Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 13 APRIL 1988

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Mr SPEAKER (Hon. L. W. Powell, Isis) read prayers and took the chair at 2.30 p.m.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Improved Railway Timetable for Sunshine Coast Community

From **Mr Ahern** (839 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will introduce an improved railway timetable to suit the needs of the Sunshine Coast community.

Rent and Mortgage Repayments, Exclusion of Family Allowance Supplement from Assessable Income

From **Mr McElligott** (229 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will take action to exclude the family allowance supplement, in full or in part, from assessable income, when calculating rent and mortgage repayments.

Upgrading of Route 20 to Four-lane Roadway

From **Mr Beanland** (250 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will upgrade Route 20 to a four-lane roadway to discourage traffic from passing through residential areas.

Petitions received.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table—

Orders in Council under the Grammar Schools Act 1975-1984 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982-1984

Regulations under the State Transport Act 1960-1985

Report of the Board of Teacher Education for the year ended 31 December 1987.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Main Roads Minister's Meeting with Member for Mount Coot-tha concerning Route 20

Hon. W. A. M. GUNN (Somerset—Deputy Premier, Minister for Public Works, Main Roads and Expo and Minister for Police) (2.33 p.m.), by leave: Yesterday in this House the member for Mount Coot-tha, Mr Schuntner, referred to a meeting that he had with me on 28 January this year in relation to Route 20. I note the member's comments in a personal explanation yesterday, and it is necessary to correct his perception of the so-called meeting.

Mr Schuntner had an appointment to see me at 4.30 p.m. in the Executive Building on 28 January this year. I might add that he had a previous appointment, which he did not keep. At about 4.15 p.m. that day, he telephoned to say that he had a medical appointment and was not able to make the 4.30 p.m. appointment. He indicated that he may come in later if that was possible. I left that option open to him. I envisaged that he may be about half an hour late. I had a Main Roads officer on hand for that meeting.

It was approaching 6 p.m. when he eventually came to the Executive Building. I had closed the interview room, sent my staff home and also dismissed the Main Roads officer. Certainly most of my staff had finished work. One lady remained, and she is able to verify what I am about to say.

I was about to leave the office prior to attending a 7.30 p.m. appointment with the Premier and the Finance Minister. I met Mr Schuntner in the reception area outside my office and indicated that because of the time a meeting was not possible and he should contact my secretary to make another appointment.

It is my recollection that we talked for possibly about 15 minutes as we moved along the corridor, caught a lift and left the building after exchanging pleasantries, etc.

The purpose of Mr Schuntner's meeting was not discussed in any detail, which vindicates my advice to this House on 17 March that no dialogue to any great extent occurred on this issue.

I can assure you, Mr Speaker, and members of this House that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is astray on his point of privilege and that I have not, on this or any other occasion, set out to mislead the Parliament.

In my opinion, it would appear that either Mr Schuntner or Mr Burns has misled or attempted to mislead the House.

Mr BURNS: I rise on a matter of privilege. I move—

"That the statement by the"——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If the honourable member wishes to move a motion, he should seek leave to do so.

LEAVE TO MOVE MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr BURNS (Lytton—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (2.36 p.m.): I seek leave to move a motion without notice to refer that statement to the Privileges Committee.

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

AYES, 39		NOES, 44	
Ardill	Milliner	Ahern	Lester
Beanland	Palaszczuk	Alison	Lingard
Beard	Schuntner	Austin	Littleproud
Braddy	Shaw	Berghofer	McCauley
Burns	Sherlock	Booth	McKechnie
Campbell	Smith	Borbidge	McPhie
Casey	Smyth	Burreket	Menzel
Comben	Underwood	Chapman	Muntz
D'Arcy	Vaughan	Clauson	Neal
De Lacy	Warburton	Cooper	Nelson
Eaton	Warner	Elliott	Newton
Gibbs, R. J.	Wells	Fraser	Randell
Goss	White	Gately	Row
Gygar	Yewdale	Gibbs, I. J.	Sherrin
Hamill		Gilmore	Simpson
Hayward		Glasson	Slack
Innes		Gunn	Stoneman
Knox		Harper	Tenni
Lee		Harvey	Veivers
Lickiss		Henderson	
McElligott	*Tellers:*	Hinton	*Tellers:*
Mackenroth	Davis	Hobbs	FitzGerald
McLean	Prest	Katter	Stephan
	PAIR:		
	Scott		Hynd

Resolved in the negative.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Review of Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Peak Downs—Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Affairs) (2.45 p.m.), by leave: In July last year, I announced the appointment of a four-man committee of inquiry to make a major review of the Queensland Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act. It had been 27 years since a major review of the industrial Act had been undertaken. The committee of inquiry is under the chairmanship of barrister Mr Ian Hanger, QC. The other members are Industrial Commissioner Mr Harry Peebles, business consultant Mr Bruce Siebenhausen and former chief industrial officer of the State Electricity Commission, Mr Gar Jones.

The committee advertised widely, calling for written submissions to be made in respect of whether or not the Act is capable of meeting the current and future demands of the Queensland industrial relations system.

The terms of reference of the inquiry are very wide and allow the committee to make a general review of all provisions of the industrial Act, with the exception of the trading-hours provisions. Fifty-six written submissions were received from a wide range of persons and organisations in the industrial relations arena, including—

- the Queensland Government;
- unions of employees;
- employer organisations; and
- members of the general public.

In order to encourage informed debate, the committee of inquiry circulated to interested parties copies of the non-confidential written submissions it had received. The committee of inquiry then held public hearings for a period of 11 days throughout March of this year. A total of 42 organisations and persons made representations to the committee during the public hearings.

The discussions and proposals for reform placed before the committee during the public hearings and in the written submissions have canvassed a wide range of topics, including—

- preference to unionists;
- grievance or dispute-settling procedures;
- appeals from decisions of commissioners;
- the appearance of legal counsel in commission proceedings; and
- compensation for hard dismissals.

The committee will now retire to review the various proposals before it and ultimately prepare its recommendations. All parties in the field of industrial relations have had the opportunity of making written and oral submissions to the committee and, in fact, have done so in a candid and constructive manner.

I look forward to receiving the report of the committee of inquiry in the latter half of this year, and I shall inform honourable members as soon as possible of the committee's findings.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Portsmith Industrial Estate, Cairns

Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Minister for Industry, Small Business, Communications and Technology) (2.48 p.m.), by leave: I refer to comments that were made in this House yesterday by the honourable member for Cairns, which were widely and significantly reported on the front page of this morning's *Cairns Post.*

It seems that the member for Cairns has been caught politically grandstanding yet again. Yesterday in this House, the honourable member made some rather misleading and outrageous statements concerning the Government's Portsmith Industrial Estate in Cairns.

Mr Tenni: He always does that.

Mr BORBIDGE: As the Honourable the Minister says, that is par for the course.

In his haste to score some cheap political points, the honourable member for Cairns either knowingly left out some vital information or simply failed to do his homework properly. It is a typical De Lacy distortion.

The honourable member's statements were either wrong or, at best, a gross exaggeration. For a start, he claimed that millions of dollars' worth of land was locked up on the estate, producing nothing, and that half of the estate was not being used. That is total rubbish.

If the honourable member for Cairns had bothered to check the facts, he would have discovered that only two blocks of land are still available for development on the Portsmith estate. The remainder has been leased or is under negotiation. In fact, the shortage of suitable industrial land is so critical that my department is actively trying to negotiate other sites.

Mr Alison: He obviously doesn't know what is going on in his own electorate.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Maryborough!

Mr BORBIDGE: The honourable member is stating the truth, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I would have hoped that the Minister did not need the honourable member's assistance.

Mr BORBIDGE: There is even a waiting-list of potential applicants.

As to the Arumpin issue—in 1982 a special lease was issued to AI Engineering on concessional terms. Unfortunately, as sometimes happens, that company was unable to continue its operation. In July last year, my department became aware that AI Engineering wished to sell the improvement on the site and transfer that special lease to a Mr I. Hopkins. As is normal practice, the department sought assurances from the purchaser that a manufacturing activity would take place on the premises, and that a development program would be undertaken to meet the lease conditions. These assurances were formally given, and the lease was subsequently transferred to Arumpin as the purchasers' solicitors advised that this company would be carrying out the activities as agreed by Mr Hopkins, a principal of Arumpin.

Mr De Lacy interjected.

Mr BORBIDGE: I suggest to the honourable member that he listen to the facts for a change. He has effectively undermined NQEA, he has effectively undermined the timber-workers in his electorate, and now he is attempting to undermine the State Government's Crown industrial program. If he found out the facts now and then, he might be a lot wiser.

As I indicated, these assurances were formally given, and the lease was subsequently transferred to Arumpin, as the purchasers' solicitors advised that this company would be carrying out the activities as agreed by Mr Hopkins.

In January this year, my department became aware that plant and equipment had been removed from the building, and that the premises were for sale. My officers have been taking action since that date to determine Arumpin's intentions. They have also become aware that another manufacturer wishes to purchase the premises from Arumpin for $400,000. The department is presently reviewing the matter, to determine whether the lease should be forfeited or transferred to a new lessee.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Government Health Policy, Comments by Member for Windsor

Hon. L. T. HARVEY (Greenslopes—Minister for Health) (2.52 p.m.), by leave: This morning's *Courier-Mail* carried a story by Mr Tony Koch reporting a leaked internal briefing paper dealing in a preliminary manner with the possibility of reviewing 31 different areas of our operations. The honourable member for Windsor has used the leaking of this document to spread an inaccurate interpretation of the health policy of this Government. He has suggested that it is the intention of this Government to depart from long-established principles of administration and policy, and I must express concern that, in doing so, he has yet again given rise to unnecessary worry within the community.

Therefore, in order that honourable members and members of the public may be correctly informed of the nature of the proposed review, I advise as follows—

The projects proposed as part of the program are designed to investigate, and, if approved, achieve savings through—

1. more efficient and economical use of staff and other resources;
2. privatisation of ancillary services in hospitals and departmental institutions;
3. generating additional revenue for the charging for and marketing of various services and the sale of property; and
4. measures to rationalise the delivery of health care services.

The papers were distributed to about 40 departmental officers, and at the time it was emphasised that the papers were being prepared and it was expected that I would be briefed at an early date. It was emphasised also that at the time I may wish to delete particular projects from the list. It was indicated further that it would be my wish to brief Cabinet on the proposals and that at that time Cabinet may decide not to proceed with particular projects.

Notwithstanding the fact that a review might proceed, there would be no suggestion that some or all of the findings would be implemented. A recent example is the review of the possible sale of the frozen food facility at Wacol. On the conclusion of that review it was decided that the facility should not be sold.

As the Minister responsible for the health function, I am aware of the important need for me to review on any ongoing basis expenditure patterns and services provided so that in carrying out my ministerial responsibilities I can satisfy myself that the funds provided to the health functions are used in the most effective way across the State.

Whilst the above approach is an ongoing one, it is consistent with the findings of the Savage committee and with the Statewide approach to reviewing a range of matters funded by the State—a requirement of the Cabinet Budget Review Committee and the Expenditure Review Committee.

I find this typically prevaricating attack on the part of the Opposition Health spokesman to be not only in the poorest of taste, which is also not unusual, but hypocritical at a time when the Australian Labor Party is, I am told, considering the abolition of free pharmaceuticals to the poorest of pensioners. Just as I would hope Mr Keating will reject this draconian proposal, I will be exercising a most aggressive concern for all Queenslanders, especially those least able to care for themselves, when I consider the proposals, if any, that come to me following this review. However, I must appeal to the honourable member opposite to desist from his common tactic of alarmism and inaccuracy.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Nurses' Quarters, Princess Alexandra Hospital

Hon. L. T. HARVEY (Greenslopes—Minister for Health) (2.56 p.m.), by leave: For the benefit of honourable members, I wish to clarify the situation that exists with respect to the nurses' quarters at the Princess Alexandra Hospital. Misinformation has been

spread by honourable members opposite and by officers of the Queensland Nurses Union. The true facts are these: firstly, the current nurses' quarters contain accommodation for a potential 455 nurses; however, the average occupancy in recent times has been around 300, or 298 for the financial year 1986-87. Current occupancy stands at 255, and following the rationalisation of nursing quarters, the hospital will have the capacity to house 140 nurses with a reserve of approximately 70 rooms to allow for variations in that number.

Secondly, no nurses have been or will be evicted. I have been given this assurance by the chairman of the South Brisbane Hospitals Board, Mr Bill Job. Nurses proceeding on recreation leave at Easter were asked to investigate alternative accommodation but, should they experience difficulty in locating accommodation or should they have a particular reason for requiring hospital accommodation, it was never suggested that they would be evicted.

Thirdly, the decision to live out is one currently made by 1 100 of the hospital's 1 400 nurses, and the nursing award reflects the cost of living out. The reason the award reflects the cost of living out is that the union movement aggressively sought to have the award changed in that way.

Fourthly, and finally—the Opposition knows quite well that the restructuring of nursing accommodation at the Princess Alexandra Hospital is in the best interests of the prompt construction of the new $12m, 104-bed geriatric assessment and rehabiliation unit. The facility will house research and will generate 12 000 man-weeks of employment in the construction phases. This issue highlights the continuing hypocritical attacks by the Australian Labor Party upon the aged and infirm of Queensland. Rumours have reached my office from Canberra of an intention to introduce—as I stated before—pharmaceutical charges for all age pensioners. I stress that this is likely to come up in the May economic statement. If this is true, and I appeal to the Federal Treasurer to reconsider that decision if it is, then this current nurses' quarters beat-up—the false accusations of Queensland public hospital pensioner pharmaceutical charges and the continuing deterioration of benefits for the elderly—will make a mosaic of deceit which will show fully the senior citizens of Queensland the intention of socialism for them.

LEAVE TO MOVE MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr GOSS (Logan—Leader of the Opposition) (2.59 p.m.): I seek leave to move a motion without notice for debate of Notices of Motion 27 and 37.

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

AYES, 29

Ardill
Braddy
Burns
Campbell
Casey
Comben
D'Arcy
De Lacy
Eaton
Gibbs, R. J.
Goss
Hamill
Hayward
McElligott
Mackenroth
McLean
Milliner
Palaszczuk
Shaw
Smith
Smyth
Underwood
Vaughan
Warburton
Warner
Wells
Yewdale

Tellers:
Davis
Prest

NOES, 54

Ahern
Alison
Austin
Beanland
Beard
Berghofer
Booth
Borbidge
Burreket
Chapman
Clauson
Cooper
Elliott
Fraser
Gately
Gibbs, I. J.
Gilmore
Glasson
Gunn
Gygar
Harper
Harvey
Henderson
Hinton
Hobbs
Innes
Katter
Knox
Lee
Lester
Lickiss
Lingard
Littleproud
McCauley
McKechnie
McPhie
Menzel
Muntz
Neal
Nelson
Newton
Randell
Row
Schuntner
Sherlock
Sherrin
Simpson
Slack
Stoneman
Tenni
Veivers
White

Tellers:
FitzGerald
Stephan

PAIR:

Scott | Hynd

Resolved in the negative.

RINGING OF DIVISION BELLS UNTIL END OF QUESTION-TIME

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, should any more divisions be required between now and the end of question-time, the bells will ring for two minutes only.

LEAVE TO MOVE MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr GYGAR (Stafford) (3.05 p.m.): I seek leave to move a motion without notice.

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

AYES, 39		NOES, 44	
Ardill	Milliner	Ahern	Lester
Beanland	Palaszczuk	Alison	Lingard
Beard	Schuntner	Austin	Littleproud
Braddy	Shaw	Berghofer	McCauley
Burns	Sherlock	Booth	McKechnie
Campbell	Smith	Borbidge	McPhie
Casey	Smyth	Burreket	Menzel
Comben	Underwood	Chapman	Muntz
D'Arcy	Vaughan	Clauson	Neal
De Lacy	Warburton	Cooper	Nelson
Eaton	Warner	Elliott	Newton
Gibbs, R. J.	Wells	Fraser	Randell
Goss	White	Gately	Row
Gygar	Yewdale	Gibbs, I. J.	Sherrin
Hamill		Gilmore	Simpson
Hayward		Glasson	Slack
Innes		Gunn	Stoneman
Knox		Harper	Tenni
Lee		Harvey	Veivers
Lickiss		Henderson	
McElligott	*Tellers:*	Hinton	*Tellers:*
Mackenroth	Davis	Hobbs	FitzGerald
McLean	Prest	Katter	Stephan

PAIR:

Scott | Hynd

Resolved in the negative.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

1. Overseas Trip by Minister for Police to Study Police Videotaping of Confessions

Mr BURNS asked the Deputy Premier, Minister for Public Works, Main Roads and Expo and Minister for Police—

"With reference to his recent overseas trip to study video taping of confessions—

(1) Who were the members of his party?

(2) What countries did he visit?

(3) What was the number of days (including dates) spent in each country?

(4) In each case, which cities did he visit and what, in particular, did he study in Paris?

(5) What are the names of police stations and institutions inspected on this study tour?

(6) Will he table a copy of his itinerary/program for the visit?

(7) What was the estimated total cost of the inspection tour?

(8) What was the cost of his previous study tour on the issue and the cost of Judge Pratt's tour?

(9) From what departmental votes were funds for these tours drawn?"

Mr GUNN: (1) I was accompanied by the Acting Commissioner of Police, Mr Redmond, my wife, my private secretary and my press secretary.

(2) The United Kingdom, West Germany and France, the latter being for transit purposes only.

(3) United Kingdom, 25.3.88 to 31.3.88, 7 days; France, 1.4.88 to 2.4.88, 2 days; West Germany, 3.4.88 to 6.4.88, 4 days.

(4) London, Paris, Munich and Bonn. As indicated earlier, Paris was visited in transit only to West Germany. No official engagements were possible there because the visit coincided with Good Friday and Easter Saturday.

(5) New Scotland Yard, London. Police Training College, Bramshall, Hampshire. Police Headquarters, Munich. West German Border Guards Unit, Bonn.

(6) No. The information is largely outlined above.

(7) I can assure the honourable member that regardless of the cost, it will represent excellent value for money as far as the future of our police force is concerned.

(8) I have not undertaken a previous study tour as such. I think the honourable member is referring to a brief visit by me to New Scotland Yard while I was in London on Treasury business nearly two years ago. The visit by Judge Pratt did not eventuate because of his commitments here.

(9) The acting commissioner's costs were met by the Police Department, with the balance met from the Works Department.

I also point out that in addition to police matters, I took the opportunity while in London to have talks with the now former Agent-General, Mr John Brown and the incoming Agent-General, Mr Tom McVeigh, as well as attending to some matters raised by them. I also point out that this visit had been planned since the beginning of the year and was taken at the only time available after allowing for parliamentary and other ministerial commitments.

2. Gympie-Brooloo Section, Mary Valley Line

Mr STEPHAN asked the Minister for Transport—

"With reference to the continuing concern regarding the future of the railway line from Gympie to Brooloo known as the Mary Valley line—

(1) Is there any question regarding the long-term life of any of the bridges supporting this line?

(2) Bearing in mind the important role this line plays in transporting fruit, particularly pineapples, to market along with other products, does he have any thoughts on discontinuing the use of this line?"

Mr I. J. GIBBS: (1) The bridges on the Mary Valley line are maintained to a standard similar to that of any other bridges in the Queensland railway system. The long-term life of these bridges would be expected to be similar to that of any other bridges of similar age in the system, and there are no concerns held regarding these structures.

(2) The operation of all branch lines is continually under review. At this stage, there is no proposal to close this section of line.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

De Laurentiis Entertainment Ltd

Mr GOSS: In directing a question to the Premier and Treasurer, I refer to reports in today's financial press about the $23.8m loss sustained by the Australian De Laurentiis company DEL, and I ask: in the light of reports that have now been circulating for

almost two months on the financial crash of DEL's US parent company, DEG, will he now report to the House details of measures that he has taken to ensure that the investment of $7.5m in public money in DEL and the lease of public land to the company is secure and will be recovered, particularly given DEL's heavy dependence on the US parent company to achieve viability?

Mr AHERN: The Gold Coast studio is basically sound and it promises to bring substantial benefits to Queensland. What has to be said is that there has been a 90 per cent downturn in investment in the Australian film industry. The Federal Government is promising to do something shortly by way of a new assistance package.

The De Laurentiis studio is well placed to reap the benefits of any change in Federal Government strategies. The group behind the Gold Coast studio is De Laurentiis Entertainment Ltd, or DEL, a company floated last year, raising $27m. The troubled American company, the De Laurentiis Group, owns 46.9 per cent of the Australian company. A buyer is being sought for that share.

Queensland's investment is by way of the Queensland Government Development Authority. It has bought the site for $1m, which is being rented by DEL, with an option to buy after eight years. The QGDA is lending up to $7.5m, which is repayable over eight years.

The Government's position is fully secured through freehold ownership of the land and through a charge in relation to the studio itself. For its loan, which is similar to the assistance given through the industrial estate program, Queensland has a film studio costing $18m to $20m and the opportunity to become a major centre for film and television production.

The Government believes the De Laurentiis project to be financially sound. It is confident that ultimately there will be substantial benefits from the Gold Coast studio, benefits which will far outweigh the costs.

While honourable members will no doubt have read of a major downturn in the Australian film industry, the future of this company is now squarely in the hands of the Hawke Labor Government.

As I have said, there has been a downturn of 90 per cent in the Australian film industry. Fund-raising is expected to drop from $149m last year to between $30m and $40m this year. The Federal Government is promising a new film assistance scheme by July. Honourable members will have to wait and see.

I want to make very clear the relationship between the American De Laurentiis Group, which has not done well at the box office, and the Australian company, which is De Laurentiis Entertainment Ltd. De Laurentiis Entertainment Ltd (DEL), which was successfully floated last year, raised $27.5m.

Mr Goss: Has it made a film?

Mr AHERN: It has just been constructed. The De Laurentiis Group——

Mr Goss: Just tell me whether it intends to make a film.

Mr AHERN: The Leader of the Opposition asked for this information; he is now going to get it.

The De Laurentiis Group of the USA owns 46.9 per cent of that Australian company. So the Australian company DEL can operate in its own right and does not depend on the American company. The DEL studio is only now nearing completion. It is located near the Cades County water park on the Gold Coast Highway. It is designed to be a fully integrated studio—Australia's first major studio complex—made up of nine buildings, including four sound studios.

As reported in today's press, Mr Peter Joseph, a very successful Australian businessman who went to the right school and all that, was recently appointed chairman of DEL. In the half-yearly report, DEL directors said that the company remained a highly

liquid company with short-term deposits, managed by the Westpac treasury, exceeding $26m of total share-holders' funds of $32m.

The Opposition's attempts to talk down this particular exercise and to knock it are not appreciated. What has happened with the film organisation in the USA is an unhappy experience, but there is no reason in the world why the Australian component cannot be very successful. We are fully secured and we are completely optimistic about the exercise.

Publicly Funded Defamation Actions against Members of Parliament

Mr GOSS: In directing a further question to the Premier, I refer to a television program last night——

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr GOSS: I refer to a television program last night that claimed that efforts to prise the former Premier from office late last year included showing him the accounts for legal fees associated with publicly funded defamation actions against members of this Parliament. The report claimed that at that time the accounts totalled more than $300,000, and that they were used as a political bargaining chip by telling the former Premier that he would have to pay them himself if he did not leave office.

In the light of that report, I ask the Premier: can he confirm the figure of $300,000 in legal costs claimed to have been incurred in the publicly funded defamation actions up till November/December last year? If the figure is not correct, can the Premier advise the House and tax-payers who are footing those bills of the actual liability for costs so far and provide an estimate of the cost of the balance of those actions, including their trials? I also ask: does the Premier intend continuing this unlimited tax-payer funded legal aid for himself, the former Premier and current and past Cabinet Ministers at a time when thousands of average Queenslanders cannot afford legal fees and do not qualify for such free legal aid?

Mr AHERN: I certainly have no knowledge at all of that particular matter. Peter Beattie was the architect of all that. If the Leader of the Opposition has not worked out that it is a complete fairy story so far in certain vital respects in respect of Peter Beattie's advice, I do not think that the Leader of the Opposition should be where he is now. Peter Beattie has made up a rather fanciful story in some respects in order to shield himself from the knives in the back from the factions in the Labor Party.

I am completely unaware of any threats made against the former Premier in respect of the payment of legal fees. I was not a party to that. I have no knowledge of it. That deals with the issues of the Channel 7 program over the last couple of nights. I do not know anything in relation to those matters.

Mr Underwood: You're the Treasurer.

Mr AHERN: I was not in the cow yard; let us be clear about that.

The nefarious dealings, the imbroglio and the ultimate coalition between Peter Beattie, the former Premier and John Moore from the Liberal Party are quite beyond me. I do not know anything about those fantasies. That is the situation.

In respect of the outstanding legal actions—the honourable the Leader of the Opposition knows that I have had discussions with him and his predecessor about this matter. The negotiations can continue. We want those negotiations to continue in the interests of the tax-payers of Queensland.

