely to stir them up will not do much for the well-being of the animals.

It must be remembered that occasionally a deer in captivity does escape. Owing to the standard of fencing that is required to ensure that the deer are held in the intended location, that is a rare occurrence. It is interesting to note that on the odd occasion when a deer does escape, it does not charge off into the wild. In fact, the deer endeavours to get back into the enclosures on the farm. Deer do that because the food is much better on the farm than it is outside and it offers far better protection from natural predators and disease.

Mr Davis: How did you work that one out?

Mr STEPHAN: I did not have to work it out. The honourable member for Brisbane Central should use his eyes and ears.

I recommend to people who live in the city that they take a trip to some of these deer-farming areas. If they did, they would get first-hand knowledge of what deer-farming is all about and would realise that it is not cruel.

Mr Hartwig: Do you think that venison is a threat to our meat industry?

Mr STEPHAN: No, I do not see it as a threat to this State's meat industry. Venison is a different type of meat. People who like the taste of venison may not necessarily like the taste of beef. However, Australia is not producing enough venison to meet its own requirements, and with the co-operation of the local industry, venison is being imported at the present time. If venison is not available all the time, it certainly will not be sold.

Venison has an unusual taste. Either a person likes it or he does not. If venison is adequately and correctly prepared, there is every possibility that people will like it. It is like comparing apples with plums. It could be said that if too many plums are grown, the apple market will be adversely affected. That could be correct, but not to any large extent. I would not consider venison as a problem.

I have already made reference to the Animal Liberation movement and the fact that it is concerned that the wrong handling methods are being adopted, causing danger to the animals. Much effort is put into the correct handling of the deer. It is not unusual to see deer-farmers rounding up deer from the pasture on a motor bike or in a Land Rover. The farmers can control the deer without causing them to become excited. At times the Animal Liberation movement gets carried away and loses sight of reality. It is about time that its members understood the industry.

I do not always agree with Senator Georges; but, after he inspected at first hand what was happening in deer-farming, his opinion, as reported in the local press, was that the animals were being cared for adequately and no cruelty was shown towards them. He stated that no suggestion should be made that deer-farming be phased out over a two-year period. Such a statement by Senator Georges proves that it is absolutely necessary to see at first hand what is happening before making any statement.

Mr Davis: That is why we suggest joint parliamentary committees—so that we can see what is going on.

Mr STEPHAN: There is nothing to stop you finding out what is happening, whether as a member of a joint parliamentary committee or not. I invite you to my electorate. You would help me a great deal if you accepted. Your attitude would change tremendously if you did and you would not be as influenced by the Animal Liberation movement.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Row): Order! The debate might be more apposite if it were addressed to the Chair.

Mr STEPHAN: I apologise, Mr Deputy Speaker. I was just informing the member for Brisbane Central that I would be quite happy to have him visit my electorate. Not

much he could do would upset me, but there is certainly much that we could do to help him understand what is happening.

Mr Turner: He gets frightened when he goes off the concrete footpath.

Mr STEPHAN: The farming area of my electorate does not have very many concrete footpaths, I admit, but it does have adequate facilities to allow me to show him what he wants to see.

Mr Davis: Have you been out on the Minister's property?

Mr STEPHAN: I do not know whether the Minister has deer on his property to inspect. That is not the point. Perhaps the member for Brisbane Central has been out to the Minister's property.

One of the misconceptions contained in the submission on deer-farming by the Animal Liberation movement was that farmers ought to use tranquilliser darts whenever handling the deer. That misconception has arisen through ignorance and in the absence of facts. There is no way in the world that that suggestion would be practicable.

Deer are rounded up and handled sensibly by farmers, whether the farmers are on horseback, tractors or motor bikes. Some paddocks are small enough to allow the farmers to move around on foot.

Deer-farming is very expensive. The fencing, which is over 8 feet in height, costs $8 a metre. That height is required to discourage the deer from attempting to get out. Any attempt to do so would injure them and damage the fencing.

Mr Davis: Are there many deer in Gympie?

Mr STEPHAN: There are. I do not have the numbers. Many deer can be found in the Brisbane Valley and the Mary Valley. The Deputy Premier and Minister Assisting the Treasurer (Mr Gunn) said earlier that there are many deer in his electorate.

Mr Davis: I was not asking about that. I was asking about your electorate.

Mr STEPHAN: I am saying where deer are to be found. The Brisbane Valley is not far from my electorate of Gympie—just over the range.

The yards provided for deer-farming must be adequate. There must be a central location, all-weather access and watering facilities. The yard size has to be in proportion to the number of deer farmed, a loading ramp is essential and pens must have angles filled in and rounded off. There must be sand, woodchip or sawdust on the ground. The crush area must be circular. That type of information is available through the department. Encouragement is given by the department and by the industry.

Deer-farmers have progressed by virtue of their own initiatives and help that they have been able to obtain. Those two factors should ensure that the fledgling deer industry is here to stay.

When the industry was first developed in Queensland the production of velvet was quite profitable and offered the possibility of stabilising the industry at that early stage. Since that time, the viability of the velvet market has decreased and venison is now the most profitable product. Although velvet is still marketed to a limited extent, it is a product that can be sold only at a very restricted price. However, velvet is certainly a product that ought to be taken into account in assessing the profitability of deer-farming.

Mr Davis: Is not velvet an aphrodisiac?

Mr STEPHAN: I am not sure what it might be called, but it is something that one cannot ignore.

I commend the Bill to honourable members. I believe that the deer-farming industry will go from strength to strength.

Mr KRUGER (Murrumba) (3.21 p.m.): I do not intend to speak at length about the provisions of the Bill. The Bill has been brought before the House to allow honourable members the opportunity of considering ways to strengthen the aims of people who are interested in deer-farming. Up till now, deer-farmers have had no protection and no guidance. I remember the time when, as a young person, I could go on a deer-shooting excursion by travelling to the Jimna area and the Mary Valley. Although the practice was illegal, everyone enjoyed being able to bag a deer if that were possible. The old-time shooters used to take great pride in the antlers that could be taken from a prime stag.

In contrast to that, the people who wish to undertake deer-farming as a livelihood are turning to the Government for means of control over the industry. The reasons for that are quite obvious to me, and I can state that the Australiam Labor Party has no objection to controlling industry as a general philosophy. As a matter of fact, the Australian Labor Party has been the forerunner in the implementation of control over primary industry throughout the State. Moreover, most of the legislation that has been enacted, without requiring alteration, was brought forward by Labor Party Governments in this State. However, the present situation needs to be examined with a view to not only imposing controls over production, but also finding markets for venison and secondary products that result from deer-farming. If the industry proves viable, the Government has a responsibilty to ensure that a large volume of sales will be possible.

At this stage, the State has a small number of farmers. As will be seen from the documents that I will later produce, the picture that is painted indicates that deer-farming can be quite lucrative, except for the costs associated with fencing and other special requirements. If the industry is successful, and if overseas markets in places such as West Germany can be established, Queensland deer-farmers can go on producing more products from the deer-farming range.

All kinds of research will need to be undertaken to ensure that markets are available and that the industry does not do what other primary industries in Queensland and other States have tended to do, that is, turn to better methods of production without ensuring that markets exist.

I draw to the attention of the Minister the need for a watch to be kept on this industry and for liaison to be conducted between the State Government and the Federal Government if necessary. Unfortunately, a new "rave" has emerged about Queensland's going it alone in some industries. If the Minister were to apply that kind of philosophy to deer-farming and ignore the Federal Government, the State Government would bear total responsibility for making sure that sufficient markets were established for deer-farming products. If the Queensland Government continues to tell people that deer-farming is a lucrative business, the Government has a responsibility to ensure that the product can be sold.

I found the speech by the Minister very interesting because it seemed to cover most of the aspects of the Bill. By comparing the Minister's speech with the provisions of the Bill, I see that the two roll along fairly well together.

I note that amendments that will be necessary to accommodate new stipulations about keeping feral animals outside the designated areas will be made to the Fauna Conservation Act. Such amendments will be necessary to ensure that control is maintained over fencing, loading ramps and farming activities. The amendments will also provide for inspectorial rights and will entitle an inspector to examine records and licensing requirements. The proposals put forward by the Minister for those amendments compare favourably with the Bill and with the contents of the speech made by the Minister. In the light of that, the Opposition has no problem in supporting the Bill.

I do, however, want to discuss a couple of articles that I read recently. They indicated that certain problems in the industry will have to be watched closely. I draw members' attention to an article in "Farm" of November 1982, which states—

> "Like many new agricultural ventures in Australia—and especially those with a strong 'hobby farmer' element—deer farming has been considered sceptically in its first few years of commercial development. But as time passes and the off-beat image starts to wear off, deer are being seriously gauged as a viable alternative enterprise.
>
> Deer, in fact, could be up to five times as profitable as sheep or cattle based on the present 250 to 300 commercial deer farms in Australia carrying 20,000 to 25,000 deer."

As I said earlier, that is a limited amount of stock, really, and it is obvious that stock numbers will have to be watched. It is noticeable that although commercial herds are increasing there has not been a major decrease in the feral population. That shows that the farmers have been trapping very sensibly and that to date the industry has been well handled. But I wonder whether, with limited stock numbers, the forecast of an industry five times as profitable as sheep or cattle can be realised if over-production occurs. As I said earlier, that is something that the Minister will have to look at closely.

The magazine featured a photograph of Ian Hart, who started farming deer commercially as an alternative to shooting them. I believe that the honourable member for Gympie mentioned him. Apparently Mr Hart has conducted his enterprise very sensibly, but one has to look at his success story in an industry that is just beginning and ask whether it will be as profitable in a few years' time.

Alastair Thompson is another farmer with more than 13 years' experience, mostly in New Zealand. He is—

> ". . . extremely critical of Government involvement in commercial deer development in Australia, in particular the involvement of the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the State Departments of Agriculture."

That is the type of problem to which the member for Mourilyan referred.

With the exception of a couple of the clauses with which I want to deal, the Opposition has no objection to the intent of the Bill. But I must refer to the regulations that will be made under the Bill. I am always a little sceptical of and dubious about regulations that are made following the passage of legislation through this Chamber. This is new legislation and, from time to time, changes will need to be made. Such changes are usually made by regulation, and it is not always easy to determine whether in fact people in the industry really want regulations introduced or whether the Government introduces regulations only for the benefit of a select few. That is the sort of thing that members will have to keep their eye on as time goes by.

I bring to the notice of the Minister the need to ensure that the regulations are fair. Any Bill is only as good as the regulations made under it. They are the working part of the Bill. Often the more formal legislation is not discussed unless somebody goes crook or tries to cancel a licence. The Minister is well aware of that and I trust that he will continue to keep a close watch on the regulations.

Another article on deer farming published in 1980 states in part—

> "About 600 are already behind fences, forming the embryo of what the Department of Primary Industry sees as having the potential to supply venison for Australian tables and perhaps those of West Germany."

I am not sure what will be the future market in Australia, and I do not think that anybody else does. Venison is new to Queensland and has not been tested on the market. It has been tried only by those people who like to go out and bag a deer for its antlers and take a bit of venison home as a change of diet. I saw a suggested price per kilogram

in another article, and it was not as high as I thought it would be, particularly when considering the price paid for other types of gourmet meals. If the price remains at the level suggested in the article I read, the venison trade will possibly not be as lucrative as many people think. That will show up later. It will depend on how popular venison becomes as a table meat.