Mr Goss: There is nothing to negotiate. What a lot of rubbish!

Mr AHERN: On two occasions I have had an opportunity to discuss this matter with the honourable member. If he is trying to prejudice the potential——

Mr Goss: You are the one who raised it.

Mr AHERN: The honourable member raised the issue. He asked the question in this House. I did not appear on the program. The honourable member raised the issue in the House, and now he says to me, "You raised the issue."

There have been discussions, and they can continue at any time that the honourable member wishes.

Industrial Disputation Statistics

Mr FITZGERALD: I ask the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Affairs: do the latest figures on industrial disputation show a further drop in days lost through strike action in Queensland?

Mr LESTER: The latest figures available as at the end of November 1987 show that Queensland is yet again leading the way with the least number of industrial disputes in Australia.

For the year ended November 1987, for every 1 000 workers in Queensland 90 days were lost through strike action. The Australian average was 231 days. In the other States the statistics were as follows: New South Wales lost 328 days; Western Australia lost 235 days; and Victoria lost 198 working days through strike action.

For the 12 months ended November 1987, Queensland recorded only 5.6 per cent of the total number of days lost throughout Australia as a result of strike action. Queensland has 16 per cent of the total Australian work-force.

Queensland is leading the way and will continue to do so. I place on record the appreciation of all concerned. The strong leadership of this Government has not been the only factor contributing to Queensland's success in this regard. The general goodwill towards work in this State has contributed, too. If this Government can concentrate on reducing the number of days lost that are caused by people taking unnecessary sick leave and if industrial accidents can be reduced, that will go a long way towards creating greater employment opportunities in the State of Queensland.

Videotaping of Gamblers at Casinos

Mr BURNS: In directing a question to the Minister for Police, I refer to a statement that appeared in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* in which it was reported that a spokesman for Mr Gunn, the Minister for Police, said—when speaking of Queensland casinos—"Gamblers should be well aware that they were monitored by cameras." He said also, "Video tapes were later stored." I ask: does the relevant Act provide for videotaping and recording of customers at casinos? Who is responsible for making and storing such videotapes? Who can scrutinise such tapes? How long are they kept? Who decides whether the tapes are destroyed or, more importantly, kept? Will the Minister give a full and frank explanation of that invasion of the rights of citizens to enjoy a night out in the legal casinos in this State?

Mr GUNN: A lot of detail would be necessary to answer the honourable member's question. A recent court case was won on evidence that was presented by way of a videotape from the casino, which is under the control of the Casino Control Division.

I would like the honourable member to put the remainder of his question on notice so that I can provide him with a detailed answer.

Mr BURNS: I do so accordingly.

Closure of and Employment of Casual Labour at Collinsville Power Station; Supply of Electricity

Mr SMYTH: In directing a question to the Minister for Mines and Energy I refer to his Government's previous decision to decommission Collinsville Power Station over three years as from 17 November 1986 and I ask: (a) why has his Government brought forward that closure to 14 October this year—more than 12 months early—breaking a promise to employees of the QEC at Collinsville? (b) As all major generating plants are below the Tropic of Capricorn, and taking into consideration that north Queensland is subject to natural disasters such as cyclones, what security does this Government intend to give the people of north Queensland in relation to the supply of electricity to industry and domestic consumers? (c) Why does his department insist on employing casual labour to fill staff vacancies at Collinsville Power Station—vacancies brought about by his Government's lack of consideration for workers in the industry—when those positions can be covered by the present employees working overtime to give them and their families more financial security when they are sacked on 14 October this year?

Mr TENNI: As far as I am concerned, I believe that the correct amount of notice was given to the employees. If I remember correctly, they were given about 18 months' to two years' notice. They were also offered jobs elsewhere in the electricity industry in Queensland. They were offered retraining. If they were not satisfied with that, with the agreement of the unions concerned a package was successfully worked out. I do not know what all the screaming is about. That is the information that was given to me. I believe it to be correct.

As to the guarantee of electricity supply in the State of Queensland—don't you worry about that! We are on a grid system in this State. A cyclone in Cairns, Innisfail or Townsville will certainly not affect that grid system. The generation and distribution of power through the grid system is fairly well assured, except in cases when lines are blown down by a storm or cyclone. Areas that are not subjected to those winds will not be affected.

I believe that the workers have been given a reasonable go. With regard to the employment of casual labour—I cannot answer that question. I do not get into the details of the day-to-day workings of any power station in Queensland. A man would need to have a computer in his head to be able to know what is going on all around the place.

Mr Mackenroth: There is no chance of your being a computer.

Mr TENNI: I think that the honourable member should look into a mirror himself.

As far as I am concerned, part-time or casual labour is extremely good. It gives an opportunity to those people who are unfortunate enough not to be able to get a job anywhere else at least to be able to pick up some form of income to assist them in their everyday living. I do not believe that the honourable member, as a member of the Labor Party, should be knocking those sorts of people. They are entitled to some assistance, the same as everyone else is. The honourable member should not worry about the electricity industry; it is being looked after extremely well. The Government will continue to keep the tariff increases in this State to a rate which is no more than half the increase in the CPI. That compares more than favourably with any of the Labor States. As a matter of fact, at present, for an all-electric house, electricity in Queensland is about 5.8 per cent dearer than that in Tasmania. That is not bad when it is considered that Tasmania has a hydro scheme, which is the cheapest form of power available.

If the honourable member's friend, Mr Richardson, is kind enough to allow the Government to go ahead and build the Tully Falls hydro scheme, and when all the facts are made available to this Government, then it will be able to maintain very low increases in the cost of power because Queensland will have a very good hydro system. I doubt whether the honourable member and his greenie friends will allow that to go ahead. However, all honourable members can be assured that this Government will play

its part in making sure that it does go ahead and that the people of Queensland get power at the best possible or lowest price for which it can be made available in this State.

Closure of Industries; Redundancy and Compensation Packages

Mr SMYTH: In directing a question to the Premier and Treasurer, I point out that whereas the Federal Labor Government has given workers in the northern Queensland timber industry compensation because of that Government's decision to close the industry in that area, whereas the Federal Labor Government has created job-training programs for workers in that area and whereas the Federal Labor Government has promised to compensate communities that have suffered because of its decision, I ask—

(1) Has his Government introduced job-training programs for Collinsville workers who will be sacked on 14 October this year?

(2) Has his Government given consideration to compensating workers who will be sacked because of his Government's decision?

(3) What compensation is his Government giving the community of Collinsville because of his Government's decision to reduce the population of that town by half?

Mr AHERN: It is my understanding that reasonable redundancy offers have been made. It is interesting that the honourable member makes a comparison with the Federal Government's efforts in this matter. Recently when I was in Innisfail, one of the deputations I received was a deputation from workers affected by the Goondi mill closure. Firm promises had been made to the workers by the Federal Minister, Mr Kerin, that there would be a package of assistance measures available for them. What has happened? Absolutely nothing has been done to assist them at all.

The situation in respect of the Commonwealth Government's performance over the World Heritage issue is clear. Very little has been done. The performance of the Commonwealth Government in this area is really quite miserable. In relation to Collinsville, appropriate arrangements will be made.

Declaration of Flood Disaster Area, South-east Queensland

Mr ELLIOTT: I ask the Premier and Treasurer: will he inform this House and the people adversely affected by the recent floods in the western downs and Darling Downs regions—

(1) What is the situation in regard to a declaration of disaster areas for those particular localities?

(2) Will he join me in inspecting the flood damage in those areas as soon as we can practicably get into that region when floodwaters recede?

Mr AHERN: These matters have concerned the Government greatly in recent times. Queensland has been very adversely affected by stressful climatic conditions of one type or another lately. Unfortunately, it will cost the tax-payers a considerable sum.

As soon as I was able—bearing in mind this particular weather influence—and when it was observed that a substantial problem had occurred, south-east Queensland was declared a disaster area under the Commonwealth/State natural disasters arrangements. That was done in the rain; it could not have been done more quickly than that. The declaration was made in an endeavour to assure people of the Government's concern and to advise the Commonwealth Government of the problem. Its co-operation was quickly forthcoming.

I carried out an inspection of the area when the weather permitted me to do so, and later last week I was able to travel to Toowoomba to conduct an aerial inspection of that area. Consequent to that, at the Cabinet meeting on Monday, there was a further extension of the declared area. The declaration was extended to include the Darling Downs and western downs.

Last Friday I met with the Queensland Graingrowers Association in its Toowoomba office and the association indicated preliminary estimates to me. Rather astonishingly, at that time $80m worth of summer crops and $80m worth of cotton crops were at risk. Up until that time I had not realised the extent of the potential cost throughout that area. I indicated to the association a sympathetic understanding in respect of QIDC applications. The Government is doing all that it can and the association has indicated to the Government that it appreciates the prompt way in which the Government has acted.

I indicate to the honourable member this Government's ongoing concern in relation to this matter and all of the measures which apply under the Commonwealth/State arrangements will be applied as generously as possible. I will seek an early opportunity to inspect the area with the honourable member.

Flooding in Condamine Area

Mr ELLIOTT: My second question is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries. I ask: is he aware of the extent of the flooding in the Condamine River and its catchment areas? Secondly, will the Minister assure this House that he will have officers in the area to liaise with land-holders as soon as the floodwaters recede?

Mr HARPER: Much of the natural disaster which has occurred in that area has been covered in the answer given by the honourable the Premier.

Many members will appreciate that, as with the drought-affected areas, I have a very personal and detailed understanding of the flooded areas because I travel through that area probably two week-ends out of every three. I understand the dislocation that has been caused and I have a first-hand knowledge of the cotton crops which have been affected. Those cotton crops were worth a considerable amount of money, because the market is extremely good. The crops have virtually been completely lost.

Both my officers and I have a very clear understanding of the problems involved. It is important to stress to honourable members in this House that the Queensland Government appreciates the plight of those who are suffering from drought conditions as well as the plight of those who are suffering because of floods. Both are natural disasters and the Government's response of financial assistance to a flood, which occurs very rapidly, is similar to its response to those people affected by droughts, which occur over a much longer period of time. Drought-stricken areas often appear to have been lost in the thinking of Governments, and the media in particular. Both disasters receive similar assistance. My officers go into flood-stricken areas just as quickly as they can in order to assess the situation, and I assure honourable members that they will continue their traditional role of assisting primary producers in an effort to bring these flood-affected areas back into production.

Yesterday officers from my own department and from the Water Resources Commission carried out an aerial survey of the badly flood-affected areas in the MacIntyre River and Weir River systems, with a view to surveying the possible need for a fodder drop to isolated livestock, particularly sheep. Today, as a result of that survey, those departments are endeavouring to organise a drop of fodder to be carried out by the defence forces into the flooded areas. It has been estimated that there are at least 30 000 sheep in Queensland and possibly 10 000 or 15 000 sheep in the nearby areas of New South Wales that are in need of fodder. Fodder is unavailable to them. Although they are in muddy conditions, they are relatively safe from floodwaters. However, they will require assistance with fodder. This exercise is being carried out and I hope that this afternoon arrangements will be completed with the defence forces to provide that form of relief.

That indicates the seriousness and the dedication with which this Government addresses problems resulting from the natural disasters of both flood and drought. I assure the honourable member and members generally that this Government will continue to address the plight of primary producers and, indeed, small-businessmen who are adversely affected by both floods and droughts.

Abolition of Week-end Family Railway Tickets

Mr UNDERWOOD: In asking a question of the Minister for Transport, I refer to the abolition, commencing this week-end, of the four-in-one ticket for week-end rail services for the period of Expo and beyond. As many families—in particular, low-income families—use the tickets for their family outings, especially to visit the many free family activities conducted at city venues such as the Mall, King George Square, the Botanic Gardens, the Queensland Cultural Centre, the Art Gallery and the State Library and events such as Queensland Historical Week, FREEPS and sporting events and the fact that many families have scrimped and saved to purchase the expensive Expo tickets, I now ask: why are non-Expo travellers being used as a source for a State Government tax grab because of Expo costs?

A Government member interjected.

Mr UNDERWOOD: The honourable member should not laugh. It is true.

I ask further: in this matter is the State Government not just another Expo fast-buck merchant on a tax grab?

Bearing in mind that recently Brisbane rail passengers suffered a 10 per cent increase in fares while passengers in the rest of the State had a fare increase of only 5 per cent, is it not a fact that the $6m operating cost announced by the Minister is really a revenue loss figure rather than the Government's deceptive line that implies that the $6m is real costs? Will the Minister this week table the cost advice he received that enabled the Government to introduce this savage tax slug on Queensland families?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before the Minister answers that question, I remind honourable members that questions without notice should be brief.

Mr I. J. GIBBS: Mr Speaker, when the rubbish is taken off the question, it becomes a very brief one. In fact, there is not too much in it.

The honourable member takes the Government to task because he alleges that this is a tax. I inform him that the Railway Department is a commercial enterprise that works in the way of free enterprise.

Mr Underwood: The railways are not a free enterprise operation; they are a public service.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Ipswich West has asked his question. He will sit in silence and listen to the answer.

Mr I. J. GIBBS: I understood the attitude of a socialist. However, I will repeat that the railways are a commercial operation. They provide public transport in the same way as privately owned buses and Brisbane City Council buses do.

To attract people into the railway system on Saturday afternoons and particularly on Sundays, when very few people use the trains, families have been given the privilege of paying one full fare and having three children travel for nothing. That is great. That is a tremendous offer by the railways. That offer also applies to Brisbane City Council buses.

During the six months of Expo all public transport will have the responsibility to take 5.5 million people to Expo and back in a satisfactory manner. The anticipated share for the railways is 3.5 million people. When the trains are being heavily used it would be impossible to control people having a single ticket with three children travelling for free with them. When the railway will be busy, that privilege of free travel will no longer apply. That will be the same with the buses. The honourable member said that that concession has been removed, thereby making it a tax. The reference to tax is a load of rubbish. It is a commercial operation. After Expo, the concession will be reintroduced.

In his question, the honourable member misled the House and the people of Queensland when he said that it will continue. I inform the honourable member that after Expo the concession will be reintroduced for rail passengers and for bus passengers.

I repeat that it is a commercial enterprise. The Government has the responsibility for moving people for the largest event that will be held in Queensland in perhaps the next 100 years. The Government will do that, and it will do it without the honourable member's help or advice, because that would be baseless and false.

Privatisation of Government Printing Office

Mr UNDERWOOD: I ask the Minister for Corrective Services and Administrative Services: is he aware of the concern of staff at the Government Printing Office over the article on page 5 of Tuesday's *Courier-Mail* headed " 'Go private' plans start with State print office"? As the Government Printer, Mr Hampson, addressed the members of the staff on this matter and was unable to give them answers to many of their questions, I ask: does the Minister or any senior officers of his department with knowledge of the proposal intend to address the employees of the Government Printing Office on the plans that the Government has for the operation of that establishment as referred to in the article in the *Courier-Mail*? Is it correct that the Government Printer will be charged a rental of $1.5m a year to occupy the premises of the Government Printing Office?

Mr COOPER: I thank the honourable member for the question. I saw the article in the *Courier-Mail.*

As the honourable member will know, some time ago the Government commissioned a report known as the Savage report. Since then, the Expenditure Review Committee has been going through the various departments and assessing all aspects of Government operations with a view to checking on efficiency, streamlining operations to remove unnecessary red tape and making bureaucracy more efficient. To that end, a number of areas of my department—one happened to be the Government Printing Office—were examined.

As the honourable member said, the Government has taken a decision to commercialise the Government Printing Office. That does not mean that it will be selling anything off. It means that it will make that department more accountable to other departments and more effective. As the honourable member would know only too well, the Government Printing Office plays a very important role not only so far as departments are concerned but also so far as this very place is concerned in the printing of *Hansard.*

At this stage I have no comment on details of the $1.5m mentioned by the honourable member because it is still a very early stage of the necessary change-over.

Construction of New TAFE College, Toowoomba

Mr McPHIE: I ask the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Affairs: is the transfer of TAFE colleges to his portfolio likely to have any effect on the ongoing program for development or to cause any change in the timing for commencement of construction of the new TAFE buildings on the old Toowoomba showground or the facilities to be included in them?

Mr LESTER: I make it very clear that the extensions will stay, as promised, at the showground.

I will provide some detail as to what is envisaged. The estimated cost of the building project is $12.6m. The building is a Federal Government project. However, the ongoing costs, which will be substantial as the project gets down the track, will be met by the State Government. That point has to be made very clear. It is anticipated that $3m will be spent in 1988-89. The project is not too far off a start. In 1989-90 expenditure is anticipated to be $6m, and the balance will be provided in the 1990-91 financial year.

The building is to house business studies, fashion design, pre-vocational arts and crafts, catering and hospitality and hairdressing. Ancillary space will be provided for a canteen, library, staff facilities and storage as part of the project.

These new buildings and new facilities in the Toowoomba district will mean a great deal to vocational education in Toowoomba and the surrounding district.

Proposed World Heritage Listing of North Queensland Rainforest Areas

Mr McPHIE: I direct a question to the Minister for Environment, Conservation and Tourism. A well-presented article in the *Australian Financial Review* of 24 March dealt with Labor's internal differences over proposed World Heritage listings. I ask: what is the present position regarding the listing of Queensland's northern rainforests? Does Labor have a common position on this as far as the Minister is aware? Or is the State ALP at loggerheads with its Federal counterparts and, indeed, is the Federal ALP torn internally over the proposal?

Mr MUNTZ: The honourable member is quite correct in his assertion that the Queensland ALP and its Federal counterparts are suffering internal problems. The Queensland ALP realises that a grave misjudgment and a grave error has been made by the Commonwealth Government in even planning to nominate a part of north Queensland for World Heritage Commission listing. It is a grave injustice to the people of Australia and in particular to the people of north Queensland. The faction fighting that is going on behind the scenes brings to light just what has happened.

There has been no consultation by Canberra with this Government or with Queenslanders, let alone with the people who sit on the Opposition benches in this Parliament. The Queensland ALP now realises that the Federal ALP has sold out the livelihood of more than 2 000 people who live in Queensland. The Federal Labor Government has sold out their future and the potential of that area, an area of 900 000 hectares that is significant in that it has a multiuse potential. The subject area is not just rainforest, it has a multiuse potential.

This Government is determined to pursue this issue until it is resolved in favour of the people of Queensland. People such as the member for Mourilyan, Mr Eaton, must realise where their fates lie if they do not support the case that the Queensland Government intends to present to UNESCO in the hope that the correct recommendation will go to the World Heritage Commission.

At present the whole timber industry right throughout Australia is on its knees simply because of the actions taken by the Federal Labor Government. That Government could not care less about conservation. The whole argument has now been politicised. The Federal ALP thought that it could win political support—electoral support—at the ballot-box by nominating certain areas for World Heritage listing. It was proved to be totally wrong in the election held recently in New South Wales. Labor electorates were targeted by the timber industry and by people who are against such across-the-board World Heritage listing. Members of the Labor Party, including Ministers of the former New South Wales Labor Government, were annihilated.

I thank the honourable member for his question. I can assure him and other honourable members that this Government will pursue the matter until it is resolved in the interests of all Queenslanders.

Mr SHERLOCK having asked a question without notice——

Mr SPEAKER: Order! As the honourable member has asked an extremely long question, I direct that it be placed on notice.

Mr SHERLOCK: I accept your ruling, Mr Speaker.

Nurses' Quarters, Princess Alexandra Hospital

Mr SHERLOCK: I ask the Minister for Health: is she aware that some nurses have already been asked to leave their accommodation at Princess Alexandra Hospital and that other nurses are under pressure to move out prior to their annual leave? Given the

figures she quoted to the House earlier today, will she inform the House why the implementation of that revised accommodation policy cannot be delayed until after Expo to remove the huge burden this has placed on young people faced with rental hikes all over town? Will the Minister give a ministerial assurance to nurses at Princess Alexandra Hospital with genuine need for accommodation that they will be sympathetically heard and guaranteed accommodation?

Mrs HARVEY: It is obvious that the member for Ashgrove heard my ministerial statement about the nurses' accommodation because he has referred to it. I repeat that the nurses are neither being evicted nor under any threat of eviction. Expo has nothing to do with the situation in which they find themselves. Six nurses who were going on leave were asked to reconsider their return to nurses' accommodation at the PA Hospital because they already owned homes in close proximity to it. In one instance, nurses had their own homes not very far from the PA Hospital and they were also using nurses' accommodation on the site. The board has told those nurses that, should any instances of hardship occur, it would look at every incident on a one-to-one basis. No-one has been evicted. The chairman of the board merely made a suggestion.

The honourable member may also recollect that a strike proposal was instituted by the nurses' union. The nurses elected not to strike. They are very responsible people in our community and they realise that they are not under any threat. No-one supports the nurses in this State more strongly than this Government and I, as Minister for Health, do.

Mr Sherlock: Will you give them an assurance?

Mrs HARVEY: I can give the honourable member every assurance, as I did this morning, and I have the assurance of the chairman of the board, Mr Bill Job, that the nurses are definitely not under threat.

State Service Superannuation Scheme

Mr HAYWARD: In directing a question to the Premier and Treasurer, I refer him to his answer to a question in this House yesterday in which he claimed that the State Service Superannuation Scheme was fully funded. Would the Premier precisely detail to this House what he understands by the term "fully funded" as it applies to the State Service Superannuation Scheme? Does he mean that it is fully funded in the sense that existing levels of contributions for both the employer and the employees are sufficient to ensure that the scheme will meet emerging commitments, or fully funded in the sense that existing assets are equal to or greater than the liability that has accrued from the past service of Queensland Government employees who are members of that scheme?

Mr AHERN: I will answer the honourable member's question in detail tomorrow. It is my understanding that the scheme is completely actuarially sound in the best sense of the term. In other words, it is well able to meet its long-term commitments in terms of the assets that it has and the investment revenues that are forthcoming. In that regard it is unique on the Australian mainland. It is strongly supported by the unions, which are very proud of the status of the scheme and its financial soundness. They have written to me indicating that fact. If the honourable member is trying to make some sort of issue here, I am certain that he will be unable to do so. However, in terms of the technical correctness of the term according to the specific criteria that he has laid down, I will table it in the House tomorrow.

Closure of Government Motor Garage, Zillmere

Mr HAYWARD: I ask the Premier: is it true that the Government intends to close down the Government Motor Garage at Pineapple Street, Zillmere, next week, throwing over 100 employees out of work? If not, what is the position as far as the future operation of the Government Motor Garage is concerned?

Mr AHERN: From time to time, in reply to honourable members who have asked specific questions of this nature, I have indicated that the Queensland Budget is very

tight. All other States of Australia are facing a similar situation. It all came down from a 3-year rolling program that was announced at last year's Premiers Conference.

Let me go over the ground again. The issue was that, during this financial year, Queensland had a shortfall of $150m on what would have normally been expected under previous programs. During the next financial year, for which we are preparing a Budget at present, there will be a further $150m shortfall and another $200m in the last year of the triennium.

The Federal Treasurer, Mr Keating, has told the States both individually and severally that they must cut their programs to fit their budgets. The statement was as clear and as direct as that from the Treasurer himself.

Behind the scenes, Treasury officers and Grants Commission people are saying that we live in a time of small government and we have to tailor our Government programs to suit our budget. In that regard, all States of Australia are examining their priorities. It is as simple as that. They have to.

Mr Unsworth in New South Wales succumbed to the temptation to avoid the problem by plundering the trust and special funds—the capital funds of the Government. When that happens, a long-term problem is built into the system. That happened in New South Wales; it was perceived by the electorate and was one of the issues that threw out the Labor Government in that State.

Recurrent expenditure must be kept separate from capital expenditure. At present a total budget review is occurring. From time to time various discussions will occur in relation to all of the options that are being considered.

On the front page of this morning's *Courier-Mail* there appeared an article relating to a Health Department review which was being canvassed. The Minister for Health has already outlined the reasons for that review. Reviews will be undertaken in all Government departments. If they are not already taking place, they will in the future. A general budget review process is occurring. It is timely, and Mr Keating has directed that it be undertaken.

That brings me to the specifics of the honourable member's question. The only firm decisions that have been made by the Government in this regard relate to the Government Printing Office and the frozen food facility. Those decisions have been announced. A couple of other aspects need consideration, and a whole range of things are being examined. However, until such time as definitive decisions are made, those will remain as options.

Not surprisingly, the Government is examining the ways in which its motor car fleet is served. It is rightly and properly considering what occurs in other States. No decision has been made, but the options are being considered very seriously.

When the Government is in a position to make a decision on the issue, all aspects will be taken into consideration and an announcement will be made in terms of employee security and so on.

Press Secretaries and Public Relations Consultants, Minister for Northern Development, Community Services and Ethnic Affairs

Mr YEWDALE: In directing a question to the Premier, I refer to the fact that recently he stated very clearly that Queenslanders would have to learn to live with smaller government. I ask: how does the Premier condone the employment of three press secretaries by the Minister for Northern Development, namely, Jamie Collins in Brisbane, John Anderson in Townsville and Kevin Meade in Cairns, as well as National Party member Vicki Kippin and Kevin Byrne as public relations consultants? Further, where is the money coming from when there is no budget for this non-existent department?

Mr AHERN: In this regard, it is very hard to escape from some comparison with what the Federal Government agencies are undertaking in terms of press secretaries and information offices that are established up and down the coast of Queensland. I understand

that Margaret Reynolds has quite a considerable number of staff. The Federal Government itself has quite an information network in Townsville. The comparisons are there. We probably should employ more people than we do. Not all of the people are involved only in public relations work; they are involved in quite a deal of administrative work, and in the circumstances their employment is fully justified.

Proposed World Heritage Listing of North Queensland Rainforest Areas

Mr MENZEL: I direct a question to the Minister for Northern Development, who would be aware of the disastrous results that the Federal Government's World Heritage listing decision is having on the timber industry and economy of north Queensland. I ask: have the local ALP members, State and Federal, supported the World Heritage listing of north Queensland timber areas? Will he issue a challenge to the Prime Minister, the Honourable Bob Hawke, to visit Ravenshoe and debate the issue with him?

Mr KATTER: The importation of timber into north Queensland from overseas is occurring. I have been informed that three ships have been contracted to bring timber into north Queensland from overseas on a fairly regular basis. If honourable members opposite want to look for a reason why the nation is going broke, they need look no further than the decision concerning the northern rainforests and the decision to import timber and replace some 1 000 employees in north Queensland while providing wealth and jobs for other countries. I might add for those people who are worried about rainforests that the countries from which the timber is being imported are slashing and burning their rainforests.

North Queensland now has a new phenomenon known as Richardson's Greyshirts. There is now a whole new army of police wandering around in the rainforests of north Queensland and depriving the people of north Queensland of access to those forests. Some families have enjoyed that access for the four or five generations that they have lived in that area. Some people whose ancestors had lived in the area for from 12 000 to 20 000 years have been excluded from the area as well.

It is quite obvious now that property is being confiscated without compensation. This is a new development in any Western parliamentary system. For the first time, and without precedent, huge areas of private property have been confiscated without the payment of any compensation whatsoever. That is a very ominous development. That is the reason why the NFF has fought so hard and has become so intimately involved in this particular issue. Great champions of civil liberties have suddenly become involved in it.

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

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr SCHUNTNER (Mount Coot-tha) (4.15 p.m.), by leave: I was misrepresented in the Deputy Premier's statement to the House earlier today. I inform the House that on my arrival at the Minister's office on 28 January, the Minister did not indicate that because of the time a meeting was not possible and that I should contact his secretary to make another appointment. The Minister invited me into his office for discussions. In view of unavoidable lateness resulting from my major and lengthy medical consultations that afternoon, I expressed my appreciation of this action. Our meeting lasted approximately 30 minutes. The whole of the meeting was in his office.

At the conclusion of the meeting, I again thanked the Minister for proceeding with the meeting despite my unforeseen difficulties with time; and, as I left, the Minister remained in his office. We did not move along the corridor together, catch the lift together or leave the building together. During the meeting, the Route 20 issue was discussed for virtually the whole of the time. I made my representations from notes I had previously prepared. I recorded notes during the meeting so that I could report the meeting accurately to constituents.

SUPERANNUATION (GOVERNMENT AND OTHER EMPLOYEES) BILL

Hon. B. D. AUSTIN (Nicklin—Minister for Finance and Minister Assisting the Premier and Treasurer) (4.16 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill to provide for a productivity based superannuation scheme of benefits for persons in Government employment, members of the Police Force and other persons."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. B. D. AUSTIN (Nicklin—Minister for Finance and Minister Assisting the Premier and Treasurer) (4.17 p.m.): I move—

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

The purpose of this Bill is to provide a 3 per cent productivity-based employer contribution superannuation scheme for Queensland Government employees. Honourable members will be aware that decisions by the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission and the State Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Commission require employers to provide a superannuation scheme for all employees based on a 3 per cent employer contribution. This Bill establishes the framework for the introduction and operation of such a scheme for Queensland Government employees.

The conditions of the scheme will be prescribed by subordinate legislation in the form of articles. The scheme proposed has been negotiated with, and agreed to, by representatives of all public sector unions.

When the Government entered negotiations, it was with the object of providing a superannuation scheme which—

- extended superannuation coverage to those Government employees not presently having access to superannuation arrangements; and
- maintains total benefits to existing members at present levels.

I am pleased to report that, because of the goodwill and responsible attitude adopted by negotiators on both sides of the table, these aims have been achieved. I take this opportunity to congratulate and thank all those involved in the negotiating process, but particularly the unions concerned, for the manner in which agreement was reached.

The scheme will be consistent with the principles which have been established by the Commonwealth Government for the operation of similar schemes in the private sector. The arrangements will encompass some 140 000 Government employees, including approximately 70 000 employees currently not covered by superannuation arrangements.

Essentially, the scheme is a simple 3 per cent employer contribution accumulation arrangement, whereby the Government, as the employing authority, will contribute an amount equal to 3 per cent of each employee's salary to an account in the employee's name. The contributions will be invested under the authority of a board of trustees representative of both employer and employees and the investment earnings will be applied to employees' accounts.

I propose to introduce a further complementary Bill to modify the existing superannuation arrangements for persons who are already members of the Government superannuation schemes in accordance with agreements reached with the unions. Those employees who are already members of the Government superannuation schemes will have their personal contributions to the existing schemes reduced by an amount equivalent to 1.5 per cent of salary from 1 July next. This will mean a welcome increase in take-home pay for all involved.

In conjunction with the reduction in contribution rates, there will be a reduction in the future rate of benefit accrual so that the total level of benefit payable to an employee from both the existing scheme and the 3 per cent employer contribution scheme will generally equate with the current level of entitlements. Thus employees who are now covered by the Government superannuation schemes will receive no overall increase in benefit entitlements, but will have the immediate advantage of a significant reduction in the level of personal contributions.

The major provisions of the Bill are—

- Establishment and appointment of a board of trustees.
- Equal representation of employer and employee interests on the board of trustees—four of the eight trustees will be appointed from nominations by public sector unions.
- The vesting in the board of trustees of the power to determine investment strategy and policy of the fund and the appointment of an investment manager or managers.
- Provision for the rules of the scheme to be defined by articles prescribed by Order in Council.
- Scheme to be known as the Government Officers' Superannuation Scheme with the acronym "Gosuper" protected in the Bill for use only for these purposes.
- Standards in relation to financial and administration matters including accountability requirements are prescribed.
- Cost of administration of the scheme is to be met from the investment earnings of the fund.

The superannuation arrangements made possible by this Bill extend superannuation coverage to all Queensland Government employees in a manner which is both reasonable and equitable from the employees' viewpoint whilst containing costs to the tax-payer to the minimum possible level.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr De Lacy, adjourned.

SUPERANNUATION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. B. D. AUSTIN (Nicklin—Minister for Finance and Minister Assisting the Premier and Treasurer) (4.21 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill to amend the State Service Superannuation Act 1972-1987, the Public Service Superannuation Act 1958-1987, the Police Superannuation Act 1974-1987 and the Police Superannuation Act 1968-1987 each in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. B. D. AUSTIN (Nicklin—Minister for Finance and Minister Assisting the Premier and Treasurer) (4.22 p.m.): I move—

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

This Bill is complementary to the Superannuation (Government and Other Employees) Bill and provides for the necessary changes to the legislation governing the State service and police superannuation schemes following the introduction from 1 July 1988 of the 3 per cent employer contribution—Gosuper—scheme. I indicated when introducing the Superannuation (Government and Other Employees) Bill that it had been agreed that

contributions paid by employees to both the State service and police schemes be reduced by the equivalent of 1.5 per cent of salary. Agreement was also reached that the future rate of benefit accrual for age retirement under these schemes be reduced by 15 per cent, so that overall the total level of age retirement benefit payable under the existing schemes and the Gosuper scheme will generally equate with the levels of benefit now provided. This Bill effects these reductions.

It also provides that death and invalidity benefits will continue to be provided solely from the State service and police schemes at the present levels of defined benefits under those schemes. This honours the arrangements negotiated with the public sector unions. In these circumstances, the amounts held in the members' accounts under the Gosuper scheme will be transferred to the State service and police schemes, respectively, to assist in funding the additional level of defined benefit.

Also in terms of agreements between the parties, provision has been made to continue to provide age retirement benefits at current levels for a period of five years to 30 June 1993. Again, the member's accumulation under the Gosuper scheme will be transferred to the State service or police schemes. This arrangement is considered necessary because, in the short term, the level of benefit accrued under the Gosuper scheme which relies on the compounding effect of interest earnings may not make up the level of benefit reduction in the State service and police schemes.

The opportunity has also been taken to address other important issues in the Bill. Provision is made for the payment of a benefit to persons who are retrenched from Government employment under arrangements approved by the Governor in Council. The level of benefit provided is determined by a formula set out in clause 12 of the Bill. This formula has been actuarially determined to provide a level of benefit equal to the member's actuarial reserve.

The level of benefit which may be preserved by a member upon resignation before reaching retirement age has been varied so that the level preserved until retirement age is equal to the member's actuarial reserve. This is the same level of benefit which can be taken in cash where a member is retrenched. Both of these benefits are achieved within existing funding arrangements and without any additional cost to either the Government or the member.

As agreed in negotiations with the police unions, the option of preserving benefits upon resignation is introduced into the Police Superannuation Scheme on the same basis as proposed for the State Service Superannuation Scheme.

Two further minor amendments are proposed to the State Service Superannuation Scheme. The first of these allows the State Service Superannuation Board greater discretion in the form of medical evidence which may be furnished by new entrants to the fund and permits the board to use other than Government medical officers in the consideration of the extent of incapacity of persons seeking ill health retirement benefits.

The Bill also addresses an anomaly in the legislation which now permits full-time employees of universities to continue as contributors upon a variation to part-time status. The scheme is currently restricted to full-time employees and the Bill ensures that persons changing to part-time status are required to withdraw from the scheme.

The costs of administering both the State Service and Police Superannuation Schemes are currently a charge on the Consolidated Revenue Fund. Provisions are included in the Bill to enable administration expenses to be met by the superannuation funds rather than the Consolidated Revenue Fund. This is normal superannuation practice. These provisions are to apply from a date to be proclaimed and it is envisaged that the change in administrative procedure will coincide with the proposed change in the investment policy of the Government's superannuation schemes.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr De Lacy, adjourned.

ACTS AMENDMENT AND CONSTRUCTION BILL

Hon. B. D. AUSTIN (Nicklin—Minister for Finance and Minister Assisting the Premier and Treasurer) (4.25 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill to provide for amendment and construction of various Acts upon a change in administrative arrangements and for related purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. B. D. AUSTIN (Nicklin—Minister for Finance and Minister Assisting the Premier and Treasurer) (4.26 p.m.): I move—

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

This Bill is an omnibus machinery measure designed to give practical administrative effect to Government reorganisation and changes in the administration of legislation. It follows the Government reorganisation of December 1987.

Structurally, the Bill is divided into parts to enable portfolio changes to be dealt with discretely. Part II of the Bill concentrates on the Family Services portfolio where—

- Youth functions have been transferred to the Education portfolio which has necessitated amending a number of Acts in the manner set out in schedule 1 to the Bill.
- Responsibility for Intellectual Handicap Services has been transferred from the Health portfolio to Family Services. The construction of relevant provisions of the Mental Health Services Act has been clarified to take account of the transfer of responsibilities to Family Services.

Appropriate amendments have been made to the Intellectually Handicapped Citizens Act 1985, as set out in schedule 1.

Part III of the Bill effects the necessary legislative changes required by the transfer of urban water supply and sewerage and certain other water supply responsibilities from Local Government to the Water Resources and Maritime Services portfolio. Specifically, the Bill transfers responsibility for the administration of the Brisbane and Area Water Board Act 1979 to 1984; the City of Brisbane (Flood Mitigation Works Approval) Act 1952 to 1974; the Gladstone Area Water Board Act 1984; the Sewerage and Water Supply Act 1949-1985; and the Townsville/Thuringowa Water Supply Board Act 1987 to the Minister for Water Resources and Maritime Services in accordance with schedule 2.

In Part III, the Bill also appropriately alters construction of specific provisions of the Local Government Act to reflect the changes.

Also in this part the Bill proposes a more streamlined procedure for dealing with applications by local authorities to undertake works under the provisions of the City of Brisbane (Flood Mitigation Works Approval) Act. The Commissioner of Water Resources will co-ordinate the necessary investigations and submit a report and recommendation to the Minister based on the findings of those authorities involved in the investigation. The Minister's responsibilities remain unchanged.

Part IV concerns the administration of the Queensland Industry Development Corporation Act 1985 and the Suncorp Insurance and Finance Act 1985-1986. In the rearrangement of portfolio responsibilities, it has been determined that the Minister for Finance and Minister Assisting the Premier and Treasurer be the Minister administering these two Acts. As the Acts in question now specifically provide that it is the Premier

who administers the legislation, it is necessary to change the definition of "Minister" in both Acts in accordance with schedule 3 to the Bill.

Honourable members will appreciate that these are straightforward machinery measures. I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr De Lacy, adjourned.

RACING VENUES DEVELOPMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. J. H. RANDELL (Mirani—Minister for Local Government and Racing) (4.29 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill to amend the Racing Venues Development Act 1982 in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. J. H. RANDELL (Mirani—Minister for Local Government and Racing) (4.30 p.m.): I move—

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

This is a small Bill designed to ensure that the approval of the Governor in Council will be required in future before trustees constituted under the Racing Venues Development Act establish or amend superannuation schemes for employees.

It is Government policy that the superannuation benefits offered to the staff of statutory authorities should not exceed generally accepted standards for public sector employees. This aim can be achieved if proposed benefits incorporated in new superannuation schemes or amendments to existing schemes require the approval of the Governor in Council.

Of the trustees appointed under the Act, only the trustees of the Albion Park Paceway have established a superannuation scheme for employees and the provisions of the Bill in no way affect the existing benefits. Any future amendment of this scheme will, of course, require the approval of the Governor in Council.

The opportunity has also been taken to make two other sets of amendments to the Racing Venues Development Act. Firstly, in accordance with current drafting practice, detailed provisions dealing with the approval and publication of rules made by trustees have been deleted and replaced by a reference to the appropriate section of the Acts Interpretation Act containing general provisions on this subject.

Secondly, detailed provisions dealing with such matters as accounts, powers of the Auditor-General and publication of an annual report have also been deleted as the trustees are a statutory authority within the meaning of the Financial Administration and Audit Act and that Act contains appropriate provisions on these subjects.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Smith, adjourned.

NATIONAL TRUST OF QUEENSLAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. J. H. RANDELL (Mirani—Minister for Local Government and Racing) (4.32 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill to amend the National Trust of Queensland Act 1963-1981 in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. J. H. RANDELL (Mirani—Minister for Local Government and Racing) (4.33 p.m.): I move—

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

As in the case of the Racing Venues Development Act Amendment Bill which I just introduced, this Bill is also largely concerned with superannuation schemes for employees.

In particular, it is provided that the approval of the Governor in Council is required before the National Trust can amend its existing employee superannuation scheme or establish any new scheme. Again, the amendment has as its source the desire of the Government to ensure that superannuation benefits for employees of the statutory authorities do not exceed generally accepted standards for public sector employees.

The provisions of the Bill in no way affect the benefits under the existing scheme operated by the National Trust.

The opportunity has also been taken in accordance with current drafting practice to repeal the detailed provisions dealing with the publication of by-laws made by the Council of the National Trust and replace them by a reference to the appropriate section of the Acts Interpretation Act on the same subject.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Shaw, adjourned.

ELECTRICITY ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 16 March (see p. 5292).

Mr R. J. GIBBS (Wolston) (4.34 p.m.): The Bill before the Parliament is really an horrendous piece of legislation.

Mr Tenni interjected.

Mr R. J. GIBBS: I expected that type of reaction from the Minister. He knows that the seriousness of the legislation is far-reaching. By the very lack of support from the back bench of the National Party, it can be seen that the Minister has had severe problems even within his own party in convincing his colleagues to proceed with the legislation. The list of speakers to the Bill includes Mr Gilmore, Mr FitzGerald and Mr Newton, who are all extremely lightweight National Party members who are unable to put a point of view properly in this Parliament. As the afternoon proceeds, at the appropriate time I shall table documentation that will show that the Minister has had severe problems with his own members of the National Party in regard to the legislation.

The fact is that this legislation will effectively cost Queensland tax-payers more money. In some instances, it will place the lives of people working within the industry in this State in severe jeopardy. Of course, what the Bill will do—and this will be demonstrated very well by my colleague the member for Caboolture later—is remove a very specific and relevant section of the current legislation, which will result in the hiding of the future indebtedness of the QEC.

Everybody in this State knows that at present the Queensland Electricity Commission has debts in excess of $4.5 billion. The removal of these figures from future reports will make it extremely difficult to keep track of the financial accountability of the operations of that organisation.

Some months ago in this Parliament the Premier used words that are continuing to haunt him. He said that he had a "vision of excellence" for Queensland. The simple fact is that, with the introduction of this type of legislation, the vision of excellence is fast disappearing and, I believe, can now be compared to the watery dreams of a middle-aged bed-wetter.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Row): Order! I do not know whether the honourable member's comments are entirely parliamentary. I ask him to use some caution in his remarks from now on.

Mr R. J. GIBBS: Because of my high regard for you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will of course adhere to your excellent instruction.

I turn to the Minister's second-reading speech. In almost 11 years as a member of this Parliament, I have never before heard such an incredible opening to a Minister's second-reading speech. The Minister said—

> "I again remind the Opposition that, if contractors are in any doubt about the quality and safety of their work, they can pay their own electricity board to have one of its installation inspectors check their work or pay another contractor authorised by the board to do so."

That in itself is an absolutely shocking admission at the introductory stage of legislation, before it is even passed.

The Minister, who has publicly championed this Bill, is already conceding that there are shonky operators within the industry who cannot even be held responsible for their own work. Let there be no doubt that that is a point of view that is shared far and wide throughout Queensland.

I want to read a little snippet from the *Twin Cities Advertiser* of a couple of weeks ago. It states—

> "Fatalities and injuries in Townsville resulting from electrical accidents are likely to increase when new government legislation is introduced.
>
> The legislation means inspections of electrical systems in new buildings will no longer be carried out by government installation inspectors.
>
> Instead the electrical contractors themselves will be responsible for the safety of their work.
>
> *Advertiser* journalist Michael McKinnon spoke to a local electrical contractor with more than 40 years experience in the business about the issue.
>
> 'The minister has now said installation inspectors will be phased out and this is purely for economic reasons,' the contractor said.
>
> 'The Minister has said that, as contractors and installation inspectors both have the same qualifications, he sees no reason to have inspectors.' "

That is not correct. They do not both have the same qualifications. The article continues—

> " 'Once contractors know they are under no obligation to pass an inspection there will be shonky work done'."

There will be shonky work done.

I can compare the problems with some sections of this legislation with the problems that I revealed last year in this Parliament in relation to the Builders Registration Board in Queensland. The end result of a comparison is horrendous, to say the least. At least when I revealed that scandalous state of affairs within the building industry, one could say that it was not a case of lives being put at risk. However, the end result in this instance is simply that people face the real risk of being fried on the job. That is not an exaggeration.

He goes on to say—

> " 'The rule book will become redundant—anyone who wants to cheat can.'

'One contractor has said that, as a result of the phasing out of inspections, he will have to buy test equipment for the first time—it is unbelievable'."

That virtually says it all about the views being shared in relation to this particular piece of legislation.

The Minister is known as a person who does not have a high regard for, or any desire to work closely with, the trade union movement. I guess that the next comments I make will probably be of no concern or shock news to him. However, I believe that the people of Queensland should be aware of the attitude of the organisations.

On 18 March this year, at a meeting held between the Electrical Trades Union, the Electrical Contractors Association, which certainly cannot be described as a supportive body either of the trade union movement or of the Australian Labor Party, Mr John McGee from the Municipal Officers Association—although it is a registered union, one would have to say that in the normal course of events it is not a union that could in any way be described as radical—and Mr Jim Foote from the Institution of Electrical Inspectors, the following statement was made—

"Collectively, we have concerns over a number of the proposed changes to the Act and believe they will lead to:—

— A lowering of safety standards in our Industry due to loss of independent inspectors and other proposed changes.

— A lowering of quality standards at which electrical work is performed due to allowing people other than trained electrical tradespeople to perform certain work.

— Serious effects on the viability of some electrical businesses due to giving away to other industries, work traditionally performed by such businesses.

— An increase in demarcation disputes between building industry and electrical industry employees.

— Greater costs to the public due to inspection work previously performed by Electricity Authorities having to be performed by electrical contractors."

They are not my words. They are the words of four responsible organisations within the electricity industry that represent a broad ambit of very qualified people within that industry. They are qualified to make judgments on the desirability of the amendments proposed.

It is interesting to note that in his second-reading speech the Minister made the point that the way in which the electrical inspectors will be used will ensure that a saving of $6m will be passed on to Queenslanders in the form of lower electricity charges. Every Queenslander who pays an electricity bill every three months knows that that is a total misrepresentation of the facts. It is all very well for the Minister to make the point in this Chamber that electricity charges in this State will be increased by only half the movement in the CPI. I would think that any Government would be able to give that guarantee. In the last eight years in this State, electricity-consumers have seen increases in electricity charges ranging from eight to 11 per cent. It has only been in recent times that that formula has been able to be struck. The simple fact is that the saving of $6m will not be passed on to Queensland tax-payers, as the Minister promised. The simple fact is that, with the incredible $4½ billion indebtedness of the Queensland Electricity Commission at present, the interest charges alone are costing tax-payers and electricity-consumers in this State millions of dollars each year. That is a simple fact of life.

As I said, the Bill is not designed on a basis of responsible industrial relations and it is not designed in the best interests of Queensland. The Bill sets out what the Minister proposes. For example, the Minister proposes that construction work—that is, the assembling, the altering, the repairing or adapting of electrical articles—and construction for and on behalf of an electricity authority be carried out by non-qualified people.

The Minister says that people in the building industry, for example, are now qualified to carry out work that, in the past, was carried out by qualified people within the electricity industry. The simple fact is that nobody can guarantee the quality of work that is performed by persons who are employed in the construction of electrical towers, the laying of cables or even ducting simply because there will be a person or persons acting in a supervisory capacity over them. That has been proved in the past.

In his second-reading speech, the Minister acknowledged the fact that demarcation disputes that have taken place within the industry in the past have often been the responsibility of the employer and the Government. However, the recipe that the Minister is laying before Parliament this afternoon will exacerbate the demarcation problems within the industry.

The Minister should not kid himself for one minute that those people who are currently employed in the industry and who have been responsible for that type of construction work for many years will suddenly give up their right to carry out that type of work. That simply will not happen. This recipe will lead to future problems within the industry.

The Minister said that people who come from interstate or another Commonwealth country such as New Zealand will not now be required to undergo a test in Queensland to determine their competence. By and large, it can be said that, to a certain degree, people within the industry in Australia are fairly highly competent. In that regard, I see no problems for people in Australia. However, I believe that the Minister is heading in the wrong direction in relation to the people who come from New Zealand, for example. It is well known that the standard of electrical training and the safety standards in New Zealand are not equal to the high standards that exist in Australia.

Mr Tenni: It has a Labor Government.

Mr R. J. GIBBS: It does not matter whether or not New Zealand has a Labor Government. It does not matter what Government is in power. It must be remembered that New Zealand has had more conservative Governments than it has had Labor Governments.

Many of the people who come to Australia from New Zealand do not have the high qualifications necessary and required for some of the work that is undertaken in the industry. There is a responsibility on all State Governments in Australia and a very urgent need for Ministers representing the electricity-supply industry to have a round-table discussion and ensure that a standard licensing system exists Australiawide. The licensing system in Queensland is different from that in New South Wales which, in turn, is different from the system in Tasmania. A licensing system applies in every State. For many years, the electricity industry and, in particular, the Electrical Trades Union have been campaigning for a standard system of licensing in Australia. Immediate action must be taken on that aspect.

I have already mentioned the amendment of section 32, which relates to financial statements. Why is the legislation being amended in such a way that the indebtedness that is currently carried by the Queensland Electricity Commission will no longer appear in annual reports? What is the reason for hiding it? Is it now starting to cause some problems for the Government and the Premier, with his vision of excellence? As we draw closer to a State election next year, is the Government getting nervous? Is it because the Government realises that the way in which the funds of the QEC have been handled—or perhaps one should say "mishandled"—will prove to be an embarrassment? Is that why it is being hidden? When this Parliament finally receives a public accounts committee and is able to demand the right to investigate those specific aspects, what will this Government's attitude be? As I said, that is something that will be touched on shortly by my very erstwhile and competent colleague the member for Caboolture.