The honourable member for Gympie referred to the value of velvet. Velvet prices vary considerably. Some articles that I have read indicate that the production of velvet is a good sideline. Apparently it has not been so good recently. That matter has to be considered by the people in the industry.

I warn anybody who is interested in engaging in deer-farming to give deep consideration to the capital outlay involved in erecting 8-ft fences and providing irrigation for pastures. Apparently deer are receptive to good pastures. It seems that an adequate water supply and good pastures are necessary to get the best production from a herd of deer. I warn people that they should give deep consideration to the quality of the country on which they intend to run deer. After weighing up those matters, people should know what is in it for them.

Deer-farming is not as cheap to start up as some other enterprises. It would certainly be very interesting. As has been stated, red deer can be trained easily and are receptive to man working with them. Whether a motor bike or a four-wheel-drive vehicle is used to herd deer, they quickly realise who is feeding them.

I shall raise a couple of points at the Committee stage. As I have said, the Opposition does not object to what the Minister proposes to do under this legislation.

Mr SIMPSON (Cooroora) (3.32 p.m.): I support the Minister for Primary Industries (Mr Turner) in the introduction of this Bill. I acknowledge that there are enterprising people in Australia, particularly in rural industries, who see potential in developing an industry. In so many areas, if something comes easily it is not appreciated. Encountering difficulties often results in an industry being developed on a very sound basis.

When beef prices were low, the pioneers in the deer-farming industry, such as the Harts at Oakwood, found that they had to diversify and find alternatives to survive on the land.

Many primary producers in Australia are going through very difficult times. Problems are being encountered in the sugar industry, the dairy industry, the beef industry and the grain industry. The false surpluses that have been created in other countries are being dumped on the world markets. Many Australian primary industries have been placed in a parlous situation. That is affecting Australia's balance of payments and the standard of living.

The deer industry has great potential. It will not necessarily become a large industry, but it has a growth factor. The problem is finding stock from which to breed up. Rusa deer have the greatest potential. They are small and easy to handle. Also, they have greater tick resistance.

It is likely that deer will be farmed in the higher rainfall areas of the State, such as the Mary Valley, some of which is in my electorate. Of course, some deer farms have been established in my electorate.

Because of the capital outlay to erect fences, fences have to be erected round the areas that have the best carrying capacity.

The length of fencing is determined by the area of pasture on which the stock will run. The cost of erecting fences for deer is approximately two or three times the cost of erecting fences for other animals. Therefore, one is looking for productive country for deer. Irrigation could be used to improve the pastures. It may be found that deer will adapt to irrigated areas as they have to hilly country that is not suitable for cultivation

or other farming. Suitable frost-free areas could be utilised for deer-farming, and it has been shown that subtropical grasses can be grown in tropical areas with higher rainfall.

I commend the people who have set out to bring some order or purpose to this industry. In the early days, red deer were released into the wild in Queensland. It is only fitting, therefore, that the deer features prominently on the Queensland coat of arms. Recently, a group of people from the Probus Club of Noosa came through Parliament House, and they were very interested in the deer and its position on the coat of arms. I explained that it was imported to Queensland. Of course, the brolga, which also appears on the coat of arms, is an indigenous creature. The point that I made was that perhaps an analogy could be drawn with people who adopt Queensland as their home and those who are born here.

Red deer may be harvested from the wild. However, in some areas feral deer are not to be found, and problems may occur. That is why controls are needed. It will be found in time that the controls will become a backstop and that the industry will develop along the guide-lines that have been set. The efforts of the pioneers in such an endeavour make life much smoother for those who follow.

In the debate on the previous Bill, I spoke about the need for the buyer to beware. Some people will always be seeking to make a quick profit, and often they are conned by slick people who have schemes in which it is claimed that a fortune can be made overnight. They may suggest that, if a person puts his money into deer-farming or into a particular type of crop, he will make his fortune. They state that so much production per acre can be achieved and that a product is bringing in so much per pound. Of course, they do not tell unwary people that values have plummeted and that the industries are not bringing in that sort of money. Primary industries operate in a supply and demand market. People may be interested in developing a new product or in expanding a product that has a potential for a wider market. That may result in over-production, which in turn, results in unprofitability. The sums must be done correctly in the first place.

My point is that buyers must beware, and they should take advice. The Queensland Department of Primary Industries provides a free information service. I hope that the service will not over-stretch its resources. However, in the other States, would-be primary producers or hobby farmers have been so inundating the information services that they are now charged for the services provided.

Mr Davis: Are we talking about deer-farming or not?

Mr SIMPSON: Yes, I am. If the honourable member for Brisbane Central ever considers going into such a venture, he would be well advised to take advice before he did so.

Mr Davis: I have told you before, and I will tell you again: I was on the land before you were born.

Mr SIMPSON: The honourable member for Brisbane Central might have been on the land before my father was born, but that does not prove that he has any knowledge of primary industries.

The advice that I give to the honourable member is the same as that given to those who have not had experience on the land, especially in a new and developing industry. Not many people have expertise in deer-farming, which is another reason why those intending to enter the industry should seek advice and proceed cautiously. They should do their sums on the basis of a reasonable expectation of return and not on the highest figures. They should also have regard for the fact that others will be joining the industry and meeting some of the present demands, one of which is for venison.

I do not discount the possibility that a market can be developed. In the case of venison, perhaps it lies with international tourists and more sophisticated eating in

restaurants. I am sure that the industry will pursue that development. However, intending deer-farmers should look at such development as a bonus on their profits in the future or perhaps something to be relied upon in difficult times, not as part of the expected return.

As the member for Gympie has indicated, feral deer must be handled in a way that will quieten them down. If those large animals are not treated properly, they can cost a farmer a great deal of money.

I commend all those who have committed a great deal of hard work and dedication to this developing industry, not necessarily for their own profitable ends. They have endeavoured to set up an industry of which Queenslanders and the nation as a whole can be proud. It will be of benefit to both tourism and primary industry in the State and will improve the standard of living of Queenslanders and visitors to this State. I support the legislation.

Mr CAMPBELL (Bundaberg) (3.42 p.m.): The ALP has always supported orderly marketing and orderly development of industry. Because of that, the Opposition supports the Bill. However, I should bring to the attention of the House certain reservations that I have about it. The Bill is a complex piece of legislation, which perhaps does not contain adequate protection of the basic rights of farmers and gives reason for concern about pest and disease control. The Minister told the House that the industry asked for the application of such controls, but the Government has shown a great deal of concern about the possibility of environmental damage and debilitation of indigenous plant species by the uncontrolled spread of feral deer in this expanding industry. Because deer have been present in Queensland for many years, some of those concerns must be questioned. It seems to me that many of the controls contained in the Bill are concerned with the effects on the environment of disease and pests associated with the industry.

Deer have been in Queensland since 1863, which is when the fallow deer was introduced. That deer is now found mainly west of Stanthorpe. The chital deer was introduced to Queensland in 1867, and it is now found mainly north-west of Charters Towers. The red deer, which is found in the Brisbane and Mary Valley areas, was introduced in 1873. The fourth species is the rusa, which was introduced into the Torres Strait area in 1912.

If there was any likelihood of major problems being experienced with the spread of those deer, it would have occurred already. Perhaps it would be going a little too far if there were to be feral areas for different species. I am aware that ticks and pests are a problem. Deer should be kept out of tick areas. If deer could cause problems in the cattle industry and other industries, controls must be exercised.

Mr Stephan: Deer are in tick areas already.

Mr CAMPBELL: That is why they must be controlled. They should not be allowed to go from one area to the next.

The Bill is complex. It controls three types of deer: feral deer, which will come under the Fauna Conservation Act; farm deer, which will be kept on farms for commercial purposes; and companion deer. Companion deer are kept for the owner's pleasure. I ask the Minister to inform me what the owner's pleasure is in companion deer.

Mr Turner interjected.

Mr CAMPBELL: I know that the Minister for Primary Industries is an expert boundary rider.

There are four species and three definitions of deer. In addition, there will be different feral areas. There will be complex controls over different types of deer, different species of deer, and different areas. Perhaps consideration should be given to how complex the situation will be.

It has been suggested that controls will be exercised through licensing, and that important matter should be examined more closely. Licences will be granted to farm on a species basis in feral areas and non-feral areas, and also on a combined deer basis. In addition, both the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Department of Primary Industries will be involved, so there might be a bureaucratic nightmare.

The member for Mourilyan (Mr Eaton) said that applicants for licences have been hindered by a number of difficulties. Perhaps the matter has become more complex than it was intended.

The eligibility and qualifications entitling a person to a licence will be contained in regulations. They are not contained in this Bill.

Mr Simpson: Are you in favour of the legislation?

Mr CAMPBELL: Yes. I am trying to outline some reservations so that better legislation may be produced. I agree that controls should be exercised.

Farmers will ask the honourable member for Cooroora (Mr Simpson), "Why won't they grant me a licence?" The Bill contains no criteria for the granting of a licence. Honourable members do not know why a person can be refused a licence. If he is not granted a licence, he is entitled to appeal. However, what are the grounds upon which the inspector will not grant a licence? They are not spelt out in the Bill.

Mr Eaton: It took two years from when I first made representations on his behalf for one man to get his deer.

Mr CAMPBELL: It took two years! Now there will be further complexities.

It is important for the licensing to be examined carefully. The Opposition is concerned about the protection of the farmers' basic rights. At the moment, if a person is refused a licence, he is not told why it has been rejected. Although that is not important now, it will be an important matter in the future.

In 1984, 53 deer-farmers were registered and it was estimated that the deer population was: red deer, 4 000; rusa deer, 800; fallow deer, between 500 and 600; and chital deer, between 300 and 400. Although the deer industry is growing, when it is fully established there will be no clear guide-lines as to who will be granted a licence and who will not be granted a licence. People who already hold licences will be saying that no more licences should be granted because additional deer-farmers will upset the industry. Clear guide-lines should be laid down as to who will be given a licence and why a licence can be refused.

At the moment, no clear guide-lines have been laid down. Under this Bill if someone breaks the law concerning licensing, he can have his licence cancelled. That creates a very difficult situation. If a person who is licensed to run deer in a particular area does something wrong, his licence can suddenly be cancelled. What happens to the deer? They will be unlicensed, and they will become what are termed in the Bill "displaced farming deer" What will happen to those deer?

I realise that a licence can be cancelled for merely a few weeks or a few months. However, if licences are cancelled, the situation will arise in which displaced deer will be kept in an unlicensed area. Those are a few of the difficulties that Labor Party members foresee.

Finally, I mention that it is very good to have in the legislation provision for appeals for licences. However, I repeat that a deficiency exists, because the legislation does not specify under what criteria a licence may be granted or under what criteria a licence may be rejected or what will be grounds for appeal. It is in the interests of the farmers intending to go into this industry that those matters be looked at. If people in country areas are knocked back for a licence, they will approach their member and ask why. Members will not know why, because grounds are not clearly stated.

As I have stated, the Labor Party supports orderly marketing and orderly development of the deer-farming industry. However, Opposition members are concerned about a few aspects of the Bill. Firstly, it is complex in that it deals with different species, different areas and different types of licences. Secondly, the Bill does not look after the rights of farmers.

Mr SCOTT (Cook) (3.52 p.m.): The legislation is low-key, but, nevertheless, it is important. I have listened with great interest to the debate. I must compliment members on the Opposition side of the Chamber for their contributions. They summed up very well the areas in which there appears to be scope for deficiencies.

Deer-farming is of importance to the Cook electorate. It is of great interest to people who live on Thursday Island. Many of them go hunting on the Prince of Wales Island for the rusa deer, which were referred to by the member for Bundaberg (Mr Campbell). He told us that they were introduced in the early 1900s. I understand they were brought there as a source of food for the pearl-divers. They remained on Prince of Wales Island and a few other islands.

In the last couple of years, deer-farming has caused a good deal of controversy. For a start, more policing of the legislation in regard to their hunting has been carried out. That has caused some concern to many people on Thursday Island. They do not know exactly where they stand.

Great concern has also been expressed about the way in which deer have been shipped out. To my mind, that raises concern in regard to the legislation in that, if a licensed deer-farmer is suddenly found to have largely increased his stock-holding, I wonder whether any provision exists to enable inspectors to try to determine how that increase in stock has come about. A great deal of trouble arose on Prince of Wales Island over the way in which the deer were shipped out. A person who has an occupational permit to run cattle over a very large area of Prince of Wales Island sought a permit from the National Parks and Wildlife Service to ship out some deer. It was very difficult for anyone to establish exactly how many deer that man was supposed to be shipping out and what the conditions of sale and transport were.

I understand that the deer were moved from Prince of Wales Island to Cairns and that they were depastured somewhere in that area—no-one seems to know where—before they were moved south. I think they were sold somewhere in the Gympie area. I would appreciate being given further information on the matter.

Mr Stephan: They were taken straight down.

Mr SCOTT: We were told that. We were also told that they were being depastured in the Davies Creek area. It is considered that an area there might be a deer farm. I am not certain what has happened to the deer. I am interested in all the benefits extended to the land-holder on Prince of Wales Island. Conventional wisdom in the Torres Strait is that he made quite a deal of money out of it.

As has been ably pointed out by other members of the Opposition, the legislation goes a fair way towards controlling the industry. Certainly, it will not totally control it. I agree with those honourable members who have said that there is a future for deer-farming. There is no doubt about that. There is possibly a future for it in the Torres Strait area. Concern has been expressed about the spread of the screwworm fly. In the foreseeable future, that will prevent any extensive deer-farming on Torres Strait islands. That is a valid and legitimate concern that will not easily be put to rest. I understand that, when the Minister was in New Guinea recently, he inspected some of the remaining CSIRO facilities that investigate the screwworm fly. It is heartening to note his interest in that subject. As he knows, there is serious concern about the screwworm fly spreading from New Guinea to Queensland. I am aware that the Minister and his officers are taking every step possible to exercise control.

Mr Casey: I had a look at the position two years ago.

Mr SCOTT: I am aware of the interest of the honourable member for Mackay (Mr Casey) in it. I am pleased to take his interjection.

I will be interested in any remarks from the Minister about the position in the Torres Strait area. What controls are exercised in legitimising the trade between Prince of Wales Island and the rest of Queensland? What can we expect from that area?

Hon. N. J. TURNER (Warrego—Minister for Primary Industries) (3.57 p.m.), in reply: I thank honourable members for their contributions to the debate. The honourable member for Mourilyan (Mr Eaton) expressed the Australian Labor Party's support of the Bill in principle.

He referred to the delays in issuing permits to keep deer and the problems experienced in the past. The Department of Primary Industries has no power in that matter. Until the proclamation of this legislation, the National Parks and Wildlife Service issues permits. By way of clarification, I point out that the Commonwealth gave approval to import deer from New Zealand; but, because of a health risk from a worm in the flesh, that approval has been withdrawn.

The member for Mourilyan referred to the danger of deer escaping and the need for controls. A number of other members referred to the need for controls in the industry. Some deer species are capable of colonising rough country. For example, the chital is a feral deer inhabiting extensive dry country north west of Charters Towers. At the moment, Queensland has far too many feral animals. That is particularly important when bearing in mind the ramifications of the outbreak of exotic disease. Recently a foot and mouth disease test was held in north Queensland. An outbreak can occur at any time. For instance, as was mentioned by one honourable member, screwworm fly could be introduced. Strict controls must be imposed to prevent deer escaping from farms and colonising areas in which they are not presently found.

The member for Mourilyan correctly stated the significant expenditure to be incurred by anyone venturing into the industry. The Government is helping. It is doing so with this legislation. The conditions being introduced by the Bill have been accepted and, in most instances, requested by the industry. The member for Murrumba supported the legislation and spoke of the need to explore markets for venison. The Department of Primary Industries has been active in the promotion of venison and, in co-operation with the Australian Deer Breeders Association, has published pamphlets. An officer of the Department of Primary Industries is located at Queensland House in London, and his task is to explore market opportunities in Europe for deer and other products.

An undertaking has been given to the Deer Breeders Association that the Government will consult with it on the framing of regulations.

Reference has been made to the quality of the countryside that is a prerequisite for running deer. That is a very pertinent point. I agree that that is a vital matter, so much so that deer-farming will be restricted to the high-rainfall, intensive-farming areas.

The honourable member for Gympie (Mr Stephan) displayed his deep interest in deer-farming. Because the industry has been developing in his electorate over a long period, deer-farming is a subject on which he speaks from time to time.

I believe that the deer-farming industry has a bright future. The Act, when proclaimed, will clarify conditions of entry and the maintenance of control that will be instigated.

The honourable member for Gympie spoke at length about the importance of proper handling and the proper lay-out of shaded areas and yards. Of course, all of those husbandry matters are most important. I commend him for the intimate knowledge that he has and the interest that he has taken in the development of the industry over a long period.

The honourable member for Cooroora (Mr Simpson) spoke about diversification in primary industries and the contribution that many pioneers in the deer-farming industry

have made. That is a very pertinent point. A great deal of money and effort has been put into the establishment of the industry, and the people involved support the legislation, which will put the industry on a proper footing.

The honourable member mentioned the role of departmental officers in the dissemination of knowledge in this and all other fields of primary industry. I join with the honourable member in acknowledging the role that departmental officers play, and I recommend to anyone who contemplates participating in this industry that he consult with the officers of my department who can assist in working out the pros and cons of future prospects. I thank the honourable member for his contribution.

As usual, the honourable member for Bundaberg (Mr Campbell) spoke about all the problems and the pros and cons inherent in this legislation and about its complexity. He referred to the lack of protection for the right of individuals and the need for protection against disease in the animals.

On the one hand, the honourable member refers to the problems that will be experienced when deer are farmed in tick areas and when deer are transported from one area to another. On the other hand, he seems to indicate that the Government should not impose any controls at all. Some species of deer are peculiarly suited to certain areas, and it is not the wish of the Department of Primary Industries to spread those species all over Queensland without any control over where they will graze or the possible harm that can be caused to the environment that is not subject to control. I have previously mentioned the problems associated with disease and feral animals. The honourable member for Bundaberg said that those two factors would cause an administrative nightmare. I do not consider that appropriate legislation—legislation that has been supported by the industry—would have that result.

The regulations have been designed to spell out the conditions, and they include under section 25 a right of appeal to the Minister if approval for a licence is denied.

The honourable member for Cook (Mr Scott) referred to the problems associated with deer-farming in the Torres Strait region. The Torres Strait area will be monitored. Because of the inherent problems associated with foot and mouth disease and screwworm fly, the department has no desire to spread deer-farming throughout the islands.

The honourable member referred to the possibility of deer being taken from a designated area and being brought back to farms, and of the possibility of people not being able to demonstrate where the deer came from. I stress that people engaged in deer-farming should be required to prove ownership, and I point out that, enshrined in the legislation, is the necessity for the proper keeping of records of deer, breeding statistics, etc. The point raised by the honourable member is covered by the provisions of the Bill. Because all of the deer stock will have to be accounted for, a complete record must be maintained to show where deer have been procured. However, I take on board the points that the honourable member for Cook has raised, and I give the assurance that the Department of Primary Industries will be monitoring deer-farming activities in the Torres Strait area when the legislation is proclaimed.

I thank all honourable members for the contributions that they have made.

Motion (Mr Turner) agreed to.

Committee

Mr Booth (Warwick) in the chair; Hon. N. J. Turner (Warrego—Minister for Primary Industries) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 19, as read, agreed to.

Clause 20—Deer farming licences—

Mr CAMPBELL (4.5 p.m.): This clause deals with the licensing of deer farms. Will the licence be given to an individual and be in his name? Will the species of deer as

well as the area on the farm to which the licence relates appear on the licence? How often will a licence have to be renewed?

Mr TURNER: The individual's name will appear on the licence, which will apply to the whole property and to the species being farmed. It will be an annual licence.

Mr CAMPBELL: Will more than one species be licensed on any one farm?

Mr TURNER: Yes.

Clause 20, as read, agreed to.

Clause 21—Applications—

Mr CAMPBELL (4.7 p.m.): I agree that a person can make an application, but there is nothing in the clause to say what he has to do to obtain a licence. No conditions are spelt out to say why a person will be able to get a licence, or what will be the conditions under which he will be granted a licence, which is more important. The clause does not spell out what is entailed when a person makes an application, what is required or what will be the basis for not giving a person a licence.

Mr TURNER: That will be spelt out in the regulations on the prescribed form. As I mentioned before, under clause 25 there will be a right of appeal to the Minister if a licence is refused.

Mr CAMPBELL: I place on record that Opposition members do not totally agree with this legislation, in that those conditions do not appear in the legislation but will be found only in the regulations. They should appear in the Bill so that they can be questioned. I refer particularly to those conditions that relate to the granting or not granting of a licence.

Mr SIMPSON: This clause is relevant to all licensing, although licensing is dealt with in a number of other clauses. The Committee is discussing legislation covering a new and developing industry in relation to which parameters have to be developed. The Minister has already indicated that they will be dealt with more specifically in the regulations. At this stage the legislation cannot specify the areas where feral animals are located or even specify that only a certain breed can be farmed, because in certain areas feral deer might die out or be destroyed. So it would be a bit foolish to issue licences willy-nilly when there is no reasonable certainty that feral deer will continue to inhabit the area. However, if there were reasonable prospects that feral deer would continue to inhabit an area, a licence would not be denied.

There is a difference between controlling an industry and controlling individual farms. The concept of the legislation is not to strictly control farms but to licence a property and allow the owner to get on and develop his business with the minimum of controls. The only controls will relate to breeds and whether there is a danger that they would add to the feral population in areas where a certain breed does not already exist.

The Government is supporting enterprising people who wish to develop the industry and is imposing a minimum of controls. On this point, there is a fundamental philosophical difference between the Government and the Opposition.

Clause 21, as read, agreed to.

Clause 22, as read, agreed to.

Clause 23—Suspension or cancellation—

Mr CAMPBELL (4.11 p.m.): This clause could create a lot of trouble. If a licence is suspended or cancelled, it will be a suspension or a cancellation of a licence for a farm. That farm will be unlicensed; therefore, the deer on that farm will become displaced deer.

If a licence is suspended or cancelled, the person who held the licence will have to get rid of all his deer. A licence may be suspended or cancelled for a short period, and that is where the problem arises. If a licence is suspended or cancelled, there will be no licence for the particular property. Therefore, under this legislation it will not be a deer farm and deer will not be able to be kept on it. That will create a real problem. What does the Minister intend to do with those displaced deer?

Mr TURNER: I see no problems in that regard. If an offence is committed against the Bill, it is necessary to have the capacity to suspend or cancel a licence. That provision is not peculiar to this legislation. A fisherman's licence may be cancelled for a number of reasons and he is not able to use his boat for fishing. A driver may have his licence cancelled and he is not able to drive his car. The provision must be included in the legislation, and there is nothing harmful in it.