The provision in the Bill that I find absolutely amazing is the one that relates to the amendment to section 36E—"Other powers of the Commission". Never before have I seen any legislation such as this, which says that the commission—

". . . with the prior approval of the Governor in Council, form or join in the formation of any company, firm, partnership or joint venture whereby the Commission as a condition of such formation or joining may—

(i) provide technical advice or undertake work that it is competent to provide or undertake;

(ii) subject to appropriation pursuant to the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977-1985, allocate moneys for the purposes of this paragraph;

and

(iii) receive moneys payable as a consequence of that formation or joining whether the moneys are payable for providing such advice or undertaking such work or they comprise a distribution of profits earned;".

I return to a point that I made in this House a number of weeks ago and a point that I also made in a number of radio and television interviews. The fact is that this legislation is the beginning of a move within the industry down that long road of privatisation. That is what it is about. Never before have I seen legislation which provides for a semi-Government body such as the QEC to be able to form its own private companies. If the QEC wishes, in cases in which it feels it is competent to do so, it will be able to buy into investment programs associated with other firms, research work or joint ventures. This almost reeks of the sort of irresponsible squandering of tax-payers' dollars that we have just seen by Suncorp, for example, which has blown in the vicinity of $150m of tax-payers' money on Ariadne shares, for which it paid almost $2 each and which are now, according to this morning's paper, on the market for 29c. Is this the sort of investment and the joint partnership that the QEC will be involving itself in? It is a horrendous move to even allow a semi-Government body to be able to participate in the market-place in that particular way. At a later time this evening the Opposition will certainly be opposing that section of the legislation.

Another aspect of the Bill which has caused a lot of consternation and concern of late is the provision relating to the membership of electricity boards themselves. I applaud the cutting-back, as it were, of the number of members of a board from eight to five. I also welcome the reduction in the meeting fees paid to those people. I have long held the belief that some of the meeting fees are too high. In probably the majority of cases the payment of money to people on boards for attending meetings is little more than an extension of jobs for the boys and girls of the National Party. It is designed specifically to spread the jobs around and to keep the troops within the rank and file of the party happy by allowing them to earn a few extra bucks. I welcome the fact that this legislation will rectify that.

It can be argued that local authorities should have the right to select their own representatives on the board. I believe that the Minister has to give some answers. The legislation states that the local authorities concerned must provide the Minister with a panel of five persons, from which he shall select two members who will be representatives.

Mr Tenni interjected.

Mr R. J. GIBBS: I am sure that the Mulgrave Shire Council and the board responsible in far-north Queensland would probably recommend Pyne if they were given the right to choose their own two representatives on the board. Local authorities should retain their autonomy and be able to appoint their own two people to the boards by way of consultation within the local authorities covered by their particular grid area.

The other members who constitute the board should include a representative of consumers and an employees' representative. For far too long a very deliberate move not to allow participation at those levels has been made in this State, particularly in relation to consumer representatives.

The Minister knows as well as I do that the major concern expressed to all honourable members through their electorate offices is legitimate concern about the administration of the electricity industry in this State. People have genuine complaints about their electricity costs. Every week I am contacted by people who query their electricity accounts and cannot afford to pay the bill. The majority of residents in my electorate are on low or fixed incomes. They cannot afford to pay their electricity bills on time and the end result is that their electricity is cut off.

When the final threat is issued, they usually shop around. Even though they might be only a day late in paying their account, their electricity supply is cut off. No extended period for payment is given to them on the very few occasions when it is needed. Electricity authority officers simply come out to their homes and cut the electricity supply off.

Mr Tenni: No they don't—the people are given time.

Mr R. J. GIBBS: They do. The people in my electorate are then faced with not only having to pay the outstanding account but also having to find the extra dollars to pay the darn reconnection fee. Of itself, that is a reason for having a consumers' representative on the board.

Mr FitzGerald: What does Telecom do?

Mr R. J. GIBBS: I concede that Telecom adopts the same dehumanising approach to customers. I believe that it is the wrong approach. I am not saying that the Opposition encourages people to go on for ever not paying their electricity accounts, but I am saying that the Government ought to have a better understanding of the financial problems that people in the community get themselves into.

No-one in the world can justify cutting off the electricity supply to a woman who is on her own, receives a fixed income and supports four or five children in a Housing Commission home. If such a woman cannot afford to pay her account on Friday, the electricity is usually cut off on Saturday morning. She is then liable to pay a reconnection fee when she can find the money. I know of women in my electorate in similar circumstances who have lived in their homes for up to two months in the dark, using hurricane lamps and cooking meals on a back-yard barbecue because they have not been able to pay the electricity account on time and the supply has been cut off without much warning. So there is a case for appointing a consumers' representative and an employees' representative to the board.

I share the concern of representatives of the industry about clause 35, which provides for repeal of the original section 175 and its replacement with a new section 175 titled "Responsibilities of Electricity Authorities, consumer and electrical contractor". All honourable members would be aware of the disaster that took place approximately two years ago at Beerwah. I assume that clause 35 has been proposed to cover what occurred at that time. Clause 35 reads in part—

> "(1) An Electricity Authority shall cause an installation inspector to inspect, in such manner as is prescribed, such electrical installation works as are prescribed . . .
>
> (3) A consumer—
>
> (a) shall ensure that his electrical installation, while it remains connected to the source of supply, is maintained free from any defect that is likely—
>
> (i) to cause a fire;
>
> or
>
> (ii) to cause a person to sustain an electric shock . . .
>
> and

(c) shall ensure that overhead lines that have been disconnected from the source of supply and that formed part of the consumer's electrical installation are—

(i) dismantled;

or

(ii) duly supervised and that the electrical and mechanical condition of the lines is effectively maintained."

I do not believe that the Government can place that responsibility onto consumers, that consumers should be given that type of responsibility. What the Minister is doing is cutting corners and endeavouring to save costs. The risk involved is the absolute reality that people will be killed.

The simple fact—and I make no apology for saying this—is that many members of the public do not understand the dangers that go along with electricity. This is something that I am fanatical about. I am lucky in that regard, because during my training as an apprentice boiler-maker, I was taught not to touch anything that required electrical repairs. I still do not do it in my own home, and I will not even replace an element in a jug. How many times have honourable members heard of people being electrocuted when doing that kind of home repair work? This Government cannot expect people to take this responsibility.

Mr FitzGerald: What about a light bulb?

Mr R. J. GIBBS: I will change a light bulb, but that is as far as my desire to be involved with electricity goes.

This matter of inspectors has to remain the responsibility of the relevant board in the area, and contractors or the public cannot be allowed to accept that responsibility. It goes without saying that it does not necessarily mean that accidents such as the shocking one that occurred at Beerwah will not occur. This accident happened when a power line came down in a creek. A young lad went into the creek and was electrocuted, and his friend went in after him and suffered the same fate.

As I said at the outset, I do not believe that this Government should take away the right of people to have electrical inspections carried out as they have been in the past, or that the Government should leave that responsibility with contractors. Clause 35, which covers the new section 175, states—

"(d) where in the course of carrying out electrical installation work on premises, an electrical contractor observes a fault in the installation that he considers hazardous—

(i) bring the fault to the notice of the consumer with a recommendation that it be remedied forthwith;".

This is a recipe for the rorters within the industry. It is similar to the situation of a person, who does not understand a great deal about the mechanics of a motor vehicle and takes his car into a service station. The proprietor puts the car up on the hoist and says, "Look, I think you need a new diff in the car", or other things are wrong with the car. Until he gets the bill, the customer does not know that he has been ripped off and rorted. This new section in the Act will allow the same kind of thing to happen, and those bandits within the electricity industry will take advantage of consumers by suggesting to them that unnecessary repairs should be carried out.

I come back to the point that I made right at the outset: in the Minister's own speech notes he stated—

"... if contractors are in doubt about the quality and safety of their own work, they can pay their own electricity board to have one of its installation inspectors check their work ..."

Here it is in the Bill in black and white—

> "An electrical contractor may perform on behalf of another electrical contractor the work of testing, to the extent and in the manner prescribed, electrical installation work that has been carried out by such other contractor . . ."

Why is this Government even allowing people to survive in the industry if they do not have the basic damn competence to check out and guarantee their own work? It has to be guaranteed. Why are such people allowed in the industry at the present time? The Minister admitted in his second-reading speech that within the industry there are incompetent people who can be responsible for linking up people's homes to the electricity supply but are not competent to carry out an electrical inspection of their own work.

Mr FitzGerald: He didn't say that at all.

Mr R. J. GIBBS: Of course he did. The honourable member can read the speech notes for himself, and read what is in the Bill.

I am not dramatising this matter, but the fact is that this is a recipe for people to be fried. In case the Minister thinks that that is an exaggeration, I remind him that, since the SEQEB dispute back in 1985 and since this Government has relaxed not only inspections but also certain other aspects associated with contractors, contractors who are now working in the industry are carrying out work that linesmen and other people were responsible for previously. On an average there have been five deaths a year in the industry. That compares with an average of two deaths per year within the industry before the regulations were relaxed. The figures speak for themselves.

Clause 38 provides for a new section 184, which deals with the qualification and authorisation of electrical mechanics to act as installation inspectors. I again make the point that I do not believe that people will be able to act competently in a supervisory capacity to be able to guarantee the work that previously has been carried out by qualified people within the industry.

Clause 53, which deals with modifications, will allow work done in small businesses, such as the construction or repairing of fans, electric toasters and that type of equipment, which previously was always carried out by qualified electricians employed by those companies, to be done by non-qualified people on the basis that at some time during the work they will be supervised. That will take away jobs from qualified people within the industry.

For a Government that on past occasions has let those lovely words "private enterprise" roll off the tongue and has expressed its love for the small-business community, I find it absolutely amazing that it has introduced this legislation, which will drive to the wall some very successful small businesses in this State. People within the industry are vitally concerned about the Bill because its provisions will mean that, in order to compete with others, they will have to sack the qualified people who are currently employed in their workshops and replace them with virtually non-qualified people—with process workers. In fact, the Minister's second-reading speech compares this sort of thing with people doing process work.

When will the people of this State see a responsible attitude to this sort of thing by the Government and by this Minister? The Minister speaks about his concern for the industry. Why does he not get into his ministerial car one morning and take a trip around Brisbane's flea markets? If he was really concerned about safety in the industry, one of the first things he would do with this legislation is ban totally the sale of any electrical goods at flea markets. I do not give a damn where the flea markets are, whether they be in my electorate or anywhere else. People should not be allowed to sell electrical goods at flea markets, because the fact is that usually they are junk that has not been inspected. Often the goods have wiring faults. I have seen bodgie jobs and home-made electrical goods. People purchasing such goods are looking for an absolute disaster. That sort of selling should be banned.

By introducing this sort of legislation, the Minister is really saying that this shoddy work is acceptable. It is a further lowering of the safety standards, when so many people in this State are dependent on the knowledge and the competence of people doing electrical work.

I wish to touch very briefly on the Queensland Electricity Supply Industry Employees' Superannuation Scheme. Later in the evening the member for Caboolture will go into it in an in-depth way. My concern about the scheme is that nowhere within the Bill can I find a provision for portability of superannuation rights. I am concerned about the preservation of rights of a person who is employed in the industry and moves from one job to another.

If that person leaves the Queensland Electricity Commission and goes to work for a private contractor, the Government has a responsibility. I do not care whether it is introduced by a Labor or a conservative Government; a national superannuation scheme should be operating in this country. It is a disgrace that no Government has had the intestinal fortitude to introduce such a scheme. There should be within the electrical industry portability of people's superannuation entitlements, as exists currently in the building trades industry. In that industry, people moving from job to job carry that superannuation entitlement with them.

For far too long, we have heard of people who have been employed in an industry for up to 45 years of their working life paying into a superannuation scheme and, when they leave that job, they take the money and spend it, and then they have to start again. As a consequence, when they retire, they leave the work-force on a pittance. It disappoints me that the legislation does not provide for portability.

It is time that the Minister sat down with his Government—this Ahern vision of excellence—and started to take a responsible look—I emphasise the word "responsible"—at the problems still being experienced by a host of people in this State who were dismissed from the industry in 1985 and who lost their superannuation entitlement.

I wish to read into *Hansard* a letter that was sent to Mr Ahern by the secretary of the Electrical Trades Union. It states—

"Dear Sir,

I have noted your stated intention of taking a fresh approach to matters of Government in this State.

It is with this in mind that I request you to arrange for an investigation into the effects on the S.E.Q.E.B. workers, who were sacked in February, 1985, caused by their loss of employment and consequent loss of substantial Superannuation entitlements, with a view to where appropriate correcting any injustices.

I stress it is not a costly major inquiry that I request but a one person investigation over at most a couple of months, which would be likely I suggest, after consultation with all parties, including sacked workers who to this day have not been able to obtain other employment, and individuals/groups in the community such as the group sponsored by several major Churches who have been attending to the social problems resulting from the dispute, establish that grave hardship has befallen some of those so hastily dealt with in the heat of the dispute.

My perception of the effects on some of the people involved is that a bitterness and hatred of all Government decisions/Organisations has developed in people who previously respected and supported the role of Government in the community. I believe the dispute will never be 'put to bed' unless matters such as those to which I refer are addressed and satisfactory efforts made to correct any injustices which have caused major hardship to some of the victims.

One area which could be addressed by such an inquiry is the possibility of the payment of the employers contribution to the Queensland Electricity Supply Industry Superannuation Fund up to the time of the employees dismissals. The Scheme Fund could, I believe, make such a payment without affecting its viability. The Rules of the Fund are such that on dismissal the employees effected received only

their personal contributions with minimal interest which meant a substantial financial windfall for the Fund reserves due to the employers contributions previously received on behalf of the dismissed employees being simply retained in the fund. As you are aware the latest Occupational Superannuation Schemes that comply. . ."

He continues with other matters.

That is an honest approach by a trade union secretary who is concerned about the future of the people whom he represents. He even went to the extent, in other correspondence addressed to the Minister for Mines and Energy, of acknowledging the fact that there was some irresponsibility on behalf of the trade union movement at that particular time. He does not try to hide that. I point out that he was not the secretary of the union during the period of that disputation. He acknowledges that there were problems in regard to communications and that there were some break-downs.

I am astounded that after a responsible and, I might say, refreshing approach by a trade union to a Minister of the Crown, a smutty, dirty, irresponsible reply could be sent to the secretary of the union by the Minister.

Honourable members should listen to what the Minister had to say. The Minister is a man who, I believe, adopts an irresponsible approach to industrial relations. He does not realise the hardship and misery that has been caused to thousands of families and young kids in this State. The Minister's letter states—

"Dear Mr. Henricks,

You requested that the Government give special consideration to ex South East Queensland Electricity Board employees who had long service and therefore were considerably disadvantaged by their own and your Union's action at the time of the 1985 Electricity Dispute.

While I can understand the position these people find themselves in and their concern over the way they threw away their jobs"—

that is garbage—

"and potential superannuation benefits,"—

that is garbage—

"I am also mindful of their callous treatment of the people of Queensland as they pursued their own selfish self interest.

Through the actions of your Union and these men the people of Queensland were deprived of the essential service of electricity for long periods of time."

Mr Tenni interjected.

Mr R. J. GIBBS: When I want the Minister to interject, I will rattle the can. The letter continues—

"Heavy losses were incurred; businesses were forced to close and many people who were innocent victims of your Union's and its members' actions lost their jobs and livelihoods while others suffered in many ways.

How do you suggest that the people who were so badly damaged by the selfish industrial wilfulness of your union and these men obtain the rightful restoration of their losses?

It seems your Union and these men still have no understanding of what they did. When your Union demonstrates how it will compensate the innocent victims of our community for their losses I shall be happy to propose to Cabinet that the superannuation benefits which these men would have had if they worked responsibly to retirement be restored."

I find that to be an absolutely diabolical reply to a person who approached the Minister in a responsible manner, who acknowledged that there have been problems in the industry, who said to the Minister, "Look, let's get the cards on the table. Let's sit down and consider the problems of these people who lost their jobs, who were dismissed."

I think it is worth while reiterating the fact that the black-outs in the industry actually commenced some two days after all those people were dismissed. That was when the black-outs occurred. It was not those people who were sacked, who were put out of work, who lost their superannuation entitlements, who were responsible for the black-outs in the industry.

I go back to the very first point that I make, that is, that this Bill is an indictment on this Government. It verifies the point that I have made. There must be a lack of support in the Minister's own party if the Government can get only three back-benchers to make a contribution to the debate.

I suppose that Mr Gilmore will read from a brief which will have been prepared for him by officers of the Minister's department. Our poor friend Magilla the Gorilla on the other side is a nice fellow but he cannot put two words together. He will have to read from a prepared brief. And, of course, our little friend Ginger Meggs will rant and rave, using a brief that he has received from the New Right.

Mr Sherrin: Isn't it disgraceful?

Mr R. J. GIBBS: It may be disgraceful, but the honourable member can sort that out with his keeper Pastor Klimionok at the Christian breakfast tomorrow morning.

I said that I would prove that the Minister has had major problems with this legislation within the back bench of the National Party. I seek leave to table a copy of a letter written by Mr Martin Tenni. I have removed the back-bencher's name from the top of it so that I will not embarrass him. The letter was written to all National Party back-bench MPs and refers to the Minister's proposal to amend the Electricity Act 1976-1986 in respect of the responsibilities of electrical contractors. The Minister wrote the letter because he was under great pressure to do so. He had so many problems with this legislation within his own party room that it necessitated his writing to his own back-bench members who were receiving complaints from the local authorities and the electricity boards in country electorates. He could not stand the pressure, so he wrote the letter.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Row): Order! The honourable member may table the letter.

Whereupon the honourable member laid the document on the table.

Mr R. J. GIBBS: The Opposition opposes the legislation in toto. As I said at the outset, it is a recipe for disaster that will in the long run lead to increased charges for electricity-consumers in Queensland. It will mean a drastic and dramatic break-down in safety standards. It will cost jobs both within the QEC and private-enterprise small business in the community. The Opposition will not be supporting the legislation. I shall speak to the clauses later.

Mr GILMORE (Tablelands) (5.22 p.m.): I am cut to the quick to think that the honourable member for Wolston thought that I was a lightweight. The very first thing he said when he stood up was, "Mr Gilmore, the member for Tablelands, is a lightweight." I say to the honourable member for Wolston that I am cut to the quick.

There are several aspects of the Bill that I would like to cover briefly.

Mr Sherrin: He speaks to his own people like that, so don't worry about that.

Mr GILMORE: I am aware of that.

Mr Prest: Little rig.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Prest: Little rig.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member for Port Curtis to withdraw his comment about a member in this Chamber.

Mr PREST: I most definitely will. I am sorry.

Mr GILMORE: I took to heart one of the comments made by the honourable member for Wolston. Having called me a lightweight, he then said that the honourable member for Caboolture was a very erstwhile friend of his.

Mr R. J. Gibbs: I didn't say that at all.

Mr GILMORE: The honourable member did. It will be reported in *Hansard.* For the information of the honourable member, I point out to him that "erstwhile" means previous or past. I wonder what the honourable member for Caboolture has done to him.

Mr Prest: Are you talking to the Chair or having an argument?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Chair will determine that matter.

Mr GILMORE: The honourable member made reference to the extra cost of the proposal. There will be no extra cost; rather, there will be some considerable savings to the electricity-consumers of Queensland.

I noted that on a couple of occasions the honourable member for Wolston said that lives would be lost. He seems to have dreamt up a series of scenarios in which thousands of people will be lying electrocuted in homes and in streets throughout Queensland simply because of the changes that are proposed to the Act. Experience does not bear that out.

Mr R. J. Gibbs: Why has there been a 150 per cent increase in deaths since 1985? Since you put contractors out in the industry!

Mr GILMORE: When I want the honourable member to interject, I will rattle the tin.

Statistics relating to the supply of electricity in Queensland do not reveal that the people who are involved in the installation of electricity are "shonky". That was the word that was used by the honourable member. If he cares to look behind him on the Opposition benches, he will see several members who were involved in the electricity industry before they came into this Chamber. I wonder which members he would like to point out as being shonky. I am quite sure that he could point out some of them.

This National Party Government trusts the tradesmen of this State. It has chosen to say to them, "If you are going to proceed to wire homes in this State, then we will believe that you will provide a worthwhile service to the people you are serving." If those people do not turn out to be worth while, this legislation includes penalties that will guarantee the situation.

The honourable member for Wolston mentioned a newspaper article in which it was stated that, for the first time in his life, one contractor was required to purchase some testing equipment. I would have thought that that was a clear demonstration of how this legislation will do exactly what this Government says that it will do. The electrical contractors of this State will have to purchase testing equipment and test the work that they carry out. In that way they will be able to guarantee the quality of their work.

This Government has also been careful to include some guarantees in the legislation. If a contractor is unsure of a particular situation, he can employ a fellow-contractor to test his work. Surely to goodness, if two contractors test the very same work, that will achieve a reasonable result.

If the owner of premises decides that he wants the electrical work tested, he can request a board inspector to do so. This Government is not getting rid of board inspectors; it is simply reducing the volume of work for which they are responsible. They will still be responsible for the testing of work that is undertaken from the power supply to the

switchboard. That is the responsibility of the boards that provide electricity to the people of Queensland, and that testing will continue to be their responsibility.

The honourable member expressed concern about the costs that will flow to consumers from this legislation. In the first year, approximately $6m will be returned to the consumers of this State. The honourable member asserted that that would not be the case; that that money would not be saved. That is a ridiculous assertion. Queensland has the most modern power-generating and distribution system in Australia. Within a couple of years, Queensland will be able to provide to Queenslanders the cheapest electricity of any mainland State. That is what this Government has been aiming for and that is where we are going. That $6m will be returned to the electricity-consumers of Queensland. This will speed up—not slow down—the reduction in power costs. In terms of what this Government is doing for the electricity-consumers of this State—there is very little that the Opposition can snivel about.

The honourable member went on to say that he was obsessed with electricity and electrical safety. I have already mentioned the multitude of scenarios that he dreamed up in which people were electrocuted. It does not seem to be reasonable for any Government not to trust its people. One of the great features of a National Party Government is that it trusts its people. One of the great features of a socialist Government is that it cannot trust its people. This Government is trusting the electrical contractors of this State to go out and do the right thing; to guarantee the work that they are expected to do.

I now address a couple of points regarding the Bill. The Bill will take away the necessity for compulsory inspection and it will cover many of the things that I have already mentioned. When an electrical contractor is trained in his work, he learns to apply his mind to electrical applications and to put wires into houses, and he is deemed to be competent to do so. A while ago the honourable member argued that electrical contractors are not competent. They are; they are undoubtedly competent. Indeed, this legislation is landmark legislation that is designed to deregulate this industry. This Government is heading towards the deregulation of many industries and of Government regulations throughout the State. The contractors of Queensland can hold their heads up high. Statistically, the application of their work is as safe as that of any other electrical contractors in the world. They are professional in what they do. Indeed, they are trustworthy.

The second phase of the Bill that I would like to discuss deals with the construction of power lines by persons who are not qualified in the electrical industry. In recent times, as honourable members are aware, in Queensland some quite incredible developments have taken place in the electrical generation and transmission industry. They have involved the construction of large transmission lines over very long distances. Those transmission lines are built on pylons of steel which are set in concrete. They are properly constructed by people in the rigging industry rather than the electrical industry. It is my view that that work is a construction, not an electrical installation. There is no reason to believe that persons who are not qualified in the electrical industry cannot reasonably be trained not only to construct a pylon but also to hang the wires on it. This Bill allows for that to happen, because it clearly qualifies who can do what and why. It also outlines that, in the case of deactivated power lines, riggers can go in and repair damage that is caused by cyclones or other disasters. They can restore those power lines quickly and effectively. That is a most important part of this legislation.

Recently, that type of power line was constructed in my electorate. It came from the south and terminated just south of the town of Mareeba. I know some of the people who worked on the construction of that power line. I am aware of the quality of the work that they were doing and of the difficult circumstances under which they had to carry out the work.

Over the years, one of the great features of the electrical industry in Queensland has been union disputation as well as demarcation disputes between various unions. This Bill sets out to stop that sort of thing.

Another matter that I want to raise concerns some rearrangements that are currently being made to the generation of power in my electorate. They involve two hydroelectric schemes that are either in my electorate or bordering it. They are the Kareeya power scheme on the Tully River and the Barron Falls hydroelectric scheme at the bottom of the Barron Falls. I commend the Minister because he has dragged that particular section of the electricity generating industry kicking and screaming into the 1980s. He did his sums and found that the way that the industry was being operated was totally inefficient insofar as it was operated manually. The Minister has now chosen to spend a considerable sum on capital equipment to turn those two power stations into fully computerised operations.

Mr Smyth: To put people out of work.

Mr GILMORE: That will save the electricity-consumers of this State $1.5m in a full year. The honourable member for Bowen said that it will put people out of work. I will take him up on that matter. In fact, I am very pleased that he raised it. Not one person will be displaced out of all the people who are employed at those two power stations in the area surrounding the top of the Barron Falls—the area that has been so badly affected by World Heritage listing. The people employed in that area will continue the maintenance and operation of the Koombooloomba Dam. The people who have been affected are operating the Kareeya and Barron Gorge hydroelectric scheme.