Mr CAMPBELL: I agree that, if a person does not do the right thing, provision has to be made for the suspension or cancellation of a licence; but the Minister still has not referred to the problem of what happens to the deer that are on the particular farm. They must become the property of the Crown. If a licence is cancelled, the Crown automatically confiscates all the deer on that farm. Deer may be kept only on a licensed property. If a licence is taken away, the property is not a licensed one and the deer on it must be confiscated. That matter needs to be clarified.

Mr TURNER: If a licence is suspended or cancelled, the person concerned will be informed of the reasons for it. If he is able to return to deer-farming after a certain period, provision will be made to enable him to retain the deer. If he is not to be allowed to engage in deer-farming again, he will be given adequate time in which to dispose of the deer. He will have an opportunity to sell his deer, say, to someone else who may be able to apply for a licence in that area. Those avenues will be investigated at the time.

Mr CAMPBELL: That matter should be clarified, perhaps, by a further amendment to the legislation.

Clause 23, as read, agreed to.

Clause 24, as read, agreed to.

Clause 25—Appeal—

Mr KRUGER (4.14 p.m.): The Minister's decision on any appeal shall be final. No criteria are laid down as to the way in which the Minister will consider an appeal. On many occasions the Minister has the final say, and it seems to me that some other way should be found. I object to the clause because I do not think that the Minister always receives full and proper advice and he may not always give proper consideration to an appeal. I am not singling out the Minister for Primary Industries, but it can happen. A close eye should be kept on that practice. I trust that, if anyone does appeal to the Minister, he will be given a very good hearing and the best decision possible will be made. However, that is the problem with clauses such as this.

Mr TURNER: I assure the honourable member for Murrumba that no other Minister or I would deal with a question like this without other than the utmost fairness and impartiality and after examining all of the facts. As the honourable member said, this clause is not an innovation and the principle can be found in other legislation. The right of appeal to the Minister remains. I assure the honourable member that there will be no problems with this clause.

I move the following amendment—

"At page 12, line 22, after the word 'refusal' insert the words—

', suspension or cancellation'."

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 25, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 26 to 29, as read, agreed to.

Clause 30—Disposal of seized deer or other things—

Mr TURNER (4.17 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 16, line 7, after the word 'disposed' insert the word—
'of' "

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 30, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 31 to 43, as read, agreed to.

Clause 44—Regulations—

Mr KRUGER (4.18 p.m.): A Bill is only as good as the regulations that apply to it. The Minister for Primary Industries has commented about the regulations, and he has stated that it is his intention and that of his staff to discuss those regulations with the industry before they are adopted. That intention is very important. On some occasions regulations have caused concern to a particular industry. As a result, they have been amended a number of times within a short period. I know that on other occasions this Minister—as have other Ministers—has said that the regulations were discussed with the industry. However, Opposition members have discovered from discussions with some industry groups that they were not consulted and that certain sections of the industry only were consulted. I urge the Minister and his staff to ensure that they speak with all sections of the industry in determining the regulations.

Clause 44, as read, agreed to.

Schedules I to III, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Third Reading

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

HEN QUOTAS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading—Resumption of Debate

Debate resumed from 3 October (see p. 994) on Mr Turner's motion—

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

Mr KRUGER (Murrumba) (4.21 p.m.): Although the Opposition has no objection to the Bill, several points have to be raised. I will do that as briefly as possible because if I go into too much detail it will only create confusion.

As the Bill has been before the House for some time, the Opposition has been able to speak to a number of people involved in the industry. I am pleased to have been able to do that. That is not always the case in this place, where quite often Bills are debated in such a hurry that the Opposition does not have a chance to talk to those affected by the legislation. That shows the advantage of having Bills before the House for a reasonable time.

A great need exists to continue with the controls over an industry of this type. A lack of controls only jeopardises supply and is a disadvantage to producers over the long term. The supply and demand management and other regulations in all primary industries were generally introduced by Labor Governments to protect producers, particularly small producers, from exploitation from middle men and unscrupulous retailers.

From time to time some proposals have recommended deregulation within the industry. Before anybody jumps up and down, I admit that that was suggested not so long ago by a member on this side of House. However, because it believes in orderly marketing and the orderly production of products such as eggs, the Opposition has got over that problem. Although the deregulation of the industry could reduce the price of eggs for a time, which was the purpose of the gentleman who raised the matter, such a reduction in price would last for only a short period. In the long term, deregulation would not help the industry at all and would only create major problems to the industry and consumers over a longer period.

A well-organised and controlled production and marketing system should benefit both sides. The purpose of controls over any industry is not to benefit one side or the other but to ensure that the consumer, the producer and the middle man all get a reasonable share. The obvious result of deregulation would be a field day for the likes of G. J. Coles, Woolworths and the hypermarket. Such a field day was seen recently in the poultry and bread industries when prices were reduced to well below the recommended minimum. In the near future the same thing could occur in the milk industry. It should not be allowed to happen in the egg industry. Of course, the Hen Quotas Act controls the number of eggs produced.

In any price war it is the small producer, not the big producer, who suffers. I have spoken to a north Queensland poultry-farmer who was forced out of the broiler industry by G. J. Coles. That company used to buy its chickens from him but later had them air freighted to the north by another company.

To give an example of what can happen, the mark-up on the northern grower's produce was generally between 75 and 100 per cent. Even when chickens were on special, the mark-up never dropped below 25 per cent. Retailers work on a mark-up of about 20 per cent. With deregulation, action could be taken similar to that taken in some other industries. That is not wanted. The control of the poultry industry in Queensland has been a success story.

The hen quota system has been operating in Australia for about 12 years. A great deal of success has been achieved by it in all States with the exception of New South Wales. It has had its share of problems. The industry in New South Wales was not as determined to reduce quotas and production as it should have been. I suppose that has occurred as a result of the cargo cult among marketing boards.

A producer is only interested in his own cost of production and production problems and does not know or want to know the board's marketing problems. Eggs that have been produced must be sold. Although a producer might produce only his quota, he must be prepared to strike a balance that is acceptable to everyone.

The board members are scared to be honest and frank with the producers because they want to be re-elected at the next board election. They cannot state the facts to the producer. The board members will not be re-elected if they reveal the truth about the board's activities. That has happened in other industries as well as the egg industry. At the last Egg Board election, the former chairman (Barry Vennamore) was not re-elected because he told the producers the truth. That has played a great part in what has been achieved by the Egg Board in this State.

Another problem experienced in New South Wales is the free sale of quotas. The high price of quotas is reflected in the cost of production, and the consumer considers that he is eventually paying for the high quota price. New South Wales should have adopted the Victorian or Queensland approach to quota transfers. Had it done so, it would have been much better off. The egg-producers in Queensland have had discussions with the Government to acheive the present system. The problems in New South Wales have settled down now that some sanity has prevailed in that State.

The New South Wales Egg Corporation was established because of the serious over-production and chaos in the egg industry. The New South Wales Minister appointed

John David as chairman of the New South Wales Egg Corporation and Ken Baxter as general manager. John David is the managing director of a chain of grocery wholesale outlets in New South Wales. Mr Baxter has been in the egg industry previously. I think that he was manager of the old New South Wales Egg Board. My information is that he was very inefficient previously and was sacked. It is my opinion that John David will prove to be a disastrous choice for producers as chairman of the corporation. I do not say that lightly. I believe that he has a conflict of interest between his loyalty to his own marketing company because he wants the cheapest possible price for eggs, and the corporation as marketers of eggs on behalf of producers.

Egg-marketing boards were originally set up to eliminate exploitation of producers by trader/wholesalers and retailers. I believe that it is John David's ambition to have his company warehouse and market all eggs in New South Wales. Mr Hallam has appointed him to market the surplus. I hope that it works out better than I think it will. Problems can be encountered when persons representing large chain store organisations act for both sides. It seems that a person such as John David would have one common goal. I am concerned that he would act generally for his own marketing benefit rather than for the benefit of the producer or the consumer.

The New South Wales Minister, as soon as he was appointed, should have changed the Act to reduce and to put a ceiling on transfers of hen quotas so that a purchaser cannot purchase another hen quota if it will bring that purchaser's quota above 25 000 hens or any other number that is determined. There should be a limit on the number of hens that any one producer can keep. It is spelt out in the legislation that the hens are attached to the property. A person should have control over X number of hens, and that should be his quota.

If the New South Wales industry and the egg corporation had continued, the New South Wales Minister would have had to deregulate the industry. If the production of eggs does not settle down, it is possible that in the near future he will have to deregulate the egg industry. Recently there has been some relief in the egg industry. I believe that sanity will prevail and that deregulation will not occur. As I stated earlier, the orderly system does not benefit from deregulation.

Eventually the egg industry could fall into the hands of large companies. That would not be desirable. It is generally accepted that the egg industry is a family farm type of industry in which the family look after a farm, run a reasonable number of hens, produce a reasonable quantity of eggs and receive fair remuneration for their efforts.

The large retailers will make deals with large producers to supply chain stores all over Australia, as they have done with poultry. For instance, Woolworths and Inghams have combined, Coles and Steggles, or Amatil, have combined in New South Wales, and Coles and White Wings have combined in Queensland.

Control must be kept out of the hands of the large producers. Eventually, eggs will be freighted from New South Wales more and more into south-east Queensland and possibly all over Australia.

A similar situation faced the milk industry. Mr Ken Baxter is on record as saying that deregulation would not be a bad thing for New South Wales, as New South Wales could then become the egg-producing capital of Australia. That indicates quite clearly that New South Wales has a problem with over-production and it wants to off-load the eggs to other States.

The ALP has traditionally been in favour of orderly and regulated marketing. Whenever consideration is given to one of the primary industries, one is able to refer to past achievements to ascertain the direction to be taken by legislation. Deregulation is not of benefit to the majority of the population.

In 1981 the Minister for Industry, Small Business and Technology (Mr Ahern) made a speech that was very similar to this Minister's second-reading speech. Perhaps the only

difference is that the number of hens reallocated in 1981 to small quota holders was 34 000, whereas now it is 50 000. The 1981 speech has merely been reproduced.

The imposition of quotas has certainly worked better in the egg industry than it has in the dairy industry. The distribution of over-quota milk was carried out in a different way from the distribution of surplus hens to small quota holders. Obviously, the distribution of surplus hens should go to the small holders who are not viable. That is just common sense.

The Minister spoke also about family owned and operated enterprises. He is to be commended for that. This type of operation has been handled mostly in that way. Very few large producers fall into that company category. That has been of benefit to everyone.

I do not want to bore the House with matters that may be raised again at the Committee stage. If problems do exist, they can be debated later on. I repeat that there do not appear to be any major problems with the legislation. That conclusion was arrived at after members on this side of the House had discussions with people in the industry who should know what they are talking about.

Mr INNES (Sherwood) (4.34 p.m.): It is interesting to be able to discuss a Bill such as this in the light of the State's economic predicament.

If the market is taken out of any activity, the public benefit is removed. The market is the way in which public interest is reflected. Competition for sales leads to a price-fixing structure that is in the public interest. In fact, it does not stop there. A market structure leads to benefits for the efficient.

If there was not as much orderly marketing in the European Economic Community, particularly in beet sugar, one would not hear the complaints that rightly come from the Queensland sugar industry—complaints that the market has been taken out and that subsidy and control have precluded efficient producers from capturing a market and exporting to it. The absence of a free market has prevented that.

The interesting observation—and I do not pretend to have extensive personal experience in the egg industry—is that, in the last few years, the farming leaders of Australia have increasingly advocated the use of market forces so that the efficient should gain the benefits of efficiency, which are the right to sell their product and the right to gain markets. They have increasingly criticised the manufacturing sector and advocated the removal of subsidy or tariff protection. In fact, they have increasingly advocated the operation of market forces.

In the rural sector, there is an interesting distinction. The beef producer is in full and total competition in a competitive market. There is nothing to distinguish his predicament from that of any other primary producer. He is subject to drought, to enormous fluctuations in world markets caused by supply and demand and, like everybody else, to the good seasons and the bad seasons. In spite of that, the beef producer makes his way.

Nobody suggests that there should not be control over quality and an obligation to oversee aspects of health. That structure can, and should, exist in the interests of the reputation of the product generally and the protection of public health. However, I have been troubled since the implementation of the Acts that cover this industry in a co-operative, co-ordinated exercise. In the early 1970s, I represented a number of growers who sought quotas. What I found then—and it is something about which the passage of time has not caused me to change my mind—was that the efficient producers did not want the quota system. They were quite prepared, in the alleged uncertainty, upheavals and problems of the market, to fight through their efficiency for their place in the market and to sell their eggs in open competition.

With control, of course, come things such as checking the quality of the eggs. As all honourable members know, that can be done quite separately from a quota system. There can be inspectors, approved examinations and grading facilities.

I would have thought that there are fewer problems with eggs than with most other goods. There is clearly a problem because eggs are perishable, but an egg is really no different from a vegetable. Vegetables are totally open to market forces. A person can very easily detect a bad egg, and he can very easily demand a swap if an egg is bad. Vegetables that look perfectly good on the outside may be rotten on the inside. In many instances, the life of eggs and vegetables is very much the same. As I said, quality controls may be imposed without resorting to a quota system.

Who loses? The consumer loses the benefit of a genuine market and a pricing structure that matches. Such considerations are important in the present economic climate. Anything that reduces the cost of a basic commodity is of real benefit to the consumer—the so-called "little fellow" about whom the blinker-minded members of the ALP continue to talk. There is no commonality between that and the increase in wages, which leads to an increase in taxation. If the price of a dozen eggs is reduced by 10 cents, five cents or two cents, that is a genuine and absolute reduction in the cost of living and, concomitantly, an increase in the quality of life. The same principle applies to the price of milk, bread, vegetables or any other item of food. A real reduction in price is a direct and total benefit to the community's standard of living.

As a basic proposition, it is apparent to me—and to most people, I would hope—that it is unlawful for anyone to keep more than the allocated number of 20 hens, or to sell or to use the excess production. In the childhood days of honourable members—in some cases in the middle-age years—people used to be able to do that. All honourable members would have bought fresh eggs from local people. As a youngster, I sold the excess number of eggs from the hens that were kept at home. However, I point out that nobody is advocating that a chicken coop should be part of every residential A block, because appropriate places have been defined by law to cover suburban hen runs. There is something absolutely un-Australian about a person being unable to keep more than 20 chickens and being unable to sell or give away any excess. Chickens can be kept only for the benefit of the consumers in one household, and I question the benefit that the restriction has provided to the egg production industry. I realise that people may be more comfortable if they happen to have the luxury of only a quota of chickens, but attention has to be drawn to the impact that the restrictions have had on the small producer.

Over the last five years, according to the statistics contained in the Minister's introductory speech, the number of quota-holders who are presently engaged in the industry has dropped by 20 per cent from 340 to 273. The closed shop has closed up even further.

In recent times, the Queensland Egg Marketing Board has acted in a desperate and draconian fashion in order to protect its monopoly over egg distribution. In defence of its position, the Egg Marketing Board will probably raise the hoary old spectre of section 92 and the reintroduction of the practice of taking eggs and other products across the border. That raises the old problem of people bringing their products into the market when the market is struggling to be viable.

That is one of the peculiar features of orderly marketing schemes. Whereas people involved support the concept of an orderly market, most of the people will still want to conduct business on the side. People were bringing properly graded and proper quality eggs to the market from across the border, and the eggs were seized by the Queensland Egg Marketing Board by the pantechnicon load.

In Australia at present, an attempt is being made to destroy the protective effect of section 92 in the interests of exerting total control that will result in the removal of the element of public interest. Such an attempt is designed to make life cushy for the egg-producer. I make no blush about saying that when I practised at law, I realised that people did not owe me a living. In exactly the same way, consumers do not owe egg-producers a living. People in the community should not be regarded as being around to provide an income for either egg-producers or anybody else.

Mr Kruger: But if producers cannot make a reasonable profit, they cannot survive in the industry.

Mr INNES: I will make the guarantee that as egg-producers have existed from the time when the first ship load of convicts arrived in this country till 1973, egg-producers will still exist in 2073. However, it might well be the case that more farmers who are experiencing difficulty in other areas will integrate and spread out the level of their farming operations. Farmers may be in a position to then sell the excess of eggs produced. Is it not said that it is better not to have all one's eggs in one basket? The result of the proposal that I have espoused could be that the farmers will benefit.

The reality is that the statistics show that the number of egg-producers has declined. I suggest that no demonstrable benefit will accrue to the consumer because of the quota restrictions, because all quality controls and public health matters can be monitored in another way. However, the excess in egg production will undoubtedly be sold at subsidised prices to overseas markets, and the cost of subsidisation will be paid by the Australian consumer. The Australian consumer subsidises excess production by the amount that consumers are obliged to pay for eggs in Australia.

A genuine market situation would get rid of that. A genuine market situation might restore the number of people who derive a living from the egg industry. I strongly support the farming leaders who advocate the adaption of farming circumstances to market circumstances. I have no reservations in speaking on behalf of the consumers. That is the only way one measures true efficiency. I have no doubt that egg-producers will be in business in this State and in this world for ever. That a number of people will suffer the ups and downs of the business is just one of the realities of life. We all do. Every other producer and manufacturer in every situation does so. The honourable member cannot demonstrate, on the statistics, that orderly marketing has increased the number of people in the egg-farming industry.

Mr Kruger: Your big friends in the big chain stores have told you to say this.

Mr INNES: I have not spoken to a single person in a big chain store. It is a matter of simple observation, and I am not a slave to some sort of antiquated political dogma, as is the honourable member. I am looking at the realities. Can the honourable member demonstrate that the introduction of orderly marketing led to the maintenance of the number of farmers who are in the business? The answer is no. Over the last five years another 25 per cent have been lost. Nor can the honourable member demonstrate that orderly marketing has acted to the benefit of the consumer. There is controlled pricing, and on many occasions consumers have paid more than they would have without controlled pricing. A genuine market would show that. A genuine market would and always will allow, the efficient producer to maintain his business, to prosper and to grow, if that is what he wishes to do.

I raised this broader point because this legislation really encapsulates some of the reservations the Liberal Party has about some types of orderly marketing. Let us look at the Peanut Marketing Board. There is a system under which private enterprise has continued to flourish, and insists on flourishing, and, of course, is causing a great deal of consternation. The reality is that people who might be efficient farmers are not necessarily efficient controllers of primary production oganisations. The grain organisation might have demonstrated that. It is horses for courses. The efficient egg-farmer will survive and will prosper, no matter what the circumstances.

I suppose that if the honourable member for Murrumba (Mr Kruger) had his way he would not follow Mr Cain but would follow the protesting dairy-farmers of Victoria who are insisting that milk go up by 8c a litre. That might be nice for those protesting farmers, but it would be no good for the people of Victoria, no good for the people the honourable member so often pretends to represent—the consumers—because, as I have demonstrated, what I am saying is absolutely true. If he thought about it he would

realise that a drop in price of any basic foodstuff is a real increase in the consumer's standard of living.

Mr Casey: The converse applies as well, of course, if you follow your fluctuation theory. If you get a shortage, the price to the consumer goes up.

Mr INNES: Yes, and my argument is that a genuine market will lead to lower and not higher prices.

Mr Campbell interjected.

Mr INNES: I live in hope of an increasing genuine market. The present situation is certainly not a genuine market situation. I know how all the honourable member's previous income and existence was owed to the ramifications of orderly marketing systems and enormous controls in agriculture. I am saying that there is no need to resort to enormous controls to keep a few chooks. A person should not be debarred by the law from selling the excess production of a few chooks to his friends, neighbours and the local store, if he wishes to do so. It is an interesting reflection upon the extent of the tentacles of orderly marketing, of the obsession in looking after the producer only, without a reflection of the interests of the consumer.

Mr SIMPSON (Cooroora) (4.50 p.m.): I support this amendment to the Hen Quotas Act and commend the Minister and the Government for their achievements since the system of orderly marketing came into operation.

I cannot help reflecting on the remarks of the honourable member for Sherwood (Mr Innes). He is a member of a profession that sets controls.

Mr Innes: There is no control in licensing or in the market.

Mr SIMPSON: There is control; rates are set. It is strange that the honourable member should suddenly suggest that, if there were no controls, the consumer would be better off. I do not believe that that is the case.

Earlier, members discussed legislation that is designed to protect consumers in property transactions.

I welcome the Opposition's support of this legislation. If orderly marketing is removed, two things happen. Firstly, the cost of the article is subject to fluctuations. That encourages speculators to enter the industry and, generally, that results in a surplus being created in that industry. That is great for the consumer for a short period, but what happens when there is a downturn in that industry is that the quality of the article is reduced and the marketing of the article becomes uneconomic. That reduces the profit that is available to finance the purchase of other equipment and so on necessary in any industry.

I turn to the Australian scene and here, unfortunately, I have to give a serve to the Opposition.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr SIMPSON: I am pleased that the Opposition is supporting the legislation, but that support is not reflected by the Opposition's colleagues in the Federal sphere. I think that the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr Bowen) said that if Australian beef, dairy and sugar producers cannot turn out a product that can compete on the world markets, they should get out of those industries.

Mr Campbell: That was taken right out of context.

Mr SIMPSON: No, it was not taken out of context. We claim to be a private enterprise Government and believe that private enterprise should operate in business and on the farm with a minimum of control. When it comes to marketing, we should

ensure stability for the good of the consumer. In that way the consumer will get a product at a lower price over a longer period.

Mr Newton: Of a better standard.

Mr SIMPSON: As the member for Caboolture says, the consumer will get a product of higher quality.

Some people ask, "Why should we pay more than the world price for sugar? Why should we have a sugar industry in Australia?" I always say to those people, "Sure, we will have sugar at the world price if you give us in Australia the world rate for wages." One of the things in Australia that are not subject to competition is wages. At present, we do not import into Australia the cheap sugar that is available on world markets. We also do not import the very low wage rates that are paid in other countries. I am not referring to the very low wages that are paid in Third World countries.

I shall use as an example the wage rates that are paid in the United States of America, which is not a Third World country. The basic wage in that country is $5.20 an hour. In Australia it is $8.60 an hour. That is a good example of why Australia is not competitive in world terms. However, the Deputy Prime Minister suggested that Australia should not maintain a primary industry if it is not profitable and if Australia cannot produce as cheaply as other parts of the world.

A relationship exists between the problems in the sugar industry, the dairying industry and those soon to be experienced in the beef industry in Australia and the problems in the European Economic Community. It has encouraged production to the point of over-production. The surplus has been dumped on world markets and Australia's export markets for many of its primary industries have been destroyed.