Mr Smyth: Is the hydro scheme in your electorate?

Mr GILMORE: The hydroelectric station is just outside.

Mr Smyth: I'll bet it is!

Mr GILMORE: I point out to the honourable member that the people affected have been given 18 months' notice of dislocation in employment and have been offered employment in other parts of the State. They have been offered either retraining or redundancy packages. It is their choice: they can relocate; they can stay in employment if they so desire. That is the way that the Minister manages his portfolio. He is doing an incredibly good job. I believe that the Minister's achievements associated with this Bill will be recorded in the annals of the power industry in Queensland as a landmark piece of legislation.

Mr SMYTH (Bowen) (5.37 p.m.): I rise to join in this debate to oppose the legislation that is intended to cut costs in the industry—according to the Minister. The only cost-cutting that is clear to me is what has become typical of the State Government over the last 15 years; that is, a cut in the work-force in that industry.

The history of the electricity industry in Queensland is one of different scenarios that have occurred throughout the Bjelke-Petersen era. I notice that the Ahern Government has not changed the effects of those scenarios. I look back to the time when the State Electricity Commission furnished a report recommending Millmerran as the best site for a power station.

I intend to point out the reasons why Queensland consumers are paying so much more for electricity. When I refer to "consumers" I am referring to ordinary domestic consumers and not to the large industrial consumers who tend to enjoy a favourable position at the hands of this National Party Government.

In 1978, the *Sunday Sun* published the following article—

> "Secret Power File Says . . . MILLMERRAN
>
> Queensland's $1000 million power station seems certain to be built at Millmerran, on the Darling Downs.
>
> A confidential State Electricity report recommending the town will be presented to Cabinet on Tuesday."

In 1978, the Honourable Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen debated the issue in Cabinet. A number of articles on the issue were published in the press. Sir Joh did not want the power station to be constructed at Millmerran, even though construction at that site would have saved the State a considerable sum.

Mr FitzGerald: Where was the water going to come from for that project at Millmerran?

Mr SMYTH: The facilities required by various power stations are provided when the power stations are built.

Mr FitzGerald: Was it going to be pumped from the town or was the water to be pumped from the underground aquifer?

Mr SMYTH: I will take the interjection made by the honourable member for Lockyer. Another report that was published on 10 February 1978 appeared under the heading, "Queensland power game hots up as CRA puts case before Government". The $1,000m for Millmerran was an estimate. It was stated that a power station at Tarong would cost $110m less than one at Millmerran over a period of 30 years. The article stated that this was an estimate, but one that had been prepared by the best consultants available in Australia, although the author refused to name the firm, which is fairly typical. The article went on to state—

> "... the 50 page, green covered State Electricity Commission's report in a table number 7, headed 'Table of relative costs of alternative power stations including effects of future escalation,' stated the Millmerran proposal would be $257 million cheaper than the CRA sponsored proposal at Tarong."

The honourable member for Tablelands has just said that the National Party Government trusts its employees. I take it that he is referring to its departmental employees. The Government therefore trusted their figure and did not listen to the advice of CRA. That is what it should have done.

However, as time went on, the Premier got his way. A further article stated that there would be a $70m saving if a power station was built at Millmerran. Later it was discovered that electricity from Millmerran would be dear, but not as dear as it was from Tarong.

The Tarong Power Station was built in an area next to the Premier's electorate and at that time a headline in the *Courier-Mail* dated 14 February 1978 stated—

> "Tarong, but it's wrong says Camm".

If departments are being paid by Queensland tax-payers to establish which way the Government of the day should go, why does the Government not take any notice of them? At that time I imagine that that statement by Mr Camm would have been very embarrassing for the public service and for Mr Camm himself. The article goes on to state—

> "State Cabinet yesterday named Tarong as its choice for Queensland's super powerhouse, but the Mines and Energy Minister (Mr. Camm) said it should have chosen Millmerran."

Great stuff. I wonder what the present Minister's position on that matter was at that time?

Mr Tenni: I will tell you later.

Mr SMYTH: Why not now?

Another heading in the *Courier-Mail* dated 16 February 1978 states—

> "Joh has leases near mine."

Over the last 15 years the Queensland people have had to pay for decisions that were made by this National Party Government which cost the State more money simply because the decisions favoured National Party electorates and National Party friends

and sponsors. It is clear that the former Premier and his family company held five mining leases around Tarong where the power station was to be built.

The honourable member for Tablelands stated earlier that the power supply to the north was fully catered for through trestles and lines. The Minister may not know it, but the line west of Rockhampton through to Collinsville is either on a single trestle or a single line. If one takes into consideration the number of natural disasters that occur in Queensland, such as cyclones, the north of the State could be without power for months if a cyclone was to damage those power lines. Earlier today in this House I asked a question about this problem. I do not believe that the Minister answered the question. We continually hear the Minister making accusations against workers in the industry.

Mr Tenni: When did you hear that? Give me an example.

Mr SMYTH: Mr Tenni made a statement in the Townsville press last week about the Collinsville power workers. He said that they had had two years to find themselves a job and that they could go, that he is not particularly worried about the people in the industry.

Mr Tenni: Was that in the *Townsville Bulletin?*

Mr SMYTH: Yes.

Mr Tenni: I haven't spoken to them for nine months and I will not. If it is in there, you or someone else put it in.

Mr SMYTH: I think the Minister is doing his usual side-step.

Two Ministers come from north Queensland, Mr Katter Jnr and Mr Tenni.

Mr Tenni: It is "Tenni", not "Tinnie".

Mr SMYTH: I am sorry. Personally, I cannot see the difference.

Mr Prest: Just because he makes a hell of a noise, he is not tinny.

Mr SMYTH: It is usually empty vessels that make the most sound.

I am speaking about cost-saving in the industry. The State Government has done nothing towards compensating the people in the industry. It has not brought out any further package for the workers who have been sacked already or who will be sacked in the future. The QEC is sticking strictly to award conditions in the industry. It is not about to pay any additional funds.

In fact, the QEC is moving houses away from Collinsville. The Government talks about saving costs for the people of Queensland, yet the QEC is moving houses by truck from that community to other parts of the State. Two weeks after the 1986 election, houses were still being built and painted for the QEC in Collinsville. However, all of a sudden the Government of the day decided to close the power station.

Previous to that the former Minister, Mr Ivan Gibbs, made a statement to business people and other members of the Collinsville community that the station would not close for another 10 years or so and that it was viable at that time. On that basis the business people in Collinsville and Bowen invested up to $3m in shopping facilities. Less than six months after they had done that, the Government said that it would close down the power station. Ministers say continually that they are looking after the little people and the small-business people. In his reply, I would like to hear the Minister's comments on that point.

Mr Tenni: When we close the powerhouse down, are you saying that that closes down the town? The coal-miners, the gold-miners and all the rest of them are going to shoot through, are they?

Mr SMYTH: I will come to that later.

The Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs, as he was then, wrote to Mr Ivan Gibbs about the people in Collinsville. He said—

> "The people I spoke to consider it is ridiculous that a Government which has firm policies on decentralisation should adopt such a centralised policy in regard to power generation."

This letter is written by a comrade of the Minister for Mines and Energy. It continues—

> "They have pointed out that when Tarong came on stream there was, they understand, excess power capacity but with the extension of business in Queensland, this slack has now been taken up. Furthermore, they firmly believe that you as Minister in 1984 promised the business people that the power station would be operable for at least another ten years and based on these promises business people have made investments in town."

The Minister, Mr Lester, wrote the following letter to a Mr D. Holloway of Collinsville—

"Dear Des,

> I do appreciate the time you took to outline to me your concern for the future of the Collinsville Power Station. I certainly appreciate your views and know how I would feel if my livelihood was at stake."

No doubt he would; but he does not live in Collinsville. The letter continues—

> "I have spoken to Ivan Gibbs and also have sent him a strong letter of which I enclose a copy and I do hope that through all our efforts the town of Collinsville will look forward to a bright future as one of the power generation centres for Queensland.
>
> Again, many thanks for taking the time to come and see me and as soon as I recieve a reply from Mr. Gibbs I shall be in contact with you."

It is obvious that, if the reply did arrive, it did not tell the truth.

Mr Hayward: What is the date of the letter?

Mr SMYTH: The date of the letter is 9 October 1986.

Mr Ardill: Just before the election.

Mr SMYTH: The election was in the first week of November of that year. On 17 November, about six weeks after the letter was written, the Minister made the announcement that the power station would close.

Mr Hayward: That is 17 days after the election.

Mr SMYTH: That is 17 days.

Mr Tenni: Are you saying that he is following in Hawke's footsteps? That is what Hawke does. I cannot believe that of the Minister.

Mr SMYTH: I cannot believe that in this State we have a Minister who can only follow one line. He has a limited thought process. He refers to the Federal Labor Government all the time and tries to pass the buck.

I would like to see the State Government take up the issue at Collinsville and compensate the workers who are staying within the industry until 14 October this year, and also compensate the community——

Mr Tenni: They don't have to.

Mr SMYTH: The Minister says that they do not have to; but what choice have they got?

Mr Tenni: If there are other positions available in the electricity industry and they wish to take up those, they don't have to stop at Collinsville.

Mr SMYTH: That is typical of the planning——

Mr Tenni interjected.

Mr SMYTH: The Collinsville Power Station workers have also been taken out of a job. That is typical of the lack of planning by the Minister and his Government. They should have been planning 15 years ago for a power station to be re-established at Collinsville. They keep saying that a power station has a life of only 20 years. However, what planning has the Government done? The only planning that was carried out when Bjelke-Petersen was in power was a brush-off with his mates about whose electorate the power station would be constructed in. That has been proved time and time again in this State. The Government does not bother planning for the future. All it does is look at where it will construct the next facility.

It is all right for Mr Tenni to say that the workers can pick up their goods and chattels and move on to the next place of employment. Those workers have families, friends and social ties within the community, which is what makes a community. However, it is hard for Mr Tenni to understand that. He has a ridiculous attitude.

The State Government should do what the Federal Labor Government is doing for the people in the timber industry in north Queensland. It should be compensating the local workers and assisting with transportation, if necessary. It should also be compensating the local community.

The Bowen Shire Council is very concerned about its finances for the next few years. It is concerned as to how it will obtain funds if many of the tenants of dwellings in Collinsville leave the area. Because of the number of workers who have left Collinsville, the council's budget has been halved.

Mr Tenni and his Government have nothing in common with the working people of this State. All they do is use the workers to the best advantage, abuse them and then make sure that they look after their own. I do not mean that they look after small-business people or working people.

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (5.56 p.m.): I have pleasure in joining the debate. I make the point that the comments made by the previous speaker were not very relevant to the Bill. However, I am afraid that some of the points that he made need to be commented upon. The people who read the speeches made in this place should know that there is another point of view on some of these matters.

The honourable member for Bowen delved into the past. He went back to 1976, and the argument about siting the power station—Millmerran versus Tarong.

Mr Ardill: That was before your time.

Mr FITZGERALD: A gentleman in the background—no, I will not say "gentleman"; a person—said that it was before my time. I happen to live in the Toowoomba region. I represent part of Toowoomba. I am well aware of the political events that occurred at that time.

The honourable member for Bowen made quite a story out of the fact that the Minister responsible for electricity and the rest of the Cabinet had opposing views at that time. He read out some headlines from the newspapers. I do not see why the fact that a Minister had a view different from that of the rest of the Cabinet should disturb the general public. I suppose it was disturbing to the party in power that headlines were run on the front page of newspapers.

The Minister responsible for electricity had a responsibility, as he saw it, to put forward a case. The Cabinet then had a responsibility, in the overall planning of the State, to have regard to resources and how those resources should be distributed.

I challenged the member for Bowen on a couple of occasions. I asked him where the water was coming from in the Millmerran proposal. I am fairly certain that the Electricity Commission found the cheapest water that it could find in the area. I believe

that it did not come from the Clarence River scheme. My recollection is that the water was going to be drawn from underground.

The western downs could have been completely dewatered by supplying water to a water-cooled power station. At that stage the Government was not aware of the air-cooled power station, which uses about a tenth of the water that a water-cooled power station uses. That is a South African innovation. I think that the Government at the time should have considered the future use of the water.

I also think that the Government should have considered the use of the coal and the quality of the coal. The Millmerran coal was a high-quality coal. It had uses other than just thermal use on the site. Some of that coal was exported overseas for testing to see whether it could be converted into petroleum products.

The coal at Tarong was considered. The Tarong coal has quite a high ash content. It was certainly not suitable to transport overseas. If one looks at the ash dams that are outside the Tarong Power Station, one realises that as the coal is burnt it leaves quite a large residue.

Cabinet as a whole has a responsibility to consider the overall use of our natural resources. The electricity industry is very important. However, if the Government is able to supply electricity and maintain a resource for another use, it has a responsibility to do so. That is the way I see it.

I am very interested in the Tarong Power Station because my electorate almost takes in the power station. A lot of the workers who constructed that power station lived in the beautiful little country town of Yarraman. I represent a great deal of the Toowoomba area and many workers from Toowoomba went to the Tarong area to work. They would have also gone to the Millmerran area to work. So I was often interested in the comparisons between the two sites.

The honourable member for Bowen may not be aware that a power station that has the capacity to generate 1 400 megawatts uses something of the order of 28 000 to 30 000 megalitres of water per year. I understand that that is about the annual consumption of Rockhampton and Toowoomba combined. That quantity of water is actually evaporated; it goes up into the air.

When a fresh-water evaporation cooled thermal power station is being used, I think that water consumption is a major consideration. I do not believe that the member for Bowen even had a clue that that is the quantity of water that is actually used each year when the power station is producing electricity at capacity.

Those matters have very little relevance to this Bill. However, I thought that I should take this opportunity to respond to the member for Bowen's comments.

Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr FITZGERALD: Before the dinner recess I referred to some matters relating to the siting of the power stations that were raised by the honourable member for Bowen. I now direct my remarks to some comments made by the Opposition spokesman. The matter of safety that he raised is a subject that is of concern to electricity-consumers in premises that are not inspected by electricity authorities. It is proposed that electricity authority inspectors will not be required to inspect work that is carried out in domestic and other premises before the electricity supply is connected. To many electricity-consumers that appears to be a weakening of the safety controls in the electricity industry. I know that people can be easily alarmed by such a matter.

I listened intently to the speech by the member for Wolston. He referred to a document in which four different groups had expressed their concerns on this issue. I listened intently because I thought that he would come up with some statistics on accidents that have occurred because of the failure of inspectors to detect faulty workmanship. The honourable member would probably be aware that, when an extension is made to an existing dwelling, the work is not required to be inspected by the electricity authority before the electricity connection is made. In other words, if extension work is

carried out on a house or a small building, the work does not need to be inspected by an electricity industry inspector before the electricity connection is made. It is presumed that the responsibility for the safety of the work that has been carried out rests with the contractor who did the job.

For the life of me, I thought that the honourable member for Wolston would have pointed out areas in which that system had failed and that he would have quoted the statistics on the number of accidents that had occurred as a result of faulty workmanship. I do not doubt that, at times, the work of some people in the electricity industry is not safe. However, the onus or responsibility is always on their shoulders, and it always should be. If the honourable member had been able to demonstrate to us that there was a problem with the existing arrangement, the Government would probably have taken those comments on board and said that that would not be possible under the new arrangements. However, the honourable member clearly failed to do that.

Mr Davis: You're not interested in safety. Anything for a quick buck; that's the way you people work.

Mr FITZGERALD: The honourable member for Brisbane Central said that the Government is not interested in safety. I said that I am interested in safety and in statistics. I would like to know whether the work is safe or not.

The United Kingdom, which has a 240-volt electricity supply similar to that of Australia, does not have inspections made by the electricity authorities. Am I correct or not?

Mr Smith: You are, but I will tell you something about that later.

Mr FITZGERALD: Very well. I note that the honourable member's name is the next on the list of speakers, so he will be able to put forward his point of view.

I know that inspections are not carried out by electricity authorities in Europe. Therefore, it is a common practice not to inspect electrical work. Electricity-consumers should place reliance on professional people to provide safe workmanship.

A comparison can be made with work performed by a motor mechanic. If a person asks a motor mechanic to fix up the power or mechanical steering on his motor vehicle, to replace wheel bearings or king pins or to check brake-linings and carry out other checks to make sure that there are no faults in the braking system, that person relies on the skill of the mechanic. In the event of an accident the responsibility rests on the mechanic. If a person is driving along a road at 100 kilometres an hour, and if a bus with a load of people on board or a semitrailer is travelling in the opposite direction, when the vehicles pass there is probably a distance of about 2 metres between them and the vehicles have a combined approaching speed of about 200 kilometres an hour. In those circumstances, if the mechanic who had worked on the vehicle was incompetent, the driver of the vehicle would be exposed to great danger and could have a nasty accident. Should Government inspectors go around checking the work of every mechanic?

I am told that the honourable member for Brisbane Central was a responsible service station owner. How often did a customer of his come back and sue him because the service that he provided was not up to a satisfactory safety standard? The honourable member had a responsibility and he accepted it. I believe that I am making a valid comparison.

Other professional people are responsible for their actions. The honourable member for Wolston mentioned that electricity is a very dangerous commodity, and I agree with him. However, many dangers exist within our society, and we live with them, too. Regular checks should be made to ensure that the people who are working in the industry and providing a service are competent. If complaints are received about people, inspectors can be sent out to investigate them. Inspectors have every right to go out and investigate people. If those complaints are found to be valid, the full weight of the law should be brought down upon those people.

I turn now to the reciprocity whereby electrical tradesmen from interstate can work in Queensland. Provided that they have acceptable certificates of competency, I believe that tradesmen from interstate and from New Zealand should be able to work in Queensland. They should not be required to go through the process of enrolling in Queensland so that they can practise their trade here. I am aware that some members of the Opposition would like to protect the jobs of Queenslanders. I can assure them that many tradesmen are moving between Australia and New Zealand.

Getting back to my comparison with a person driving on a road—a person who holds a driver's licence in New South Wales is allowed to drive in Queensland. Although he is subject to Queensland laws, he is not required to hold a separate Queensland driver's licence unless he is a resident here.

This legislation will assist businesses and contractors to get their jobs done. I understand that, at present, an electrician who wants to work in Weipa has to come to Brisbane first to obtain registration. There are no registration facilities in Weipa. I believe that an electrician who is competent to undertake work in New South Wales is competent enough to undertake work in Queensland. The same applies to drivers' licences. A person who obtains a driver's licence in Australia is able to drive anywhere in Australia.

Another aspect of this legislation that I believe will be of great benefit is the issuing of tickets for minor offences. It will be of great benefit to the person who has committed a minor infringement under the Electricity Act and who wants to have a matter dealt with quickly. Officers will not be running around with pockets full of tickets that they can issue.

At present, a person who commits a minor infringement under the Act and wishes to plead guilty has to appear before a court. If offenders can simply pay fines that are imposed for minor infringements, that will be a great advantage.

Honourable members can imagine the difficulties that would arise if, every time a person was picked up for speeding, that person had to be summonsed and taken into court. Of course, people who wish to challenge a ticket that they receive have full legal rights. They have access to the court system. British justice is not being diminished in any way. If they do not wish to plead guilty to an alleged offence, they have their full legal rights.

I turn now to the changes relating to the composition of electricity boards. That was a very difficult decision for any political party to make. I would be less than frank if I did not say that this matter was debated freely. Quite a lively debate occurred in our party.

Mr McElligott: What side were you on?

Mr FITZGERALD: I will tell the honourable member exactly what my feelings are on this matter.

Firstly, I agree with the way in which the Bill deals with this aspect. After reading the Savage report, and being supportive of most of the principles in that report, I believe that, for the common good of the electricity-consumers, electricity must be distributed efficiently and that the boards must be run efficiently. I agree that boards should be smaller. The reduction in the size of the boards from eight members to five will in no way diminish the ability of those boards to carry out their responsibilities.

Previously, the local authorities selected members to serve on those boards. Under the new arrangement the local authorities will be asked to submit a list of names to the Minister and he will have the responsibility of selecting and appointing two of those nominees to the electricity board. The Government will appoint two nominees to the board, and I understand that the commissioner or his nominee will serve on the board as chairman.

Mr Davis: The main qualification will be a National Party ticket.

Mr FITZGERALD: The honourable member said that there is going to be cronyism. He should look at the composition of the boards. If the honourable member intends to accuse those gentlemen of being supporters of one particular party only, he will be found to be quite incorrect. I know that the Minister goes to great lengths to find the best people he possibly can to appoint to the boards.

In 1945, I think it was, when the boards were set up, quite a strong argument was advanced that local authorities, particularly those in rural areas, because of the expansion of the electricity industry out into those areas, needed their own representatives on those boards, to make the decisions where the electricity should go and how the distribution should take place. In 1945 that was a very, very sound argument. However, in 1988 I believe a further stage has been reached. The boards' areas of responsibility are becoming fairly large.

Mr McElligott: You certainly have.

Mr FITZGERALD: I say to the member for Thuringowa that the people who are appointed to those boards do have expertise. While I acknowledge the work that those people have contributed, the amount of time they have spent and the expertise that they have been able to provide, I say to the honourable member that the people who are elected to a local authority are not always the best appointees. Those people are elected to govern a local authority, which is the third tier of government, and I fully recognise and I fully support them in that field. The administration of the Electricity Act is a State matter, which, quite obviously, is a separate area of responsibility. The people in local authorities can make a great contribution. If their names are put forward, surely some of them will be appointed to the boards.

I do not believe that it is a prime responsibility of local authorities to distribute electricity. Nor do I believe it is a prime responsibility of local authorities to administer other State Government activities in their areas. They do not have representatives on the education committees. Why do education boards not have local government appointees on them? That does not happen in Queensland. The main roads authority is responsible for the distribution of funds and the Main Roads Department and the local authorities have to co-operate. The assistant commissioner is responsible for the administration of the main roads in a particular area. The same can be said about the railways. Sure, it is providing a service to the people. It is clearly a State responsibility to provide that service. Because of the grid system and the generation of electricity and the interaction of all the electricity authorities throughout the State, the State is responsible.

This legislation provides a great way in which people in a certain area with ability can be appointed to the electricity boards. The legislation prescribes that two of the appointees shall have a local authority background. I would not be surprised if, in the case of many boards, the Minister appoints four people from local authorities. That would not surprise me—two Government nominees and two actual representatives of local authorities. In a couple of cases, I would be willing to bet that the Minister will put three of them on the board.

Appointments to boards are made at the Minister's discretion. He will appoint the people he believes would be best for the task—ladies or gentlemen. I do not back away from the arguments raised by the Opposition one bit. I know that Opposition members will advance the argument that the Government is weakening the authority of local government. I do not believe that the Government is doing that, because I do not believe that electricity supply is an appropriate responsibility for local authorities.

I believe that one of the Opposition parties will move amendments along the lines that I have foreshadowed because it would be a great grandstanding exercise. Its members will mount the platform and say that the State Government does not support local authorities. What absolute hog-wash! I make it plain that the State Government supports local authorities and recognises that they have specific areas of responsibility. I believe that it is in those specific areas that the State Government should support them. However,

I do not believe that local authorities should dominate the electricity industry as of right.

It is probably true that in some cases, however, local authority appointees would be people who are very, very popular and very competent in carrying out local authority responsibilities but who may not be able to make a great contribution to an electricity board from an engineering point of view. I am sure that the Minister will act very responsibly in making those appointments.

I wish the new boards and those appointed to them all the best for the future in the difficult tasks that they face. The findings of the Savage committee have been adopted and implemented to a large extent by this Government. Sure, people want smaller government and more efficient government. It is also desirable that people in Government should adopt a more responsible approach. The legislation places a greater onus on the Minister, which is the case with the provisions of other Bills that come before the House as they relate to respective portfolios.

I accept that the legislation gives the Minister more responsibility. Surely in a democracy the Minister can be given more responsibility, because the electorate can change the Government every three years. Ministers can be stood down if they are not doing their job properly, and I do not see anything wrong with that. Members of the Opposition cannot tell me that the added responsibility placed on the Minister is not part of the democratic process. I do not believe that responsibility should be tied up so that those people who provide the funds for the expansion of the industry—the consumers—have no say whatsoever. They will be able to have a say by casting a vote in the ballot-box at the next election.

I support the amendment of the Electricity Act. I believe that a substantial period has elapsed since the Act was introduced in 1976. I think the legislation has reached the next stage at which the fine tuning is being done. I support the Bill.

Mr BEARD (Mount Isa—Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (7.49 p.m.): The member for Wolston made the opening speech in this debate approximately an hour or so ago in a very impassioned manner. He raised many points with which I will agree during the next 20 minutes when I make my speech. However, I will not use simple assertions as evidence to support my argument, which was the case with the honourable member for Wolston. The honourable member said continually "the simple fact is" followed by an assertion and he used that as his major mode of proof. If he had read a little of the material written by Oscar Wilde, as I am sure Mr Deputy Speaker has, he would know that *In the Importance of Being Earnest*, this famous sentence appears—

> "You may be sure, Algernon, that when someone begins by saying 'The fact is', he is about to tell a lie."

I am sure that the honourable member for Wolston would get on very well with someone called Algernon who eats cucumber sandwiches.

My concerns about the Bill arise basically from the fact that the subject-matter is electricity. Even children know that, in common with fire, electricity is a good servant but a very bad master. The legislation gives rise to discussion about the possibility or even the probability of shoddy work leading to death and destruction of property. Shoddy work in electrical installations and modifications certainly can—and often does—lie hidden for years before it kills or destroys. The perpetrator of the fault—the shoddy operator—may never be traced; he might have gone out of the district, gone out of business, or he might even be dead. It may even be that no-one remembers who carried out the work.

The risks for the shoddy operators, who could be described as the cowboys of the industry—and every industry has its cowboys—are small. The shoddy operators may never be found out and, of course, they will take a punt on short-cuts because they think they will get away with it.

There are areas in which I would welcome the removal of Government and semi-governmental authorities from the operations of private enterprise, but that cannot be

supported if such a removal increases the possibility of accident, death or destruction. In theory, what the Government is proposing in this Bill is fine. It amounts to the professionalisation of the workers in the industry, the acceptance of the responsibility for their own work and the assurance that their own work has the stamp of their competence on it—that they stand behind it and wear the responsibility for it. That is the landmark of a master tradesman. In theory, this is good stuff and I am for it, but only in theory.

The question that must follow is: what guarantees a master tradesman in Queensland? Is the only criterion to hang out a shingle after a person has completed his apprenticeship and call himself a master tradesman? I know that it takes a little more than that. I will make a comparison with West Germany. Following a full apprenticeship in that country, a person has to be a journeyman for five years in the trade, followed by the undertaking of a nine-month evening course at an advanced college before he can gain certification or registration in the trade and use the term "master tradesman". Until Queensland has master craftsmen in this State who are properly qualified by training and practical experience and who meet objective criteria, the proposals suggested in this Bill are fine only in principle. They are potentially deadly and highly costly in practice. With electricity there are no second prizes, and one mistake is all that one is allowed.

The spadework for this legislation has not been done, and in my opinion that is the problem with the Bill. The extensive training, retraining, updating and certification structures are not properly in place. The work is not monitored and few faults are reported. Few rogues are caught and even fewer are prosecuted, but when they are there is insufficient disincentive in the penalty to drive the cowboys out of the industry. I believe that the appropriate section of the Act is section 175 (f)—I will stand corrected if I am wrong—but I do not believe that that section has been properly enforced and therefore that there has not been proper follow-up to ensure that routine inspections are carried out correctly. One result of this is that the death rate in the industry over the last two years has been an average of five persons per year, compared with the previous rate of two persons per year. Accidents and deaths are occurring. This figure represents a significant increase and it has occurred for two years.

Even if no deaths occur, there is a great mass of shoddy work out there in the community; heaven knows how much. No-one knows how much there is out there, but there are accidents that are just waiting to happen. I understand from a very good source that in Gladstone this year, during a quiet dip between some busy periods, the board's inspectors went out and did random spot checks of 30 houses. I was advised that three of the houses were so bad that the electricity had to be disconnected. I have been advised—once again from a very reliable source—that a lot of poor work has been reported in Maryborough. The inspectors in that area reported that many things they found there frightened them, and I have no doubt that the same story could be told all over Queensland. Time-bombs are ticking away out there in the community just waiting for accidents to happen. An extensive retraining and policing operation is necessary.

Mr Alison interjected.

Mr BEARD: I think the honourable member is safe; his house is okay.

There is no enforcement of satisfactory standards at the present time where the Act applies only to modifications and alterations. Since the Act was introduced in 1976, inspectors have been responsible for ensuring their own work when it came to modifications and alterations, but there is no enforcement of these standards now. This Bill attempts to extend the self-inspecting role of contractors to new installations.

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr BEARD: It is interesting to note, Mr Veivers, that two months ago a man called Mr Ivor Williams of the Electrical Contractors Association in the United Kingdom visited Australia gathering information to lobby the United Kingdom Parliament in order to bring some sort of regulation back into the industry in the United Kingdom

because of the problems that are being experienced in that country where similar self-regulation was introduced some years ago. That country has had the experience and it wants to return to the original regulation.

I have in my possession a letter written by the Honourable Ivan Gibbs when he was Minister for Mines and Energy dated 25 August 1986. This letter was addressed to the executive director of the Electrical Contractors Association of Queensland. In it Mr Gibbs said—

> "I confirm that the Government's policy is:—
>
> . . .
>
> (c) that it is not proposed to transfer the responsibility for initial and similar installation inspections from Electricity Authorities to electrical contractors."

So less than two years later, but two Ministers later, we are debating a Bill that will do just what Mr Ivan Gibbs said the Government would not do.

During his speech a short while ago the member for Wolston tabled a letter that the present Minister wrote to all of his Cabinet and back-bench colleagues to drum up support for this Bill. It must have been an uncovered truck that delivered the mail that day, because I, too, have a copy of that letter. I share the convictions of the member for Wolston that there must have been rumblings in the National Party kitchen for Mr Tenni to have written that. In that letter he wrote, inter alia—

> "This letter is written to explain to you step by step the proposed legislative changes."

On page 3 of that letter Mr Tenni stated his long-term aim. It is a fine aim but, as I said at the beginning of my speech tonight, fine principles can be destroyed by impractical or inappropriate implementation. I wish to read what Mr Tenni said his long-term aim was. I do not disagree with this. He said—

> "Our long term aim is to have electrical contractors who, as master tradesmen, are responsible for the execution, supervision and certification of their own work without having imposed on them inspection by an Electricity Authority's installation inspector . . ."

That is good, but the structure is not there to do that properly. The Minister said—

> "The first step is to make the electrical contractor responsible for testing his work on new installations except for the consumer's mains and the main switchboard. He and the consumer will still have the option offered by Mr. Camm in 1976 to pay the Electricity Authority or another contractor to do their inspections."

But human nature says that consumers will trust the contractor. They have hired him; they will believe him. He will say he can do it and they will punt on his safety and his assurances rather than pay extra. The contractor will not admit to any doubt and people will not pay any extra just on a doubt that the fellow they have hired is not good enough to do the job. If that was the case, they would not have hired him. Human nature will defeat it. Very often human nature defeats fine principles.

So if Mr Ivan Gibbs, the responsible Minister in 1986—that is less than two years ago—was against these moves and if, going by the letter from which I have just quoted, it can be assumed that many or most of the National Party back-benchers were worried about it, who was for it? It would appear that it most certainly was not the industry. The Minister sought comments from the Insurance Council of Australia, the Electrical Trades Union, the Municipal Officers Association, the Electrical Contractors Association of Queensland and the Institute of Electrical Inspectors.

I can quote from a letter that sets out the response from the Insurance Council of Australia. In a letter dated 10 February 1988 to the Minister, the ICA states—

> ". . . and I must advise you that your proposal to permit electrical contractors to inspect and certify their own work, causes the general insurance industry very real concern.

We believe an Electrical Contractor to be no different to most competitors in any industry or field, in that his livelihood depends on his ability to compete against his peers to gain appointment to jobs. Therefore if there is no check to ensure that the rules, laws and standards for that work are properly adhered to, then short cuts are invited, errors will be made in installations, and generally, a lower standard of workmanship can be expected. Unfortunately, the possible results of such short cuts, be they intentional or genuine mistakes, may not be manifest for many years afterwards, and often this further exacerbates the problem. Thus we believe that a reduction in the standard of life and fire safety in electrical installations is an almost inevitable result of the proposed changes to the Electricity Act."

Of course, it can be expected that that opinion will be backed up by increases in insurance costs.

In its letter the ICA stated further—

"We feel that the present arrangement should continue whereby all new installations and certain other categtories of electrical work carried out by contractors, are inspected by supply authority Inspectors. Our reasons may be summarised as follows:—

A uniform and consistent standard applies to inspections now being carried out.

. . . inspections by supply authorities are independent and impartial . . .

Inspectors are required to keep abreast of the ever expanding demands for the use of electricity, and the related safety precautions . . .

Inspectors . . . are in a position to have these matters rectified.

. . .

Investigations by the Insurance Council suggest that electrical contractors themselves do not seek the added responsibilities involved in the inspection of installations; rather, they appreciate the 'safety mechanism' of independent inspection by Board inspectors.

. . . insurers rely heavily on the fact that installations have initially been inpected and approved by a qualified inspector.

. . . the insurance industry cannot support any move which increases the risk of injury or property damage because of a reduction in the standard of supervision . . ."

I will quote extensively from a letter sent to the Minister two months ago by the Insurance Council of Australia in response to his request for submissions. Mr Hall, the regional manager, who wrote the letter, states—

"Your proposal appears to anticipate that property owners will, in the absence of independent inspections, either voluntarily or at the behest of other interested parties such as mortgagees, insurers or even intending purchasers, find either the original contractor (which may often be impossible) or a second contractor to carry out an inspection and report on the standard of installation work. This would inevitably be at some cost to the property owner as well as involving considerable delay. This direct cost burden falling upon property owners would surely outweigh the perceived saving in eliminating the cost of maintaining the existing Inspectorial system; and from the point of view of public safety, this Council sincerely believes that rather than abandon Independent Inspectors within each Board area, and inviting what seems to be an inevitable increase in personal accidents, injuries and fires as a result of faulty electrical installations, your Government should be looking to increase the extent and authority of the existing Inspectorial facilities."

I have also the results of a survey conducted by the Electrical Contractors Association of Queensland after the Minister first mooted the proposed amendments earlier this year. The results were collated less than a week ago. The results show that electrical contractors in Queensland overwhelmingly disapprove of the proposed changes. In the survey results they used words such as "Dangerous", "Will lead to shoddy work and

short cuts", "Some situations require Supply Authority approval" and, "One strong opinion expressed by the Electricity Commission is that the standard of electrical installations over the last few years are not falling."

However, that opinion has been strongly disagreed with in this survey to which 214 electrical contractors in Queensland responded. They believe overwhelmingly that standards are falling. A great percentage of them believe that they are falling rapidly. They believe that there are too many do-it-yourself people and week-end contractors. They believe that the standards are falling due to rising labour costs and reduction in the number of inspectors. They believe that the standards will fall further if testing by supply authorities is reduced and handed to private firms.

Even allowing that that was a survey of electrical contractors—we can assume there would be a fair element of a closed-shop mentality in those results; in other words, "Let's limit the competition by closing the shop up"—there is still room for grave concern in that response.

I have here the final draft of a letter that was written to the Minister this week on behalf of the five bodies from whom he asked for submissions—the Electrical Contractors Association of Queensland, the Institute of Electrical Inspectors, the Electrical Trades Union, the Municipal Officers Association and the Insurance Council of Australia. I will not read the whole letter, but I can quote some very interesting parts. It states—

> "All of those bodies have of course been in separate contact with you to express their concerns over your proposed changes to the Electricity Act.
>
> Following your suggestion regarding a possible joint submission by all of the organisations named above, those parties have held several meetings in order to identify their common concerns and to enable them to prepare a joint submission."

It is that submission that I am reading.

They speak of the need for retraining. They refer to a section 186 (C) (e) and say—

> "We firmly believe that the Electricity Authority should report all instances of faulty and dangerous work to the Electrical Workers' and Contractors' Board . . ."

They speak about random inspections and public liability. In that respect, I understand that of the 3 200 licensed electrical contractors in Queensland about 25 to 30 per cent do not carry public liability insurance. I believe that almost half of those 3 200 licensed contractors are week-enders or part-time workers, and the percentage of those who do not carry public liability insurance is of the order of 70 per cent.

They speak about remote areas, technical section, main earth, testing and portable electrical appliances. It is a lengthy submission which I hope the Minister will have received and studied carefully.

Having read that letter and the other documents that I have quoted from, I am certain that many people just do not want these changes to take place. It makes me wonder why the Government is going ahead with them.

I am not an electrician; I am not an electrical inspector; I am not a technician. But I am a citizen, I am a consumer, and I am not a mug. Nor are my constituents mugs. What I have endeavoured to draw attention to is a host of evidence showing that people who are experts, who do know what they are talking about, are dead set against this legislation for what seem to me to be very good reasons. So how can I support this legislation? How can the Liberal Party support it? The Liberal Party cannot support it in the face of all this evidence.

I have not even dealt with the several other important amendments contained in the Bill, because the objections of the Liberal Party to this major amendment are so strong that it must oppose the Bill on that ground alone. However, two of my colleagues will speak later in the debate, and I am sure that they will deal with some of the other amendments proposed in the legislation.

If the Government still wants to go ahead with this legislation, let us shelve it for two years. Let us put in place a system of competent tradesmen with sufficient training and with a procedure for retraining and updating their skills, with monitoring by the SAA, with TAFE courses like AEL122 being made compulsory, with constant random monitoring and with severe penalties for breaches. Let us get that structure in place so that when master tradesmen are asked to accept the responsibility for monitoring their own work, they are indeed ready for it and ready to become professionals in their game.

I must also point out to the Minister that proceeding with the legislation in the face of such strong opposition is pretty provocative. I just hope that some of the more fiery brethren out in the community do not take it upon themselves to show their displeasure in a way that hurts the community and themselves.

The Liberal Party opposes the legislation.

Mr SMITH (Townsville East) (8.07 p.m.): At the outset I point out that the term of the Tenni Ministry, in respect of the electrical industry and the way it is going, could probably be equated with the last days of Pompeii. The Minister has overseen some unfortunate incidents. There was the cutting-back of the harbour boards, and now the Minister is getting into the electricity boards. There was also the matter of the fire levies, which the member for Port Curtis mentioned——

Mr Tenni interjected.

Mr SMITH: I just want to refresh the Minister's memory.

Another action of the Minister was to withdraw engineers from tourist boats. Someone convinced the Minister that it was safe to do that. The next thing the Minister knew, he had a massive fire on his hands. That caused the Minister to reverse that decision, and quite rightly so. I do not know who advised the Minister on that occasion. Frankly, I would be very interested to know where the Minister's advice is coming from at present.

I want to say by way of preamble that the problem in the electricity industry and the problem that the Minister is facing is this: the advice that the Minister is getting from the commission appears to be coming from the money men and not the technical people. I think that what we are seeing is a loss of the sort of people who came up through the industry, who perhaps entered the industry as tradesmen, who have studied and who have a practical knowledge of the industry. One of the problems that the Minister is faced with is that the advice that those sorts of people could give him is not available or is not being given to him.

When one examines the higher echelons of planning, serious questions have to be asked because Queensland has an installed capacity of 5 320 megawatts and a maximum usage—not an average usage, a maximum usage—of about 3 500 megawatts. That is a massive capacity in terms of State potential. It is an overcapacity of 1 400 megawatts. That is a terrific cost. That, of course, is one of the reasons why people are paying so much for electricity today. A previous speaker said—and I will accept it—that the interest on that debt is approximately $16.50 a household. That certainly amounts to a lot of money.

If that is not bad enough, now the Government is talking about going ahead with the Tully/Millstream project. I have yet to be convinced that there is any real merit or potential in that scheme except the capacity for increasing the debt.

I do not want to provoke too big an argument with the Minister for Finance. I just wonder whether in his new ministerial role of being responsible for finance, he might suddenly lose interest in the project that he promoted previously.

Mr Austin: No. They are going ahead full steam.

Mr SMITH: I will believe it when I see it.

Mr Austin: Provided that Senator Richardson is reasonable.

Mr SMITH: He is always reasonable; the Minister can take that as par.

I am talking about the billions of dollars of indebtedness of the electricity industry. What is the major response by the Minister to that indebtedness? It is to look at the major areas in which installation of equipment has resulted in a system that has overcapacity and that type of thing. No, the Minister is beginning to look at simple things such as reducing the number of inspectors and the number of representatives on electricity boards.

In broad terms, no-one will argue very much about some of the excesses. I certainly do not agree that a board member should be paid $400 for attending a meeting for a couple of hours. However, I suggest to the Minister that all he has is a talking-point. The amount of money absorbed by the employment of the members of the board, and even the cost of the inspectors, represents a small percentage.

The Minister claimed that the reductions would result in a saving of $3m. The reduction in board membership would result in a saving that would be much smaller. I am reminded of a very well-known tactic that is used. When the Minister has a major problem that he wants to conceal, such as mismanagement and maladministration that results in the loss of millions and even billions of dollars, the decisions are made behind closed doors and the Minister puts up for debate the colour that the proverbial outhouse door should be painted. He gets everyone talking about that so that the focus of attention is shifted from the real problem. In effect, that is what the Minister is doing. He has created a talking-point about the structure of the board and he has created a talking-point about the lack of need for inspectors, and he is attempting to shift the focus of the real problems of the industry.

I readily admit that the present problems in the electricity industry are a legacy that the Minister inherited. However, nobody can escape from the fact that the problems are massive.

Mr Tenni: What is the problem?

Mr SMITH: For a start, bad planning—installation of equipment that has a capacity that is far in excess of the needs of the State for many years.

Perhaps I can take notice of some of the documents that have been leaked. The documents seem to have a habit of being fairly reliable. A document that fell into the hands of the Federal Minister for Finance, Senator Walsh, showed that the Queensland Government is so strapped for cash that, to get out of its problems, it is looking seriously at privatising the electricity industry.

Mr Davis: That would be a shame; that's where we go back quickly.

Mr SMITH: Back we go all the time. The Queensland Government is always going backwards.

Let me turn to another issue. There is no doubt that the National Party back-bench members are unhappy about this matter. They are sitting at the back of the Chamber. They want to stay in the background. They do not want to be part of the problems associated with this Bill; and I do not blame them for that.

Let me make a comparison. When a suggestion of privatising Telecom was made, the first persons to yell blue murder were the members of the National Party. I do not blame them for that, because they were doing very well in that area. The rest of the country is subsidising many of the people whom they represent.

It is a simple fact of life that the political input that the National Party Government has had into the professional management of the electricity industry is frightening. The Queensland Government claims that it has a 99 per cent connection rate throughout the State. If it is not 99 per cent, the figure is certainly very high. However, the Government does not tell the people that the cost of providing the electricity supply to remote rural communities is absolutely outrageous. In economic terms, it could never be justified.

I am aware of a study that was conducted some years ago. It was shown that people in isolated communities could be supplied with their own generators and fuel; the boards could maintain the equipment; and the cost of that to the board would still be much cheaper than supplying electricity to those communities. That highlights the inefficiency that applies to the electricity industry in Australia and why costs are so high. It should never be said that this Government has overseen a great expansion and tremendous efficiency in the electricity industry. This Government has a disgraceful record that cannot be attributed to the professional officers in any way. The present inefficiency has been created by the political input of this Government.

I should like to relate a story about a very great man who is now dead. Unfortunately, I cannot remember his name, but he was the chairman of the old Townsville Regional Electricity Board. In 1976 he backed to the hilt the manager of NORQEB, Ben Hammond. I am aware of the pressure that was applied at that time by the Minister's office to do all sorts of things that were absolutely economically non-viable. The manager to whom I have referred had the guts to stand up to the Minister at that time. He had the backing of that independent board chairman. Such circumstances will no longer be able to exist. Not only will the Government be picking the team, but also it will be picking the captain.

This Government should be honest about the whole matter. It has a choice of saying, "Yes. We will give the various bodies some say in the running of their own boards." In that way, those authorities would be able to elect their own people to those boards and the Government would not be interfering to the extent that it is at present. If the Government intends to continue interfering and overriding, it should be honest, abolish the boards altogether and run things from a central operation. Otherwise the Government is creating an artificial interface of a board with no power.

Mr Tenni: No, the Labor Party did that. They threw all the Nationals and Liberal blokes off every board. You're just mixing things up.

Mr SMITH: I do not believe that the Minister has done his homework.

This Government is proud of the fact that it will contain costs to half of the CPI in the future. This Government has all of the capital equipment in place and no further generating capacity is needed. Queensland's revenue base is increasing, but this Government claims that it will still have to increase costs by half of the CPI. This Government should be bringing electricity costs down or at least maintaining them at their present level.

Mr Tenni: We're just opening another new power station now. We're starting another one soon and another one next year. We need more power. I will tell you afterwards why.

Mr SMITH: I would not be proud of the fact that another power station is about to open when Queensland has 1 400 megawatts of overcapacity.

This Government claims that it has the interests of the community at heart. If I were to examine some of the harsh actions of this Government during the past 20 years, it would be difficult to cite a harsher or more unreasonable incident than the treatment of those long-serving employees of SEQEB. I have raised this matter before. The shadow Minister mentioned this issue as well. I am talking about those people who had 20 or 30 years' service and who had a few years to go before they retired. I was reminded of the bad old days when the tyrant father ruled all. Those people were literally cut off without a penny and no prospects. That is an example of the social conscience of this Government. The fact that this Government allowed that to happen is a pretty fair insight into what it is prepared to do within the electricity industry and other areas.

Another major talking point has been the provision in relation to inspectors. Most people probably do not realise that the inspectors who are being spoken about are technically known as installation inspectors. Technically, they are not electrical inspectors.

In fact, there are very few electrical inspectors, most of whom would be employed by the commission itself.

The number of inspectors should be maintained or even increased. I do not know where the honourable member for Mount Isa got his information from, but most of the things he said were fairly realistic and his source was certainly reliable. Consideration should be given to the employment of more electrical inspectors and, indeed, more safety inspectors. I am talking about electrical safety inspectors, not the people who go out and check the scaffolds, ditches and those sorts of things. The matter relating to the potential for electrical accidents is very important.

What has occurred in relation to the Builders Registration Board almost parallels what is happening with respect to the inspectorial authority, except that in the case of the Builders Registration Board a person certainly ran the risk of finishing up with a shoddy house that might have fallen down around his ears. However, I suggest that the risk of personal injury from that particular occurrence was certainly much less than that which could be expected from wholesale unsafe electrical installations.

I have previously spoken to Mr Deputy Speaker about this matter. I seek to have incorporated in *Hansard* section 175 of the Electricity Act 1976, which appears in Division III—"Conditions Governing Consumers' Electrical Installations". As my time has almost expired, I will not be able to deal with this matter in detail, except to say that that section contains an impressive list of duties of inspectors.

Leave granted.

Division III—Conditions Governing Consumers' Electrical Installations

175. Duties of Electricity Authority with respect to consumer's installation. An Electricity Authority—

(a) shall ensure that a consumer's electrical installation to which an initial supply of electricity is to be made available is inspected in its entirety, prior to connexion to the source of supply, by an installation inspector in the manner prescribed;

(b) may cause part of a consumer's electrical installation to be inspected by an installation inspector prior to the connexion of that installation to the source of supply in lieu of the whole of the installation being inspected at the one time (but only on the basis that the connexion when made is in respect of that part only of the installation so inspected), in which case it may recover from the consumer the cost of any inspection by an installation inspector other than the first;

(c) shall ensure that alterations and additions to a consumer's electrical installation are inspected by an installation inspector in the manner prescribed, prior to connexion to the source of supply, if—

(i) such alterations and additions have been performed by an electrical worker, duly authorized by this Act, who is not himself an electrical contractor and is not carrying out the work as an employee of an electrical contractor;

(ii) the Electricity Authority is required to provide additional metering or control apparatus or it is necessary to alter, in any manner whatsoever, existing metering or control apparatus or the wiring associated therewith;

(iii) such alterations and additions are to or form part of a consumer's high voltage electrical installation;

(iv) such alterations and additions are to provide a supply of electricity to any individual item of equipment having a rating in excess of 15 kilowatts;

(d) shall ensure that a consumer's electrical installation or part thereof, including any alterations or additions thereto, that has or have been inspected by an installation inspector pursuant to paragraph (a), (b) or (c) and not connected by him is re-inspected by an installation inspector prior to connexion to the source of supply;

(e) shall ensure that within three months after the receipt of a written request from a consumer for a check inspection of his installation, such consumer's installation is inspected by an installation inspector.

(f) shall cause an installation inspector to carry out a check inspection of a consumer's installation or part of a consumer's installation in any case where the Electricity Authority deems this desirable or in accordance with a plan prepared by the Electricity Authority

as a requirement of the Commission (the Commission being hereby authorized to require an Electricity Authority to prepare and implement a plan for check inspections within its Area);

(g) shall cause an installation inspector to carry out an inspection of alterations and additions to an electrical installation, being alterations and additions that pursuant to this Act are not otherwise required to be inspected by an installation inspector, if the electrical contractor who has undertaken the alterations and additions requests such inspection and undertakes to meet the cost thereof.

Mr SMITH: I think it is important that that list of duties of inspectors is incorporated in *Hansard* so that people can see what this Government is attempting to transfer to the contractors.

Since 1977 the inspectors have had a reduced role. That point was made earlier. Most people do not know—and nobody has bothered to mention it in this House—that, even though additions to installations were not required to be inspected, it was a requirement that each and every contractor in fact submit a notice for every installation that he or his men worked on. The fact is that that allowed the electricity boards to have a pretty fair idea of who was doing the work. If notices were not being put in by a contractor whom it was known was active, the board knew damned well that that contractor was not doing the right thing and he was a person who had to be checked on. In effect, the opportunity was there to monitor those installations.