The legislation contains a home consumption provision for the product. This Government, despite the comments that it comprises agrarian socialists, stands by the system of orderly marketing. If that system means a strong private enterprise factor within the business and farming sectors, I stand by it. If, as a result of orderly marketing and its terms and controls, consumers receive a top-quality, cheaper product year in, year out, I stand by that system, and the Government stands by it. I support the legislation.

Mr De LACY (Cairns) (4.56 p.m.): I rise in this debate to make a few comments on behalf of my egg-producing constituents. At the outset I must say that, as was explained by the Opposition spokesman (Mr Kruger), the Opposition has no objection to the thrust of the legislation. The Labor Party wholeheartedly supports legislation that has the objective of maintaining the broad industry base of family-owned and family-operated enterprises.

In his eloquent way, the member for Sherwood (Mr Innes) put the case for a return to market forces and true private enterprise. His speech was timely. I do not agree with his argument, but he highlighted the conflict that exists in the Government on issues such as primary industries. On the one hand, the Government goes before the public and speaks consistently about being a supporter of free enterprise and private enterprise. On the other hand, particularly in those primary industries that are dear to the hearts of Government members, the Government acts in a very socialistic way.

The Government does not act in this way only on issues involving primary industries. Yesterday honourable members witnessed the spectre of the big debate on industrial relations in the electricity industry. It became obvious that the problems in that industry have been created by and large by the Government, because it has created within the electricity generation and supply industry probably the largest socialist monster in Australia.

The honourable member for Sherwood highlighted the way in which the members of the Government find themselves on the horns of a dilemma. The honourable member for Cooroora (Mr Simpson), who has just resumed his seat, clearly exemplified that in

his speech. He spoke about free enterprise but, in the same breath, he spoke about orderly marketing. The member for Cooroora referred to statements that were attributed to the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr Bowen) when he was Minister for Trade in the first Hawke Ministry. The member for Cooroora regularly takes comments out of context.

On this occasion he stated that the Deputy Prime Minister was not in favour of supporting Australian industries that cannot compete in an international market. That is patently untrue. That comment by the member for Cooroora is highly ironic because Mr Bowen is one of the strongest supporters of protectionism within the Federal Ministry. The honourable member for Cooroora suggested that Australia should import cheap overseas labour for the sugar industry. However, I point out to the honourable member that, because of an embargo, the sugar industry is not competing freely and cheap overseas sugar cannot be imported into this country.

Mr Simpson: Do you support a floor price plan for the sugar industry?

Mr De LACY: Yes, I do, within the constraints of the Government's ability to finance one. Such a plan must be contributed to by the industry as well. Because the Queensland sugar industry is under the complete control of the Queensland Government, the Government should be considering that type of scheme to support the industry.

The member for Sherwood gave a recipe of free enterprise and market forces for the egg industry. He has much more faith in market forces than I have. No evidence exists that market forces have worked for an efficient industry either in Australia or in overseas countries. He often speaks about the bastion of free enterprise, the United States of America. I have with me an excerpt from an American poultry journal of September 1983 which states that the United States Department of Agriculture has reported that egg consumption in 1982 was 263 eggs per capita—down 2 eggs from 1981 and 10 eggs from 1980. The per capita consumption of eggs in America is declining continually. The article also states—

> "An often overlooked fact in this decline of per capita consumption is that all eggs produced are consumed. Thus, while it is true that Americans consumed fewer eggs last year, they would have consumed more had more been produced. At what price, of course, is anyone's guess. Therein lies the nub of the problem. The industry is still a conglomerate of independent decision makers, making painfully slow progress in improving marketing and with a pricing system controlled by buyers, not sellers."

The market forces of the free enterprise system are at work in the United States, but its egg industry is less efficient than the Australian industry, which is controlled.

Mr Simpson: And the farmers are going broke over there.

Mr De LACY: I hate to agree with the member for Cooroora, but I have to.

The member for Sherwood drew attention to a 20 per cent decline in the number of egg-producers in Queensland, despite the fact that the industry has been fairly well regulated. If the State did not have the orderly transfer of quota scheme, a much greater reduction than 20 per cent in the number of producers would have occurred.

If the member for Sherwood wants further evidence that benefits accrue from a regulated industry, he should have a look at the number of producers who have gone out of production in the sister industry, that is, the broiler meat industry. The member for Murrumba pointed out that a north Queensland producer, who is a very good friend of mine, was forced out of the broiler industry simply because the same sorts of controls and regulations do not exist.

What the private enterprise Liberal Party dries, as they are now being referred to, cannot understand is that an unrestricted working of market forces tends to lead to a monopoly. Those who come in to control the industry do not do so for the benefit of the consumers. They tend to squeeze out other producers for the short-term benefit of

consumers, but, in the long-term, when they have a stranglehold on the industry, the consumer does not benefit; the only things that benefit are their bank balances.

The Labor Party and, as far as I am aware, most of the industry supports the legislation. I realise that some producers do not want regulation and would be prepared to go it alone. However, those people generally have in mind some short-term advantage.

The same thing is happening in the peanut industry and many other primary industries. The old hands at the farming game know what is going on—they have "been there, done that", and consequently, in the long run, the producers do not benefit. What is needed is an overall regulated structure and an orderly marketing system that allows people to continue to exist and to effect their economies and efficiencies within the parameters of that particular system. There is no reason why Queensland cannot have efficient production that will benefit consumers within the constraints imposed by a regulated system.

Sometimes the market forces do not take into account the social costs. The principle outlined by the Minister for Primary Industries (Mr Turner) in his second-reading speech, of having a family-owned and family-operated enterprise, is a perfectly legitimate objective. If that objective is done away with, it may very well be that the egg industry will concentrate itself into fewer and fewer hands.The industry will get away from the family-size operation and it will probably concentrate in areas that may not necessarily be socially desirable. Speaking as a Queenslander, I cannot see what benefit would be gained by Queenslanders if the industry was concentrated in New South Wales. If the industry was concentrated in the south at the expense of north Queensland, I cannot see what benefit that would be to north Queenslanders, particularly the people in the electorate of Cairns. Everyone in the Labor Party can stand here and unblushingly say that he supports the socialistic intent of the legislation, if one likes to put it that way. However, Government members must blush a little.

I agree with the member for Murrumba (Mr Kruger) that the egg industry in Australia is facing a fairly grave crisis. It is certainly the biggest crisis that it has faced since the hen quota system and the production control systems were introduced in all States in 1972 and 1973. Those production controls were aimed at the control of production and the elimination of surplus production. That was effective in all States, particularly Queensland, but not so much in New South Wales. It was not effective in New South Wales, because that State did not have an orderly transfer of quotas scheme. That State relied on the so-called market forces. The retail chain stores became involved and started to call the shots. People working outside the system were working against the system because they saw that it was not to their short-term benefit. There is still over-production in New South Wales. This led to panic and, instead of controlling production as a way out of the dilemma, New South Wales decided to market its way out of the problem by forming the New South Wales Egg Corporation and by adopting an aggressive marketing stance. That put the fear of the devil into the private enterprise Government of Queensland and many of those private enterprise supporting producers of eggs in Queensland. It is likely that the New South Wales Egg Corporation will use its position in the market to put cheaper eggs into Queensland, again to the short-term benefit of the consumer but certainly at the expense of the producer in Queensland.

It is ironic that Queensland has a free enterprise Government that is calling for more controls, more regulation and more socialistic legislation, whereas New South Wales has a socialist Government that is getting itself out of a problem by unleashing the market forces onto the egg industry.

I am concerned about the position that has been adopted by the Federal Government. To a certain extent, the member for Cooroora (Mr Simpson) touched on this matter, but he always does it in such a sneering supercilious way that nobody can take him seriously. Last year, in response to a recommendation from the Australian Agricultural Council, a move was made to abolish the Australian Egg Board. As Australia does not now have serious surplus production, that is probably not an unreasonable step to take,

because the cost is a burden on the whole industry. Associated with that is the phasing out of the levy, which, of course, was there if only to subsidise the export of the surplus eggs.

The part that concerns me is the elimination or repealing of the subsection of the Trades Practices Act which provided for exemptions in marketing arrangements between egg marketing boards in the different States. That may appear to be OK on the surface. However, it can and will lead to other States such as New South Wales being given the opportunity to dump their surplus production in Queensland.

I have a piece of paper which says—

> "Cessation of the exemptions under the Trade Practices Act will increase the opportunity for competition in the egg industry—"

I am sure that, if the member for Sherwood were still here, that would make his free enterprise heart very glad. It goes on—

"and is in keeping with other measures of deregulation by the Commonwealth."

It may be that deregulation is the Commonwealth Government's objective. However, I cannot see how it can be the objective of the Commonwealth Labor Government, because orderly marketing and the regulation of primary industries are quite dear to the hearts of Labor people.

I have written a letter to the Federal Minister putting the case on behalf of egg-producers—certainly egg-producers in north Queensland—in which I pointed out that deleterious effects could be suffered by Queensland producers. I am sure that the Queensland Government feels the same way; but it would not be interested in negotiation, it would prefer confrontation.

We support the fine tuning of the regulatory mechanism in the egg industry in that it tends to allow the reallocation of hen quotas, which, in turn, enables the small, uneconomic producers to grow larger with more viable holdings. In this way, the other small producers in marginal areas can leave the industry with some dignity, the big producers are prevented from getting bigger and the industry will not be concentrated in the hands of a few large producers.

Mr CAMPBELL (Bundaberg) (5.13 p.m.): This Bill does much for the future of the egg industry. For many decades the organisation of primary industries through orderly marketing has been a great feature of the philosophy of Labor Governments.

Prior to the introduction of the Hen Quotas Act in 1973, the egg industry did not have orderly marketing. At that time, orderly marketing was introduced throughout Australia. The legislation has been amended several times under the guise of a need for orderly marketing. Last year the Commonwealth Government decided to abandon orderly marketing. The industry now faces a big change.

The Bill is welcome because it proceeds from supply control to supply management, which is a big difference. The Bill embodies short-term and long-term adjustment.

The Bill can be dealt with in three sections. Its aim is to limit large growers and their quotas. It attempts to assist small growers. Through the controlled transfer system it enables the small growers to expand.

The egg industry in Queensland is characterised by a few large hen quota holders and a large number of small quota holders. Therein lies one of the problems. It is very difficult for small growers to be efficient and to compete with the very large quota-holders.

The management of production introduced by the Bill is of three types: an egg producer's basic hen quota, an adjusted hen quota (which may be subject to positive, negative or zero adjustments) and a temporary hen quota. Those three factors will allow short-term adjustment as well as long-term determination. On the matter of supply control and adjustment, the adequacy of the legislation is not to be seen in the paper

before us. It is dependent on the decisions made by bureaucrats or industry leaders. Their decisions will make the Bill either succeed or fail.

The Bill refers to the prescribed number of hens and how a decision will be made about the number of hens that a person may have and who may be regarded as a small quota-holder or a large quota-holder. This is an important matter. If the wrong decisions are made, there will be long-term detrimental effects on the industry. It is imperative to appreciate that, in spite of legislation having the correct provisions, unless the proper decisions are made it will not work. It is very important for the decision-makers to ensure that their information gained from studies about supply and demand is accurate and that those studies are done by people with expertise.

In a way, this legislation is of the primary producer organisation and marketing type. It allows flexibility. Most other legislation covering orderly marketing lacks flexibility. Perhaps that is a trend to be fostered by the Government in future organisation and marketing boards.

I refer now to an aspect that should be covered by the Bill. It is all very well to have quotas, but this Bill deals with a homogenous product—an egg. It can probably be likened to milk. Irrespective of where the milk is produced, it is packaged in a carton and tastes the same as any other milk in a carton. However, that is not so in the bread industry. Attempts to introduce controls in that industry are not practicable because bakers make different types of bread. Consumers have their preferences. It is difficult to introduce commodity controls where there is no homogeneity. In egg-marketing, consumer preference is tending towards range-free eggs, or eggs produced on the open range, rather than eggs produced in batteries. They have a different coloured yolk, and there is a growing consumer preference and demand for them. The production of range-free eggs will have to be catered for in the legislation.

The member for Sherwood (Mr Innes) introduced an argument opposed to the orderly marketing of primary products. It is all very well to expound the virtues of private enterprise on the basis of efficiency determining price, but important factors that the free enterprise system does not take into account are equity in production—the ALP has a belief in the family-owned and family-operated farm—and stability of production. Free enterprise does not guarantee that. Orderly marketing guarantees production and supply of food 365 days a year.

The National Party is supposedly a supporter of the free enterprise system, but that is not so. It does not believe in free enterprise. It believes in private ownership for the privileged few. There is a large difference.

I believe that if the legislation is properly carried out it will be of benefit. I hope that the people who will have the responsibility for making decisions based upon this legislation will examine the regulations closely, especially as they will prescribe hen quotas and the conditions under which a determination will result in basic hen quota adjustment, and I hope that they will ensure that the regulations work properly. If that is done, the egg-producing industry will survive and become even stronger in the future.

Hon. N. J. TURNER (Warrego—Minister for Primary Industries) (5.20 p.m.), in reply: I thank all honourable members for the contributions that they have made to the debate. The honourable member for Murrumba (Mr Kruger) supported the legislation. He referred to the possibility of deregulation of the egg-producing industry and other primary industries. He also referred to the problems and effects that the deregulation would have in the long term on both the producers and consumers, and the effects that may be experienced if the deregulation was implemented. I concur with the opinions that he expressed.

The honourable member for Murrumba also devoted a portion of his speech to a description of problems faced by the industry in New South Wales, and I will advert to those problems in more detail at a later stage.

As I outlined in my second-reading speech, the objects of the Bill are founded on the need for protection of smaller family growers and the adjustment that will be necessary in the long and short term to the methods of calculating the number of hens by the new method.

The honourable member for Sherwood (Mr Innes) spoke at some length about his philosophy of orderly marketing and primary industries. I acknowledge that the honourable member is entitled to hold that view. He spoke of the public interest and the benefit that should accrue to those in the industry who are efficient.

Particular reference was made to the fact that in Victoria the milk prices should not rise. Although I do not wish to debate that issue at this time, it is pertinent to point out that part of the problem in the dairy industry in Victoria—in fact all over Australia—has resulted directly from a lack of production restraints being imposed on the Victorian dairy industry.

The concept of efficient producers producing for a market that is totally free can be examined by reference to the dairy industry in Victoria. It is claimed that it is the most efficient in milk production and, for that reason, the Victorian dairy industry should have a share in the milk-producing market on a national scale. It has been contended that Victoria should be the State that produces all of the milk and, as a result of that, an attempt has been made to impose a levy on the industry. If that proposition had been accepted, $16m would have been channelled out of the dairy industry in Queensland—that so-called inefficient producer-State. That amount of money would have been transferred to the so-called highly efficient milk-producing areas.

I make that point to illustrate that, if the producer is reduced to a level at which no profit is being made, he will eventually go out of business. In the case of the dairy industry, the question of where the milk will be coming from arises. It could possibly be imported from New Zealand or from the European Economic Community, but the consumer would be worse off in the long term.

It must be borne in mind that the primary producer in Australia is among the most efficient of producers in the world, and that cannot be said of many of the secondary industries in Australia today. Orderly marketing does not provide subsidies to the farmers and, although the honourable member for Sherwood (Mr Innes) said that anything that reduced cost is of great benefit to the consumer and is a direct improvement in the quality of the consumer's life, it certainly would not be an improvement in the quality of life of the producer who is going to the wall. The honourable member also said that he did not support controls that would make life cushy for the egg-producer, and that people were not meant to provide egg-producers with a living. That was the terminology that he used, and I believe that that philosophy could be applied to each and every primary producer in the country.

The cities of Australia owe their present prosperity to the amount of national export income earnings that have been derived from primary industry. I point out that if it were not for primary industry, many people would enjoy a standard of living of a lesser quality than is presently being enjoyed. I make that point to the honourable member for Sherwood and anyone else who needs to be reminded of it.

The member for Cooroora (Mr Simpson) indicated his support for orderly marketing, and correctly pointed out that, properly controlled, it protects both producers and consumers by ensuring continuity of supply. That is a very pertinent point. The honourable member for Cairns (Mr De Lacy) referred to the Government's socialistic attitude in relation to this legislation and to many other areas of legislation. I point out that in a socialistic or communistic state industry is directed or controlled by the state. Under the statutory marketing boards, the orderly marketing system is grower-controlled and the boards are grower-elected. So there is a vast difference in basic philosophy between the system of orderly marketing in this country and that of industry in communist countries. I am pleased that the honourable member supported the object of family farms that I outlined in my introductory speech.

The honourable member referred also to the many problems associated with the New South Wales industry because of the lack of effective controls over quota transfers and the inability of the licensing authority to apply quota cuts when necessary. Queensland has always maintained controls over those elements. This Bill seeks to bring the controls up to date to meet current needs.

The honourable member referred to the crisis in the industry. His comments would be true of most primary industries in Australia facing ever-rising costs and diminishing returns. Many primary industries with shrinking world markets will certainly face similar problems into the future.

The honourable member for Bundaberg (Mr Campbell) touched on most aspects of the Act and the Bill, and the reasons behind their introduction. He referred to the limit on large growers, assistance to small growers and the control of the transfer system.

I take this opportunity to thank honourable members for the contributions they made to the debate.

Motion (Mr Turner) agreed to.

Committee

Mr Randell (Mirani) in the chair; Hon. N. J. Turner (Warrego—Minister for Primary Industries) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 11, as read, agreed to.

Clause 12—Amendment of s. 44; Transfer of egg producer's basic hen quota—

Mr CAMPBELL (5.28 p.m.): There are two aspects of the transfer of hen quotas to which I wish to refer. Who will determine the value of the transfer of a hen quota? Will it be determined by the board? Will there be any limitation—I cannot find any reference to it—on the transfer of quotas from one region to another, or will there be a free transfer of quotas anywhere in the State?

Mr TURNER: There will be no transferability across the State. Transfers will be confined to the present zones.

Under the clause dealing with the transfer of an egg producer's basic hen quota, where a quota is to be transferred from one person to another the committee is empowered to further approve the transfer of such quota to the existing holder of a basic hen quota. The proposed new subsection (2) (a) allows for prescribed terms and conditions to apply to the allocation of a basic hen quota. That will be particularly important in the allocation of new quotas in the industry, when the successful applicants will be required to meet certain criteria relating to the commencement of operation.

Clause 12, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 13 to 22, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

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

RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading—Resumption of Debate

Debate resumed from 20 November (see p. 2749) on Mr Lane's motion—

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

Mr CASEY (Mackay) (5.31 p.m.): Yesterday, this Chamber debated the Government's industrial relations policy. It is ironic that it was a carry-on from what has

happened during the last two weeks. It is also ironic that the amendments in this Bill deal, in the main, with industrial relations in the Railway Department. The problems facing the department have been continuing for about two years. Some of the amendments in this Bill are designed to overcome some of the problems that have arisen.

Traditionally, the demise of conservative Governments throughout Australia has begun when those Governments have attacked their own employees. Of course, a classic example of that was the Moore Government that came to power in Queensland in 1929, after Labor Governments had held office for a long period. The Moore Government was doing all right for a short period, and then it began to attack its employees, including those in the Railway Department. The people of Queensland were not prepared to accept the treatment that that conservative Government was meting out to its employees and, consequently, they threw it out of office.

The demise of the Fraser Government in Canberra was caused partly by the way in which it treated its employees. In the mid-1970s, the Railway Department in New South Wales was administered by the conservative Government of the day. One of the reasons why that Government was thrown out of office was that it began to attack its own employees. In recent years, the industrial relations policies of Governments have caused the downfall of conservative Governments in South Australia and even in Western Australia.

Today, we are seeing the conservative Government in Queensland trying to crush its own employees. Yesterday, honourable members talked about SEQEB, and I shall not canvass that matter again today. Great disquiet and concern exist within the public service. The Government is doing certain things to public servants and they have just got to cop it. Equal opportunities no longer exist in the public service; the right of appeal has been taken away for a number of positions in the public service. That is the core of some of the dissatisfaction that has arisen in the public service in recent years. Top positions are unattainable by many people. Under this Bill, similar exemptions are being introduced into the railway industry.

I have compiled a list of the number of jobs within the public service that have been exempted and are exempt from appeal. On 1 May 1958 the list of offices against which an appeal for promotion could not be held was gazetted. Only 88 positions were exempted. That figure is now well over the 300 mark; it is almost 350, which is four times the number of exempt positions in 1958.

The Minister for Transport (Mr Lane), in his second-reading speech, admitted that something similar was happening within the railways. In 1982, 64 jobs were exempted from appeal. In 1958, probably only the commissioner's job was exempt from appeal within the Railway Department. Since 1982, the Government has increased the number of exempt positions to 117. In two years the figure has almost doubled. In other words, the number of jobs at the top of the Railway Department that are unattainable has doubled—unless employees are prepared to crawl and grovel to the Government, to the Minister or to the commissioner. More importantly, an employee must have a conservative background and not have been linked to the Labor Party.

Mr Davis: In other words, the Minister is the El Supremo of the Railway Department.

Mr CASEY: That is, perhaps, not quite the right term. I expect El Supremos to go round with a gun on their hips, shooting people in a deliberate manner. I do not think that the Minister would be prepared to go that far. I do know that he is quite keen to ensure that nobody within the Railway Department who has anything to do with the Australian Labor Party at any time will get anywhere up the ladder within that department. That is why the top jobs are set above the sights of most employees within the Railway Department who have devoted their career and their lives to that department.

Events in the Railway Department are only a flow-through of what is happening within the public service generally. The figures that I have quoted show that since 1958 four times the number of jobs—almost 350—are now not appealable. Within the Railway

Department itself, an additional 117 jobs are exempt. That figure of 350 does not include the Railway Department. The figures from that department add one-third, or 33⅓ per cent, to the number of non-exempt jobs.

That is the way in which the Queensland Government is eroding the conditions of its employees. It is fighting to ensure that it can crush the aspirations of an employee within the public service who looks as though he may be able to achieve something. The problem goes further than the Railway Department. The Minister for Transport, through the report from PA Management Consultants and other ways, is sacking as many people as he can at the bottom of the scale. He is doing that to get rid of jobs from the system. Consequently, the safety of Queensland railway services is being endangered. That has been evident in recent months.

This Bill is a classic example of the Government's attitude to industrial relations. I turn now to discuss the principles that are embodied in the legislation as they relate to the Railway Department generally. Within the Railways Act is a provision that enables the department to fine its employees. The Commissioner for Railways, or his nominee, is probably the only employer in this State and in this nation who still has the power, as provided for by legislation, to fine employees. I notice that the Minister is shaking his head.