There are contractors who do shoddy work, whether or not they are electrical contractors. The reality is that in the community plenty of contractors do shoddy work. The effect of the elimination of inspections must inevitably bring about a reduced standard. I do not believe that that is acceptable in terms of the electrical industry and electrical installations. The rule book has been known by generations of electrical contractors and electricians as their Bible, and they refer to it as such.

A problem emerges straight away because apprentices will not be acquainted with that standard when they complete their training. They will not be aware of the necessity to maintain a particular standard. They will not be given the incentive to maintain the quality of work that has prevailed in previous years.

Earlier, the honourable member for Lockyer spoke about 240 volt AC being used in England without significant problems arising. One factor that needs to be understood is that there are a number of ways that a particular level of voltage can be employed. Throughout Australia, the system that is employed is known as the multiple earth neutral system. However, many other countries—especially in areas in which mines are located—use a system known as an earth leakage system when there is a greater element of risk. As well as maintaining inspectorial standards, Governments in Australia ought to be moving towards ensuring that earth leakage circuit-breaker systems are in place throughout Australia to reduce the attendant hazards. Anyone who thinks that 240 volt AC is not a hazardous voltage does not know much about the matter.

The Opposition spokesman mentioned that tragedies caused by electrocution have increased from an average of two to five a year in recent times. Although I accept what the honourable member said, I tend naturally to remember tragedies that have occurred closer to home in my electorate. Recently a little girl came in contact with an earth wire that was not properly attached to a water pipe and a tragic accident resulted. On the face of it, the practice should not have caused a particular problem, except that the wire became live through faulty workmanship. I would contend fairly authoritatively that if the installation had been inspected, there is a good chance that the faulty workmanship would have been picked up.

Mr Tenni: Are you aware that that is what we are going to do?

Mr SMITH: If the Minister had been listening to me, he would have heard me say that contractors have been obliged to put in notices ever since the Electricity Act 1976 was passed.

Mr Tenni: I have known that.

Mr SMITH: The fact is that the boards have not policed the provisions. They have had neither the staff nor the encouragement to do so.

Mr Tenni: They have.

Mr SMITH: No, they have not. They have had enormous pressure placed on them. Pressure has been applied to boards to effect a reduction in costs to compensate for the mismanagement of the electricity industry, particularly in the generation and distribution sectors. They are the facts, and the Minister will not talk me out of them.

Mr Tenni: You have been listening to the unions.

Mr SMITH: It is a question of looking at the top because that is where the problem originates.

The other factor that puts pressure on contractors is the competitive position they are in. I have spoken to contractors recently and I have gone to the trouble of speaking to people who have been involved in the industry for many years. They tell me that the industry is so competitive now that on most jobs it is not economical for them to send two tradesmen and they have to send only one tradesman. One person to whom I spoke—who has many credits to his name from his experience in the industry over a number of years—asked me, "How can I take out an inexperienced employee or a new employee who has recently started work with me into the field, confident that he will do a reliable job that will not cause me to lose my licence?" He added, "I can't afford to send out two people, because the competition in the industry is such that economics will not allow me to do that." The Minister ought to take that factor into account.

A previous speaker raised the matter of insurance. There is no doubt that the insurance industry relies on the basic tenet that an installation has been properly inspected. If that basic belief is not well founded, costs borne by individual consumers and operators will increase because insurance companies will take steps to satisfy themselves, before coverage is given, that installation has been carried out to an appropriate standard. All these factors have the potential to rebound on the consumer.

Another important factor is that, although certain work has been carried out by untrained people, traditionally the work has been at a minimal level of responsibility. The boards have always undertaken an active educational role to ensure that members of the public are aware of the necessity to have equipment installed and repaired by trained operators who are members of contractors' associations. Generally, I believe that that practice has been fairly successful. Under this Bill that work can be undertaken by untrained people. I will not pretend that at the present time, when an appliance or a piece of equipment goes into an electrical workshop for repair, that work will always be carried out by a qualified tradesman. In fact, to a large extent, because of the lower level of wages paid to them, the work is likely to be carried out by apprentices. Those apprentices, however, are carrying out that work in an environment in which they have access to trained and experienced people for advice. Those people can check the progress of any job on the spot and are working in an environment in which electrical standards are maintained, there is pride in the work and the whole environment is such that the conditions that exist would result in a safe repair and, consequently, a safe appliance. Regardless of the fact that the Minister says that there are other places where this does not happen—and I agree—it is highly desirable that this standard is maintained in Queensland.

I will close on this point: I would hate to take on the responsibility that the Minister is taking on by allowing that work to be turned over to untrained people.

Mr Tenni: No, we are not.

Mr SMITH: I am afraid that the Minister is.

Mr HAYWARD (Caboolture) (8.32 p.m.): I have pleasure in continuing this debate which tonight has been clearly carried in this House by the Australian Labor Party. It

has been a great disappointment to me, listening carefully to the debate as I have, that there has been no comment made at all by any of the National Party speakers about the reduction in financial accountability of the electricity industry that will result from this legislation. There has not been a single bleat out of any of them and possibly, as honourable members examine what I am about to say, they will be able to understand why that is the case.

When introducing this Bill the Minister said that these amendments contain a number of important matters of policy and many matters of an administrative nature. Some of these very important points, which are matters of accountability, are contained in the last paragraph of the Minister's second-reading speech. He simply states—

> "The other amending provisions in this Bill deal with various matters affecting employment conditions, superannuation tariffs, budgets and finance, approval of electrical articles and annual reports."

That paragraph contains hardly any detail and it is very difficult for members of this House to know what is going on when legislation is presented in such a basic way.

The point that I wish to make is that these matters of the financial accountability—which I intend to talk about and which to some extent are alluded to in the second-reading speech—of the Electricity Commission have been disposed of by the Minister without so much as an explanation to the Parliament. To me, and to the other members of the Opposition, this is clearly unsatisfactory. Superannuation, budget, finance and annual reports are all matters that are of vital concern to this Parliament and to the electors of Queensland. Ultimately there are many items that affect the financial viability of this State. If these items, which should be discussed, are not taken into consideration and spoken about in this Parliament, this will lead in the end to a further drain on consolidated revenue. The sort of items that I am referring to are alluded to in newspapers and everyone knows that the Electricity Commission is involved. These are items such as foreign exchange losses, massive power overcapacity, burgeoning departmental debt and a declining asset-to-debt basis.

What kind of a Government presents amending legislation to the Parliament—this Electricity Act Amendment Bill—and does not explain the majority of the changes, and particularly changes which are of vital significance when it comes to financial accountability? These vital items were presented in a sloppy way in the Minister's second-reading speech. That is of concern to all Queenslanders and emphasises the complete lack of accountability of this Government. I hope that I am in a position to make a suggestion. Can I suggest that in future, when something like this occurs, the Minister provides a clause by clause explanation and, rather than read it, table it for incorporation in *Hansard*?

Clause 45 of the Bill states—

> "Amendment of s. 224. Electricity Authority to make compensation. Section 224 of the Principal Act is amended by—
>
> (a) omitting the words 'exercise of' where firstly occurring and substituting the words 'execution of works pursuant to';".

What does that mean? What does the provision do? I am sure that, after the amendment is made, the section will probably do the same thing. There certainly is no explanation as to what that is all about. There must be some sort of legislative reason for that amendment to section 224. Perhaps that amendment will cause Queensland's tax-payers to save millions and millions of dollars. Somehow I doubt that, but I am simply saying that I think it is incumbent on this Minister, and on all other Ministers, when presenting Bills to at least try to make some attempt to explain what the amendments do. As I have said, the Ministers do not have to read them out, they can simply table them so that people who wish to speak in the debate have some idea what the amendments mean.

Mr Smyth: Wouldn't it be right to say that the National Party Government cannot comprehend what you are trying to explain to the House?

Mr HAYWARD: I am not sure, but I am sure that the Minister can comprehend what I am saying. I hope he does, because I really think it is important. I am not talking about taking up the time of the House but about giving everyone a chance.

None of the important accountability issues that I wish to highlight are specifically addressed by the Minister. As I said, it is summarised in four lines at the end of his second-reading speech.

I now turn to a really important clause of the Bill, clause 9, which amends section 32, which deals with financial statements. I will deal with it in conjunction with clause 46, which amends section 235. These sections deal with financial statements prepared by the Queensland Electricity Commission and the individual boards. It appears to me that these amendments eliminate the need for statements comparing the loan indebtedness of the QEC with its depreciated assets. Clause 46 takes away the need for comparing the loan indebtedness and the depreciated assets of the individual boards. Part of those amendments eliminates the requirement to prepare a table of depreciated assets as a ratio of outstanding debt consolidating the statements prepared by each electricity board.

I have been talking about massive borrowings. In fact, all Opposition speakers have referred to the enormous borrowings and the huge outstanding debt of the Queensland Electricity Commission. So why is this particular piece of information to be removed?

I wish to quote from page 49 of the Auditor-General's report on audits of departmental accounts for the year ended 30 June 1986. The report states—

> "DEPRECIATED ASSETS/NET OUTSTANDING INDEBTEDNESS
> Section 32(2)(e)(ii)"—

that is being taken out—

> "further requires a comparison of the depreciated value of assets in service with the net outstanding loan indebtedness as reduced by the balance of the sinking funds accounts."

The Auditor-General's report shows that in 1985 the depreciated cost of assets of the Queensland Electricity Commission was approximately $1.9 billion and the net outstanding indebtedness was $3.2 billion. I want to go on now to the 1986 figures because the report provides a comparison between 1985 and 1986. I remind honourable members that this information will no longer be available. In 1986 the depreciated cost of assets was $2.2 billion and the net outstanding indebtedness $3.5 billion. When the figures are looked at from that point of view, things do not look too good; in fact, things look to be a bit thin on the ground. If one had a business with debts as a percentage of assets standing like that, one would be a little concerned about its future viability.

Mr Palaszczuk interjected.

Mr HAYWARD: I am drawing it to the Minister's attention. It is important and it should be explained.

I ask the Minister: why has the perceived need for that information no longer become necessary? What has happened?

Page 7 of the 1986-87 Queensland Electricity Commission financial report shows that the depreciated cost of assets is $2.6 billion and the net outstanding indebtedness is $3.9 billion. The debt is not reducing; it is getting worse. As far as the QEC is concerned, on the information provided in the report, the debt is now approaching $4 billion. Certainly, nothing has been presented by the Minister or the National Party speakers in this debate to in any way put one in a position in which one might think that it was not a problem. When it is summarised in four lines on the last page of the Minister's speech, it becomes enormously sinister. We are talking about enormous issues.

The Electricity Act Amendment Bill presents a real opportunity for the Government to ensure some financial accountability on the part of the electricity supply industry in Queensland. I believe that it has failed, because the Government has taken no steps towards accountability in financial reporting. I am talking about accountability in the

sense that the electricity supply industry will provide information about its activities in internal reports and that the Minister will be answerable to Parliament about those matters. What I am saying so far is that the information concerning the comparison of the assets to the outstanding debt ratio is now no longer required to be reported. The legislation has done nothing to improve the financial accountability of the Queensland Electricity Commission and the various electricity boards.

I now wish to refer to the 1986-87 Queensland Electricity Commission financial report at page 6, which states—

"Note 1. BASIS OF ACCOUNTING

(a) The annual financial statements of the Commission are prepared in accordance with section 32 of the Electricity Act . . ."

I remind honourable members that the amendments that are being discussed will eliminate the provision of some of that information that is now provided. The report says that the Electricity Fund, the Electricity Works Fund, the Loans Transactions Account, the Sinking Fund Account and the Investment Suspense Account statements for the year ended 30 June 1987 show the results in cash transactions only.

The report contains a summary of each individual board. In the section dealing with the Mackay Electricity Board, under "Note 1. BASIS OF ACCOUNTING", the report states—

"The Operating, Capital Works, Special and Trust Fund Statements for the year ended 30 June, 1987 show the result of cash transactions only."

Then it goes on to something that is really important when one talks about the question of financial accountability. It states—

"The Statements do not include provisions, prepayments, the value of electricity consumed but not billed at 30 June, accrued leave entitlements or accumulated depreciation."

To return to the section dealing with the Queensland Electricity Commission, it does not include foreign exchange gains or losses and there is no accounting for liability to superannuation payments.

Many members of this House have been involved in various businesses and other endeavours. Some members have come from an accounting background, as has Mr Deputy Speaker. Will any member of the House say that the financial statements of the Queensland Electricity Commission and the various boards provide financial accountability to the public of Queensland? I do not think they do. I am absolutely sure that they do not. The amendment has actually reduced financial accountability.

I contend that the Minister should have taken the opportunity to extend the financial accountability of the Queensland Electricity Commission by introducing accrual accounting. Accrual accounting means the matching of revenue with expenses for a period rather than receipts and payments or cash accounting, which is now practised.

Mr Palaszczuk: You've lost the Minister.

Mr HAYWARD: I do not think that I have lost the Minister. I certainly have not lost his advisers. They would be aware of exactly what I am talking about.

At present these accounts record only cash transactions. When only cash transactions are recorded, no allowance is made for depreciation on plant. An enormous capital investment and a tremendous number of depreciable items are involved. There is no allowance for that. There is no allowance for foreign exchange gains or losses. No-one can tell me that with the massive overseas borrowings of the Queensland Electricity Commission over the years there are not foreign exchange losses. If there are not foreign exchange losses, the accountability is not helped simply because nothing is described in this report.

With cash accounting no allowance is made for accrued leave entitlements. Certainly no allowance is made for superannuation commitments. The key difference targeted by

accrual accounting compared with cash accounting—and this is what should be considered and what I hope the Minister's departmental advisers will consider—is that the Queensland Electricity Commission is an ongoing business. I am sure that members of the National Party are surprised to learn that these basic items that I have mentioned are not recorded and are not taken into account in electricity accounts.

Quite simply, cash-based accounting links receipts and payments but ignores the timing of the economic events which surround them. What I am saying—and everybody is aware of this—is that decisions made by the Queensland Electricity Commission may impact not only on the current year, which is 1988, but for several years, and the financial reporting process should recognise that factor. These losses or gains or whatever on foreign exchange should be recognised in the accounts.

The electors of Queensland are entitled to know the liability for the future from the Queensland Electricity Commission, especially simple things such as accrued leave entitlements, the superannuation liability and the liability to pay in the future people who work within this industry.

I do not say that the introduction of accrual accounting will be easy. The problem with the introduction of accrual accounting—and this is where this Government falls down all the time—is that a political will is needed. Determination is needed. The Government needs to have some guts to do it and succeed, or it just will not happen. Political constraint is the reason why the Government does not do it. I contend that when it comes to this National Party Government, that political constraint is the fear of disclosure and the fear of the unknown.

Every day honourable members come into this Chamber and they have to fight to get information from this Government. They have to argue every step of the way. That is typical of what goes on. Any attempt to obtain information is made out to be a sinister thing.

For instance, why does not this Government show the liability of the Queensland Electricity Commission to pay superannuation in the future, a liability which is being incurred at this very moment in power stations throughout Queensland? Perhaps the reason is that the Government thinks that it would have a negative effect on its electoral chances. It would show just what it costs to run the Queensland Electricity Commission. At present nobody knows.

As I have said, this Bill presented the opportunity to achieve financial accountability in the Queensland Electricity Commission. No honourable member would argue that there is not a need to ensure that the true costs and revenues for a year are brought to account for those items which are currently reported, for instance, accrued leave entitlements as part of the wages cost. Surely those basic items should be reported. In addition, the cost of the items that I have listed that are not currently reported must be recognised. Foreign exchange gains or losses are not reported. Honourable members do not know whether the Queensland Electricity Commission has made gains or suffered losses. One can bet that it has suffered losses, but no-one knows. Members of this Parliament—and I mean all members of this Parliament—and certainly the electors of Queensland need to know the real costs and the real commitments of the Queensland Electricity Commission.

Recent legislation in New South Wales requires statutory bodies to produce accounts on an accrual basis. That system was introduced by the Unsworth Government, and it was proceeding with it. One of Greiner's campaign pledges was that, upon election, he would introduce accrual accounting for Government departments in New South Wales. The hard work was done by Unsworth to adopt that system with the statutory authorities, so a lot of the groundwork has been done. Greiner has made that commitment. It is a bipartisan issue in New South Wales.

The National Council on Government Accounting in the United States of America noted that the accrual basis is the superior method of accounting for the economic resources of any organisation. That statement was made by Government accountants in

the United States. The council went further and recommended that the accrual basis be used to the fullest extent practicable in the Government environment. That is not what is happening in Queensland.

Tonight I thought that the Electricity Act Amendment Bill presented an opportunity to start doing something about it, not to actually eliminate the only bit of information that did have some slight concept or hint of some attempt at accrual accounting with at least a recognition of depreciation on the original cost of electricity assets.

I turn now to the supplementary report of the Auditor-General for the year ended 1987. I think that all members of Parliament have had a copy of the report placed on their desks. In Appendix F, under the heading "Accounting in the Public Sector", it states—

"There is a strong and increasingly vocal body of authoritative opinion"—

it is nice to know that I am on the side of that—

"in favour of the adoption of accrual accounting techniques by all public sector entities.

. . .

Consequently, the financial statements of a cash accounting entity do not portray its true operational results and, except to the extent to which they are supplemented with accrual type information in relation to assets and liabilities, they do not convey the financial worth of an entity at the end of the period concerned."

What is the use of those things? They do not really provide any information, but the change that will be introduced into the Act will eliminate some of the information that was previously being provided.

At this stage I make it absolutely clear that I do not want in any way to denigrate the Auditor-General. After being so excited about the concept and talking about the authoritative opinion that exists for the introduction of accrual accounting, he stated—

". . . I venture the opinion that there is little convincing evidence that the benefits to be derived from formal accrual accounting would be commensurate with its implementational and ongoing costs and the problems that its application would cause across the vast, complex and decentralised Queensland public sector."

In his conclusion, after being so excited about it, the Auditor-General has really succumbed in some ways to the politics of the situation. However, as I said, it is not my intention to attack the Auditor-General except to say that his statement defends a lack of accountability by the Queensland Government.

As I said earlier, this amending Bill presented an opportunity to require the preparation of financial statements for the QEC and the electricity boards that enable people to assess truly the cost of operations of the QEC. That is what accrual accounting does. As I said, New South Wales has introduced accrual accounting for statutory authorities. I simply contend that, if the Government does not use accrual accounting, it does not know what the costs of the QEC are. Accrual accounting has particular relevance because we are talking about a massive investment in infrastructure that is borne by all Queensland tax-payers. The Minister referred to that. We are all aware of how huge the department is, but we are faced with a situation in which the Government is not correctly accounting for it.

I contend also that the lack of determination by the Minister to bite the bullet and start introducing accrual accounting in Queensland is an insult to the accountants who work so diligently in the public service in Queensland. They are very, very sharp people, and they are in a position to introduce this system. It is ridiculous to simply fob it off and do nothing about it. It puts the people of Queensland in a position in which they are completely unaware of the true cost of the Queensland Electricity Commission.

I turn now to the amendments relating to superannuation. I refer to the Queensland Electricity Supply Industry Superannuation Board. I draw to the attention of the House Note 14 at page 100, "Actuarial Investigation", which states—

> "In accordance with the Board's decision on 21 November, 1984, an investigation as to the state and sufficiency of the funds standing to the credit of and accruing due to the Scheme as at 30 June, 1985 was conducted by"—

a firm of actuaries—

> ". . . in terms of section 375 . . . The firm certified that each section of the Scheme was actuarially sound and that the existing level of contributions by members and employers be continued."

It then makes a statement that bears consideration by the Minister. It states—

> "The Board is not aware of any circumstances that have arisen since the date of the investigation"—

and we are talking about 21 November 1984—

> "that indicate other than continued actuarial soundness of the Scheme."

I draw the attention of honourable members to Note 1 in the foreword. The "Notes to and forming part of the accounts for the year ended 30 June 1987" state that as at 30 June 1987 approximately 8 900 employees of the electricity supply industry were covered by the scheme. In 1986 the figure was 9 600. The note to which I referred earlier stated that "The Board is not aware of any circumstances". I believe that there are some circumstances.

The actuarial investigation occurred in 1985. In that year there were 10 000 employees of the board, in 1986 there were 9 600 employees, and in 1987 there were 8 900 employees. Because of the declining base of the employees of the electricity board, circumstances may have arisen since the date of the investigation that indicate other than continued actuarial soundness of the scheme. I am not saying that that has not been examined, but I am saying that that is a very big statement that is made in that actuarial investigation. Of course, these figures were released prior to the stock-market crash of last year.

Mr Austin: You are not on that again! You were wrong last time. I will tell you what—if you were an accountant, I wouldn't get you to do my books.

Mr HAYWARD: The honourable member should ask Mr Alison about that.

There has been a significant effect on the superannuation investments of the fund. Many of those investments have been made through investment bodies that are clearly investing in the stock-market.

I am not saying that those matters have affected the actuarial soundness of the scheme. There may have been limited-scope actuarial investigations that were carried out since then. However, a perusal of the accounts does not reveal that. The information is not contained therein. It is not clear and the information is not made available to people. That is what I am trying to say. This legislation presented an opportunity to change some of these things.

In the few minutes remaining I will deal with a couple of the other parts of this Bill. Clauses 67 to 70 deal with superannuation. Clause 67 amends section 371, which concerns the articles of the superannuation scheme. It is important to remember that this amendment gives Cabinet total power over changes to the articles of the superannuation scheme. It is important to consider that previously Cabinet merely approved changes by the superannuation board. Cabinet will now be in the position in which it has total power over any changes to the electricity superannuation scheme. That is an important matter to bring out in this debate.

Clause 69 amends section 380. It provides that all new public service transferees who were previously part of the State service superannuation scheme must swap to the

electricity scheme. That probably explains why there is a need to boost the numbers, because they are declining. I accept that. There is nothing wrong with that. It is just that I am looking for some explanation as to why it is occurring.

Clause 70 inserts sections 381A and 381E, which deal with the employer-funded accumulations superannuation fund. It should be noted that, typical of the style of this Government, the rules of the fund, which dictate such things as contributions, benefits, and the nomination of the six employer and employee trustees, are not spelt out in the Bill for debate in this House. Instead, they are made subject to Cabinet direction.

In conclusion, I refer to the remarks made by Mr Gilmore in this debate. He described this Bill as a landmark piece of legislation. It certainly is a landmark for this Government. It is a landmark of lack of financial accountability; it is a landmark of sloppy presentation of such vital legislation by the Minister; and it is a landmark in its attempts to conceal the overseas and other debts of the Queensland Electricity Commission.

Time expired.

Mr De LACY (Cairns) (9.02 p.m.): It is my intention to be brief. Sometimes, because of reasons outside my control, my best intentions are not realised. It amazes me how many times in this House we seem to be engaged in an exercise of saving the Minister from himself. We tried to do it in relation to the fire services levy and the port authority levy, and now we are trying to do it again with these amendments to the Electricity Act. I am concerned that we will not be successful.

In north Queensland the Minister is being called the Minister for tariffs. He introduced the fire services levy, the port authority levy and now he is looking for some way to introduce a power consumption levy. It seems to me to be a pity that a Minister from north Queensland is not going into bat for north Queensland. Some of the consequences of this legislation and some of the consequences of the decisions the Minister is making in respect of the electricity industry are not in the best interests of north Queensland. I will refer to that in a minute.

I cannot see the benefits of this particular piece of legislation. I am certain it will have a deleterious effect on safety standards. It will certainly do away with jobs. I doubt that it will have a very beneficial effect in terms of cost efficiency.

I will now comment on some of the remarks made in this debate by the other person from north Queensland, Mr Gilmore.

Mr Smith: Far-north Queensland.

Mr De LACY: From far-north Queensland—I am sorry. He said that this is landmark legislation. The honourable member for Caboolture has just referred to that point. It is a landmark, all right, but in the wrong direction. Mr Gilmore said that there is nothing to demonstrate that electricity contractors are shonky. Nobody would ever suggest that all electricity contractors are shonky. Certainly the Labor Party does not. He said that the National Party trusts the people. It has a funny way of trusting them; it will not even introduce a fair electoral system and trust them to vote properly.

The fact is that there are shonky electrical contractors; although there are some very good ones. In my area there are many fly-by-nighters. The tourism-based economy of the north seems to attract those people. In far-north Queensland there are now 360 electrical contractors. Some of them start up overnight. Some of them do not last very long. Tremendous competition exists between them. Even those people who are fairly good tradesmen, because they get caught up in a highly competitive business, are forced to cut corners and so forth. They are the reasons why the inspection system ought to be maintained. It has served this State very well over a long period, and that is why the Opposition so virulently opposes this legislation. Members of the Opposition fail to see who will benefit. The so-called $6m saving to consumers is absolute nonsense. Let me say to everybody in this Chamber, "Don't hold your breath waiting for those benefits to flow through to the consumers."