Mr Lane: What about the Commissioner of Police?

Mr CASEY: That may be so. He is the head of a force that is disciplined in the same way as the military forces are disciplined. I will make an exception of military forces and other disciplined bodies. Surely it cannot be said that, today, the Queensland Railway Department should be a disciplined body. Surely the Minister is not saying that the Railway Department should be run along military or police lines and that this measure should be retained in the legislation. It is a hangover from the old British Empire—the days of the British Raj.

If one were to examine the awards registered in the Industrial Commission, other than the ones that have been mentioned here already by the Minister and by me, one would find that no other employer in this State has the right to fine his employees. That is as it should be, too. Surely to goodness Queensland does not still live in the dim Dark Age. Surely to goodness Queensland has passed that age and has entered a more sensible era in which people treat one another with human dignity and as human beings. A fine can be imposed virtually without trial.

The only other place in the British Empire, as it used to be known, where such provisions are still in existence is Northern Ireland, where there still exists the right to gaol, suspend, fine or punish people without trial. I do not wish to go into a dissertation of my own ancestry and the sorts of things that are happening in Northern Ireland today, but my comparison is a valid one because it displays the thinking of the Minister and his 16 spineless Cabinet colleagues in the recent electricity dispute.

For everybody else in Queensland the courts dispense justice; but that is not so for employees of the Railway Department. The commissioner, or a person at his direction, can fine an employee on the spot. I understand that exactly that happened last night, but the commissioner pulled out of it quick smart. The Minister might not know about that yet.

This provision has been in the Act since 1888—almost 100 years. Surely relationships between human beings have progressed over those 100 years. Surely the Railway Department has reached an era of enlightenment in which people should treat each other as human beings. That is what everybody else in Queensland does and that should also happen in the Railway Department. In 1888 the maximum fine that could be imposed was £5, which is $10 in modern terminology. As I said, this is an archaic provision. In those days a fine of £5 probably amounted to two months' pay.

The endeavour by the Minister to increase that fine from $10 to $100 amounts to nothing when it is compared with the loss of pay for suspension that is usually imposed

at the same time. Not only is this fine out of date in human values; it is completely out of date in monetary values when compared with the rates of wages contained in awards, which ensure that people do get a fair and just wage. In the context of today's wages, a fine of $100 is relatively meaningless. However, the principle of the commissioner being able to fine an employee in this way is wrong and at a later stage in the debate the Opposition will seek to remove that power altogether from the Act.

One of the other principles embodied in the Bill is the amendment to section 17 of the Act, which deals with suspension generally. The Bill touches on the right of appeal against suspension. The words contained in the Bill are yet another glorious example of the days of the old British Empire. The way an employee appeals is "by a memorial to the Governor in Council" In other words, if a railwayman is suspended, reduced in rank, has his pay reduced or is dismissed, the only way in which he can appeal is by a memorial to the Governor in Council.

The wording itself sounds like something on a tomb. That does not give much hope to those persons involved. Fancy expecting mercy from the Premier and Treasurer (Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen) and his 17 spineless colleagues in Cabinet! The only avenue open to railway employees suspended under the proposed section of the Act, or to employees who have had their pay reduced, is to throw themselves at the mercy of the Premier and Treasurer and his Cabinet by way of an appeal.

The Labor Party believes that it must move into an enlightened age. Railway employees should have the same right of appeal as other public servants and employees in private enterprise in Queensland. Their right of appeal should be to the Industrial Court, and the court should make the determination. They should not be subjected to the will or the whim of the Premier and Treasurer. Perhaps he may not be feeling well when the appeal is heard. Perhaps the other Cabinet Ministers might be cringing to him or not be prepared to stand up to him. That is what happens.

Mr Prest: You know what he does to unionists.

Mr CASEY: One knows what could happen as soon as a person says that he is a member of a trade union. The railway workers have a very strong wish to remain trade-unionists. They should have the same rights as their fellow Queenslanders. They should be able to appeal to the Industrial Court on any matter relating to their dismissal.

Mr Alison interjected.

Mr CASEY: Members of the Electrical Trades Union, as well as everybody else, ought to have that right. Some of the people to whom the honourable member for Maryborough applied pressure ought to have that same right. The railwaymen in the workshops at Maryborough were sacked. The honourable member for Maryborough said in this Chamber that the Minister was doing a good thing by them. They also have a right to appeal to the Industrial Court against a decision from a person such as the honourable member. On that issue, it is the honourable member's wish to follow blindly the Minister for Transport (Mr Lane), the Premier and Treasurer and the other spineless members of Cabinet.

The Labor Party believes that there is something called justice. Justice is the entitlement of every man and woman in the community. That applies to civil justice, criminal justice and industrial justice. Every individual has that right. Railwaymen should have the same rights as public servants, who do not have to appeal by memorial to the Governor in Council. They can go straight to the Public Service Commissioner or to an appeal court. The Labor Party believes that those words should be removed from the legislation. An appeal should not be by way of memorial to the Governor in Council; the right of appeal should be to an impartial appeal board.

The Labor Party is not asking for something new. That principle is already written into the Railways Act under section 30. If somebody is suspended under section 23 of the Act, he has a right of appeal to the Railway Appeal Board. Anybody suspended in

accordance with section 17 of the Act should have the same right. There should be no differentiation between the rights of appeal under those sections.

As I said earlier, every person in the community has a right of appeal to the Industrial Court. Under the Bill, a person can be suspended by the commissioner or somebody with his authority. Their memorial goes to the Governor in Council. Evidence cannot be presented to the Governor in Council. A person does not have a chance to present his case and appear before the jury of 18 to see what can be done. That person can only grovel to Cabinet.

In view of the current way in which the National Party rules in Queensland, honourable members would know why he would have to do that. No man with any pride would be prepared to grovel to those Cabinet Ministers. No man with any expectation of justice could expect to achieve satisfaction from that source. That is what is wrong with the principle that is embodied in the Bill; that is why there is need to change that provision.

Another principle contained in the Bill will bring about a great change in the Railway Department. That concerns promotional opportunities. To date, promotional opportunities within the railways, except for those jobs that are exempt, have been mainly on the basis of seniority. The basis for promotion will now be efficiency.

If the Government believes that efficiency is the yardstick to be applied, I suggest that it be applied to Cabinet Ministers in this State. Almost all of them would lose their jobs. I know that the few Government back-benchers who are in the Chamber—including the honourable member for Pine Rivers (Mrs Chapman)—would agree that if an efficiency test were applied to Cabinet Ministers, many more back-bench members would be in Cabinet. The present Cabinet Ministers, including the Premier and Treasurer, should be on the back-benches or out on the grass somewhere. I understand that, because of the ramifications of events during the last few weeks, moves are afoot to ensure that that happens.

Members of the National Party can be seen having little meetings round the place. Every five minutes they can be seen having confidential talks in the corridors in which the feelers are being put out. It is reminiscent of those days back in 1969 when the Premier was going to be knocked off. It looks as though honourable members will see a repetition of what happened on that occasion.

Most of the top jobs to which employees can be promoted in the Railway Department are already exempt. In 1982, there were 64 exemptions. In two years, that number has risen to 117—almost double. In fact, the top jobs within the Railway Department are constantly being increased. A person in another place once referred to them as fat cats. If honourable members went round the railway workshops, the goods sheds and the running staff depots, they would hear that expression being used once again.

Apparently, the Minister is interested only in increasing the number of fat cats at the top. The blokes at the bottom are being pushed out. The report by PA Australia which the Minister has carried around in his brief case for the last two years, has become virtually a bible to him. I think it was the Premier and Treasurer who recently referred to the fact that once every night he read a page out of the good book. A fellow from Kingaroy once told me that the only good book that the Premier and Treasurer appreciates is his bank deposit book. I believe that that statement is correct. Every night the Minister for Transport reads a page out of the report of PA Australia.

That report recommended jobs in the Railway Department only at the top. The consultants said, "Let us put in more people at the top. Let us cut them out of the bottom—out of the workshops where locomotives and wagons are repaired and out of the running staff. Let us get rid of the fettlers out of the links who are keeping the lines safe and in order. Let us get back to two-man crewing. Let us get rid of these fellows. They are trade unionists. They do not count; they do not matter. Suspend them; fine them."

The fact is that those men are the salt of the earth, not only in the Railway Department but also in the communities in which they live. What is happening? Workshops numbers are being cut back considerably. Everybody knows the story. Fifty-three men were sacked from the Cairns workshops. When those men had moved to other areas, the Railway Department suddenly discovered that they were short of workers to carry out the necessary repairs to the rolling-stock in the Cairns area. A few had to be returned to the workshop. They were being employed as porters. Blacksmiths' and other work was urgently required, so those men had to be returned to the workshop.

Dismissal notices have been served on 43 men in Maryborough and another 13 in Gympie in one fell swoop. I am referring to decentralised cities in Queensland. This Government, more than any other in the history of the State, has centralised its activities in Brisbane. It boasts that Queensland is the most decentralised State in the Commonwealth, but that is no credit to this Government. Full credit for that must be given to previous Labor Governments in Queensland, which built up the sugar industry, for example. In the debates on the previous two Bills dealt with by the House, the sugar industry was used as an example of the benefits of controlled marketing. Full credit for our decentralisation ought to be given to previous Labor Governments that saw to it that everybody in the State's provincial areas was looked after. Not so with this Government. The latest unemployment figures reveal that, in provincial cities and country areas of Queensland, unemployment is almost twice as high as it is in the Brisbane area. The National Party used to be the Country Party and it looked after country people. The day it changed its name, it turned its back on country people, and it has behaved like that ever since.

I return to the workshop cut-backs. A time and motion man is investigating the Rockhampton workshop. Almost a thousand men are in fear of their jobs. Only last week, another 19 were sacked in Toowoomba. The experts have even gone into little places such as Alpha, Blackall and Barcaldine to sack railway workers. I defy anyone in the Chamber who has railwaymen in his electorate to say that they are not amongst the best citizens in the community. They are involved in football clubs, social activities and any community group that organises sport for young children. Who in their community raises money for charitable organisations such as the crippled children and the subnormal people? The first people to join committees for those activities are railwaymen. The salt of the earth, they are. They are amongst the best workers in the State. The Minister claims that they work only 45 per cent of the time. He says that on the basis of the report provided by PA Australia. Railwaymen are amongst the best members of our community.

Mr Prest interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Row): Order! I heard the remark of the member for Port Curtis that the Minister was "a bludger in the police force". I consider that to be entirely unparliamentary. The member will withdraw it.

Mr PREST: I do so.

Mr CASEY: Now it is in "Hansard", Bill. It would not be there otherwise.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr CASEY: These are the people the Minister is seeking to attack. These are the people the Government wants to sink the boot into. These are the people the Government is trying to keep on the same level as they were 100 years ago, in the spin-off days from the British Army. These are the people being sacked by the Government. Toowoomba, as I said a moment ago, has just come on the list. Townsville is being investigated. The Ipswich workshops and the Redbank workshops are being looked at. The Government is endeavouring to sack people in every centre in Queensland where there are railway repair shops.

What will happen in the future? We are already seeing the consequences. There is a reduction in maintenance. Once that occurs in any type of transport organisation, safety is affected and lives are endangered.

Debate, on motion of Mr Wharton, adjourned.

The House adjourned at 6 p.m.