Last year, the Far North Queensland Electricity Board inspected 2 400 new homes, of which 120 had defects. One home in every 20 had some type of defect that had to be rectified. Any of those defects could have led to fire, shock or bad accidents, if not fatalities.

Let me inform honourable members who wants the old system retained. Obviously, the workers do, the home-owners do, the insurance underwriters do, and most of the responsible contractors do, too. They want the old system retained as protection—at least the big firms do. Any firm's workmanship is only as good as its worst employee. One incident was cited to me in which inspectors had received a completion certificate and an inspection application form. When they went to the site to inspect the job, they discovered that it had not even been started. That example demonstrates the types of problems that occur in an industry characterised by heavy competition that puts a lot of pressure on firms to make money and get jobs done.

I do not think the Minister understands how good some of these inspectors are. They have been in the job for a life-time. I know one inspector who as been in the job since 1957. The inspectors are very experienced in detecting faults. Other electricians could be sent out to inspect sites, but they would not be able to do half the job because they do not know what to look for. The people I am referring to are specialist inspectors.

I am not against imposing a charge for the service. The Minister should have investigated ways of making a charge for the service in much the same way as local councils charge for visits by plumbing and building inspectors. It is not good for society that the service is being done away with in the manner proposed by the Minister. I cannot see who will benefit as a result of this legislation. Although it may be sensational, the question I ask the Minister is: what price can be put on human life?

This situation is similar to the decision made by the Minister to automate hydroelectric power stations in north Queensland at Kareeya and Barron Gorge, which went down like a lead balloon. It was unpopular not only with the people who work at those stations but also with people in the general community. I am led to believe that automation of hydroelectric power stations simply will not work and that the possibility of bringing in a viable automated unit is pretty well negligible. The area and method of operation are not suited to automation and the equipment is aged. Moreover, only certain parts of the operation will be able to be automated.

Mr Smith: The scale is too small.

Mr De LACY: Exactly. If the hydroelectric power station had been planned to incorporate automation from the word go, it may have worked; but it will have minimal effect at this stage. Certainly, it will not improve the economic operation of the power stations and it could well have the opposite effect when the capital cost is taken into consideration.

Management no doubt made the calculations during a very dry season. A low level of electricity consumption in north Queensland has been recorded for both power plants. When that happens, management always starts to worry about reducing the work-force and the problem seems to be how to get rid of the men at the lower level of the employment scale. However, circumstances would be different in a period of flood. Flood seasons have not been abolished. People in south Queensland thought that it would never rain again, but what happened this year? People are needed to operate these power stations, particularly when flash-flooding occurs. An automated system cannot respond as quickly as men who have implemented monitoring systems up and down the river. I point out that the revenue earned in 24 hours of full production at 60 megawatts would pay for one shift-worker for a year. However, in order to appreciate the value of an employee in that type of production, one needs to be on the spot.

Obviously the exercise at Barron Gorge is to do away with the shift-workers, thereby eliminating an operator and a turbine attendant. These shift-workers work on a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week basis, which involves eight men altogether. The workers have been

advised that 13 people will be retrenched or made redundant. Eight shift-workers and five other workers will be involved. I presume that they are the ones who clean the intake screens and valve chambers. How can automation affect those workers? They will not be affected at all, and if the industry can do away with them now, why could it not do away with them 25 years ago? It simply does not make sense.

The other point I wish to make is that the shift-workers in the turbine area are more than just power production officers. In addition, they are security officers and fire protection officers. The Minister knows that vandalism in that area is rife. The area is now a major tourist attraction and there are people creeping around that part of the world all the time. Those shift-workers also act as security officers. I can see the situation arising in which the Government will spend a lot of money to replace two power workers and replace them with two security officers. It simply will not work. It is exactly the same story at Kareeya. Thirteen workers at the Barron Gorge Power Station will be made redundant and between 30 and 40 at Kareeya. Twelve shift-workers will be involved; and where will the other 30 workers come from? The Government can do away with half the staff overnight, but what will happen to the work that they used to do? Half of this work cannot be automated. The employees have not been told which of them will be made redundant and, as a consequence, there is a lot of confusion and low morale. The workers do not know whether they will have a job next year or not. What kind of a basis is that to run an operation from? It always seems to be the case that people down at the lower end of the scale can be sacrificed.

Mr Tenni: They have all been told. They were told the day we got through to Cabinet last Monday week.

Mr De LACY: I am talking about the ones at Kareeya.

Mr Tenni: There have been discussions with the unions and the whole lot.

Mr De LACY: All right, but the advice that has come to me is that they do not know which workers are going. They do know the numbers, and obviously the shift-workers know that they are going; but they are only a percentage of the work-force which is being made redundant.

Mr Tenni: They are a long way down the track.

Mr De LACY: Yes, but that is my point. It is a long way down the track and if they are going to have this difficult period of uncertainty as to whether or not they have a future, it will be a terrible working environment.

Mr Tenni: They were all told.

Mr De LACY: I will take the Minister's word for it that each person knows whether or not he will have a job in the future; but that is certainly not the advice that I have received.

Mr Tenni: All the shift-workers.

Mr De LACY: But it is more than the shift-workers. There are only eight shift-workers at Barron Falls and 13 people will be made redundant.

Mr Tenni: Yes, there are a couple of others.

Mr De LACY: Perhaps the Minister can clarify this later.

The industry will not produce one extra kilowatt of power and there will be no additional cost efficiency. I cannot see the economics and no-one else can. I wonder what the Government is talking about.

I have one final point: I understand that some houses have been transferred from Collinsville to Koombooloomba, facilities have been upgraded at Kareeya and now it is said that some of the workers in that area will be made redundant. It seems that different management groups within QEC are going in different directions. I believe that the

Government is downgrading the north and will make north Queensland more vulnerable than it is at the present time from the point of view of its power supplies. The people of Queensland should not hold their breath waiting for these economies to flow through to consumers in the form of reduced electricity tariffs.

Mr BEANLAND (Toowong) (9.14 p.m.): I rise to support my colleague the honourable member for Mount Isa and the Liberal Party's opposition to this legislation.

I trust that the Government is not endeavouring to promote these amendments as part of its deregulation process. I say that because my mind goes back to a time a few days ago when the Minister rose in this House and indicated that under no circumstances would he entertain the idea of privatising this State's electricity operations. He should certainly be looking at a deregulation process. The aspects of safety and people's lives are certainly far removed from the kind of deregulation that I know and speak of. They have nothing to do with deregulation. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I am very surprised that the Government would gamble with people's lives in this fashion. The honourable member for Mount Isa indicated enormous opposition from community groups to these changes.

Mr McPhie: That is what was said in 1977.

Mr BEANLAND: This opposition comes from all around Queensland, not only Toowoomba and Cairns. One can understand that, because the Government is lowering safety standards.

Mr McPhie: They are not.

Mr BEANLAND: The member for Toowoomba North should return to his electorate in a hurry because, after the result of the Groom by-election last Saturday, obviously his seat is in grave jeopardy.

Mr Beard: We are probably enjoying the last moments of his company.

Mr BEANLAND: Yes, that is probably right.

One of the effects of lowering safety standards will be an increase in the number of fires in properties in the State. That is the reason that the Insurance Council of Australia is so strongly opposed to the legislation. One can go through the list of other community groups that have indicated their strong opposition. They are not opposed to the lowering of safety standards just for the sake of opposition; they all have real and credible reasons, reasons that have stood the test of time. After all, if it had not been reasonable to have these safety checks and these high safety standards, why over all these years have we had them? Why has the Government not previously done away with them?

It is very easy for human error to occur. It is not only shoddy workmanship that can cause electrical problems. In this day and age when electricians are working in small and confined areas—they can be very cramped spaces—it is very easy for them to put a wire in the wrong place or to attach wires incorrectly. On the odd occasion, that happens, and no amount of penalties or anything else of that nature put in the legislation by the Minister will overcome these problems. Of course, some people in the community do their own wiring. When that occurs, with these short-cuts that the Government is taking, safety problems will arise.

What the House is dealing with tonight is safety. When it comes to health and safety, the House is not dealing with something such as deregulation, it is dealing with people's lives. The two should not be mixed up, as obviously the Minister and the Government have done. Obviously they are confused over the whole issue. When people are dealing with electricity, they do not get a second chance. Once a person is subjected to an electric current, that person very rarely gets a second chance. That is what the Minister is dealing with tonight: people's lives.

If the Minister had been serious about deregulation and wanted to investigate the efficiency and the effectiveness of the electricity industry, he could have investigated many, many other areas. Instead of simply dismissing privatisation out of hand, which is what he did in this Chamber, he could have investigated its possibilities. The Minister has indicated that it is far easier to do away with safety standards. No beneficial effects will flow from the abolition of these standards. Whilst the Minister can point to a saving of $3m or some other figure, he fails to take into account the concern of the community at large, because, there is not only the increased loss through fire in residential, commercial and industrial property but also the human suffering that occurs with them. No dollar signs can be put on that loss.

The member for Lockyer, who does not appear to be in the Chamber at the moment, in speaking earlier in the debate said that the onus would be on the shoulders of the electricians doing the shoddy work. Of course, the onus is on their shoulders at present. If they make an error, there is not much use going along afterwards and complaining about it or increasing the fine. Clearly, the damage is done. That is the very reason that we should ensure that those safety checks remain. If they have not been necessary over all those years, why have they been retained for so long?

It is worth noting that the Government, in supporting this proposal, has trotted out the Savage committee recommendations. It is pleasing to see that the Government at long last is looking at the Savage committee report. I remember when the report first came into this Chamber. The Government swept aside the most important recommendations. It has still pushed aside the most important recommendations. It takes only certain recommendations out of the Savage committee report and uses them in the manner in which it wants to in order to further its own interests. It has not looked at the whole of the Savage report and taken up all the important recommendations that are contained therein.

The Government is once again attacking local authorities and local government. The present Minister was Minister for Water Resources and Maritime Services when the Government abolished representation from local authorities on harbour boards in this State. It seems to be an exercise by the Government to castigate the role of local authority. In this legislation we find local government representation has been cut from five nominees out of a board of eight members to two nominees out of a board of five. If the Government is going to cut local government representation and look at relativity between the numbers, it should be looking at three out of five members and not two out of five members.

Local government reluctantly accepts the reduction in the number of board members. I know that local authorities have indicated their strenuous opposition to the Minister in relation to the proposal. They find it difficult to accept. However, if they have to accept a reduction from eight to five in the numbers on the electricity boards, certainly they want three representatives. I cannot accept the reduction to two members; nor can the Liberal Party.

Obviously, the Government is looking at the make-up of electricity boards. It is concerned about the voting patterns on electricity boards. This change in the numbers on the boards opens up the spectre of cronyism at a time when the Government's action is under close scrutiny indeed. The Government is looking not only at the reduction of the number of members to two, but also at changing the situation so that the Government, through the Governor in Council, can appoint from a panel of five two representatives to the boards. Local authorities throughout the State oppose that change most strenuously, and the Minister is fully aware of that. Local authorites believe that if they have to accept a reduction in the number of representatives from five to two, they should at least be allowed to select those two representatives on the relevant boards.

It is not good enough for the Minister to say that the Government wants to have the say. For decades, local authorities have made those appointments. Suddenly the State Government finds that the local authority representatives lack credibility and business acumen. In his second-reading speech, I believe that the Minister made a slur

against local authorities by insinuating that they do not always have business acumen. Local authorities in this State are huge business undertakings. Because of their size, members of local authorities clearly have the ability to be able to become effective members of electricity boards.

The Minister stated that local authority representatives were receiving board attendance fees of $400 per meeting. If the Minister believes that those fees are too high, it is up to him to change them. Instead, what he has chosen to do is throw the baby out with the bath water. It is an indictment on the Minister that he should imply that the fees that local authority representatives receive are far too high.

The changes that the Government is proposing today are an attack on the credibility of local authority representatives. By removing the ability for these local authorities to select their representatives on the boards the Government must perceive that at present there are perhaps some trouble-makers. If that is so, I can say that there are very few of them on electricity boards. I am not aware of any.

If there is discord, I can assure the Minister that it is nothing compared to the discord and the dissatisfaction that these changes will create among local authority representatives, who have traditionally been very forceful supporters of this State Government over many years, and I am sure that the Minister would recognise that fact. This is certainly not a way in which to continue to gain support from local authority representatives.

It appears that the Minister wants to be able to manipulate the electricity boards and to make them mere rubber stamps. If that is the sort of thing that the Government wants to achieve, fine. If the Government is so concerned, what it should be considering is the complete abolition of the boards.

Mr Tenni: Do you recommend that?

Mr BEANLAND: I am not recommending it. From the cut-backs that have been made and the statements that the Minister made in his second-reading speech, it is apparent that that is the Minister's view as to how the boards should function.

Clearly, the Minister is trying to centralise power, the same as he did with the harbour boards. The Government wants to dictate the terms of the administrative decisions that the boards will make.

Local authority representatives have a great deal of knowledge and expertise not only in relation to business matters in their areas but also in relation to development that takes place in their areas. Electricity boards have a very important role to play in the infrastructure that they provide. Therefore, their decision-making and local authority decision-making in relation to development that occurs in certain regions and local authority areas is very much tied in together. That is a very fundamental and essential reason why local authority representatives should have a position on electricity boards. Clearly, electricity boards and local authorities cover very large areas. They have functioned effectively up to this stage. I am sure that they would have been able to function effectively in the future if the Government had not decided to start decimating them.

Earlier in the debate the honourable member for Lockyer said that it was hog-wash to be concerned about local authority representation. The word he used was "hog-wash". Of course, it is not hog-wash at all to be concerned about the role that local authorities play. Aldermen and councillors who serve on councils are democratically elected. They are fit and proper people to play a role in and to have an important place on the electricity boards that operate in this State.

As I have said, this legislation is nothing more than an attack not only on safety standards but also on local government representation on electricity authorities in this State. The Local Government Association has indicated that it is strongly opposed to this method of selection and to the number of representatives that it will have on electricity boards.

I indicate that at the Committee stage I will move an amendment to one of the clauses that relates to local government representation.

Mr PREST (Port Curtis) (9.30 p.m.): I have pleasure in supporting the Opposition spokesman. I am disappointed that the Minister proposes to make changes to the seven electricity boards in Queensland. The present position is that the seven boards comprise seven members, five of whom are from local government. The Minister proposes to reduce the composition of the boards to five members so that the boards comprise a representative of the commissioner and four other members, two of whom will be from local government.

The Capricornia Electricity Board, CEB, covers an area from Taroom in the south, west to the South Australian/Northern Territory border, up to the north-west, out into the central west and along the coast down as far as Wide Bay. That is a very large area, and it incorporates approximately 20 local authorities. Over the years it has been hard for those local authorities to select five persons to represent all those local authorities. The number of members on those boards will be eroded. It must be remembered that in the mid-1970s the Queensland Government did away with the Central Western Queensland Electricity Board, CWQEB, which was amalgamated with the CEB. It now covers one of the largest areas in Queensland.

The Minister said that one of the reasons he wants to reduce the number of representatives on the boards is that he wants the representatives on the boards to be businessmen and people with business acumen. Of course, he wants the boards to be run as a multimillion-dollar business.

Mr De Lacy: Do you think he would be worried about their politics?

Mr PREST: I am sure that he would be.

The local authorities are very upset because they know that the gentlemen that the Minister will appoint undoubtedly will be just rubber stamps for the Minister and for the commission.

Mr R. J. Gibbs: He might appoint Mr Bellino to the FNQEB.

Mr PREST: He could do so. Mr Bellino might be appointed to two boards. He might be appointed to the board in the Brisbane area. I think that Mr Bellino has some connections in far-north Queensland also. One never knows who his friends might be.

Not very long ago, a newspaper article was headed "Tenni can't be trusted: Lewis". I do not know who Lewis was; I think that he may have been the Police Commissioner! I will not read the report, because it relates to the Fitzgerald inquiry and people who have been named at that inquiry. Since he became a Minister, Mr Tenni has gone through a pretty bad time. Who knows when the report of the Fitzgerald inquiry will be handed down? Perhaps we had better give the Minister a farewell now.

Mr Tenni was the Minister responsible for fire services. Honourable members know what happened to fire services in this State. Mr Tenni then became the Minister for Maritime Services. Again, henchman tactics were applied so that the number of boards was reduced. A levy was imposed on harbour boards. The number of representatives on electricity boards will be reduced—again by Mr Tenni.

Mr Tenni: It is "Ten-nee".

Mr PREST: "Ten-nee"! What is that—Chinese?

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PREST: It is like "Norm Lee". I do not want to get personal. I inform the Minister that I am still around and that we are still very good friends.

Martin has never been known for his honesty.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PREST: I always like to hear some of the things that he promises. No doubt when he talks about cutting down on people, he really means that, and he really loves it.

The Minister says that by appointing businessmen to the boards he will reduce payments to board members. I was not aware that each board member receives $5,000 a year for attending 12 meetings annually. If that is the case, those members would be receiving between $450 and $500 a meeting. The Minister went on to say that he intends to reduce their payments to $59 for a meeting of two hours, $79 for a meeting of two to four hours, and $104 for a meeting that lasts for more than four hours. The chairman will receive $89, $119 and $148 respectively. I do not know where the Minister thinks he will obtain businessmen who will be prepared to go to Rockhampton or wherever for two-hour meetings and be paid $59.

I remember quite well—and Mr Viertel would be aware, too—that, during the 1970s, the CEB board used to meet at 9 a.m., have morning tea from 10 to 10.30, resume the meeting at 10.30 and continue until 11.30 or 11.45, and then adjourn to the Leichhardt Hotel—end of meeting.

I do not know of any businessman in Rockhampton or the near vicinity who would be prepared to give up a day's work, attend a board meeting and receive $59. The members of the CEB board come from Longreach, Barcaldine, Blackall and further afield. In fact, the chairman of the board, Mr Stockwell, comes from Blackall. I do not see how the Minister will attract businessmen from those areas to attend two-hour meetings for a payment of $59.

People who have been members of local authority boards for some time have a close contact with the local communities. Boards such as the CEB that are so big comprise members who would not have a clue as to what development is taking place from one end of a local authority's area to the other. Through meetings and conferences that are held regularly by local authorities, there is contact with the people in the outer areas of an electorate.

The Minister should take cognisance of what has been said by the Local Government Association, namely, that because they are duly elected by the people and work for the people, board members should be members of the local authority.

I often wonder why we have a person in Gladstone by the name of Mr Bellet. I call him a professional board member. He is a Government appointee, not a local government representative. He could not win a raffle, let alone win a position on a local authority by being duly elected. Not only is Mr Bellet a representative on the CEB board, but he is also the Government appointee on the harbour board, the Gladstone Hospitals Board and the Gladstone Fire Brigade Board.

Although Mr Tenni has not yet become the Minister for Health——

Mr Tenni: Next time.

Mr PREST: Most probably the honourable member will be. Mr Tenni has been the Minister responsible for all of those boards on which Mr Bellet—the professional board member of Gladstone—is a Government appointee.

A Government member interjected.

Mr PREST: As I said, if Mr Bellet put his name into a ballot, he would not win a point. I do not think he would even get his own.

Mr Tenni: Do you want him off?

Mr PREST: Yes, I do.

I would like the Minister to take cognisance of the local authority and have those people who have been elected to the local authorities reappointed to the electricity boards, especially in the CEB area. That should occur not only there but also right throughout Queensland.

One of the things that concern must be shown about is safety. The duties are being taken away from the inspectors, and the electrical contractors and others who carry out work will be held responsible for any faulty workmanship. Safety is being sacrificed for the dollar. Mr Tenni seems to be more concerned about saving the dollar. It is known in many trades, whether it be panel-beating, carpentry, labouring or whatever, that if there is a short-cut to be taken, some unscrupulous person will always take it. When that person is found out, it is normally too late and generally at someone else's expense. Because of the dangers associated with electricity, one very seldom gets a second chance with it. It must be remembered that death is final. This Bill is sacrificing safety for the dollar. That is a step in the wrong direction.

I support the remarks of the Opposition spokesman. The Opposition will be opposing most provisions in the Bill.

Mr EATON (Mourilyan) (9.43 p.m.): In supporting my colleagues, who have covered most of the ground, I will be as brief as possible. The crux of the argument that has been put forward by Government members has been missed. Financial reasons have caused the Government to make decisions in relation to retrenching the workers and shifting them around. It was the Government's lack of economic planning that led to all of the major power stations being built in south-east Queensland. I am quite concerned about that because two years ago in February, cyclone Winifred blew over two electricity towers. For years it was accepted—and also accepted by myself as a former electricity employee—that those towers were practically immovable and that it would take a major earthquake to move them. However, in cyclone Winifred two of those towers were blown over. Expert repair gangs had to be brought in from other areas to try to restore power.

Mr Tenni: The ground was absolutely saturated.

Mr EATON: It also concerned the wind factor, but allowance was supposed to have been made for all of that.

I want to highlight the importance of what I said previously, namely, that all of the major power stations are in south-east Queensland. One of the towers that were blown over was situated between Cairns and Innisfail. The area to the north of that tower—the Cairns section—received its power from the power station at Barron Gorge. The area to the south—Innisfail to Tully—could not receive power, as the grid section could not operate. At one stage, 1 500 people were without power and the two power stations in the north were generating at maximum output. It must be remembered that at that time many of the industries were not working. All the available power workers, including some from Townsville, were trying to restore power to those people. In fact, I sent a telegram to the Minister asking for more gangs to be sent in to try to help restore power more quickly. The last consumer had his power restored on the 14th, which was 14 days after the cyclone. Those men were still working. There were storms on the Atherton Tableland and men were not able to be sent down to help, which, under normal circumstances, would have been done.

The crux of the matter is the finance aspect. The Departmental Accounts Subsidiary to the Public Accounts show that the major debt owed by the Queensland Electricity Commission as at 1 July 1986 amounted to $3,425m and that 12 months later the debt had increased to $3,801m. Honourable members can appreciate the millions of dollars received from tax-payers that are paid out each year in servicing those debts.

North Queensland does not have enough power stations to enable the statement to be made without fear of contradiction that supply can be maintained. As I said earlier, if a major catastrophe occurs and something happens to the towers, the people of far-north Queensland could find themselves without an electricity supply.

Mr Tenni: The Tully hydroelectric scheme will fix that, won't it?

Mr EATON: Hopefully it will. I am not frightened to say that I fully support that scheme. I know the area well and I have worked in the electricity industry.

Mr Tenni: Would you tell that to Senator Richardson?

Mr EATON: I have already told him.

Mr Tenni: He has assured you that he will not hold it up?

Mr EATON: He has not given me any assurance of that kind yet.

Mr Tenni: I am going to go ahead and do it, whether he wants it or not.

Mr EATON: He has told me that the Federal Government will look into that matter when the time comes and that it will possibly go through; but at this stage he will not give me an assurance that the Federal Government will not hold it up.

Mr Tenni: Will you give him that message, because I am going to do it. It will go ahead as planned.

Mr EATON: That project is very much needed in north Queensland because a hydroelectric power station would be cheaper than a coal-fired power station. In the process of construction, employment opportunities can be created for the people who are being forced out of the industry.

I turn my attention now to the plight of the workers. When any Government is involved in a financial crisis, the most dispensable item is the worker. The human element is the first component to be divested. Management can save machinery costs and costs associated with many other items, but the most dispensable item in any industry today is the work-force. That is sad, because this is supposed to be the age of knowledge, science and technology yet a way still has not been found to save the worker.

I am concerned about the disruption that is being caused to workers who are involved in an industry undergoing change. People who have spent a life-time engaged in the electricity industry are having their lives disrupted and are very concerned. Not only is management making it harder for workers to stay in certain industries, but it is also breaking down conditions.

An associated factor is the maintenance of safe conditions, particularly in the training of apprentices. In recent years, because of cut-backs in the work-force due to the economic climate, maintenance has fallen behind. The job I was employed to do before I became a member of Parliament was live-line work. The gang I was in was supposed to visit every pole and major electricity line once every two years for a live-line inspection. At the time I left the industry, the work was two years behind. Because of the decision to reduce the work-force, I understand that the gangs in Cairns have been reduced to four. There were six gangs in Innisfail at the time I was elected to Parliament. There are only two now, although an extra gang operates in Tully.

Management practice is not to replace the workers who retire or resign. Although the odd vacant position has been filled, a great deal more expertise in the electricity industry is needed than many people think. Some specific areas of responsibility have been affected. I am concerned that people do not have to be qualified linesmen to be involved in erecting power lines. A person does not have to be a qualified electrician or a fitter and turner—a fact that was acknowledged even by the Minister. The Minister cited factories and workshops in which process workers can carry out some electrical work. I would agree with the Minister that one does not need an electrical certificate to sweep the floor.

Mr Tenni: What about the standard pole and cross-bearer?

Mr EATON: If the poles are not stood straight, the cross-arms and the insulators will not be properly connected, which will ultimately increase costs.

Mr Tenni: Are you telling me that a builder or a fencing contractor could not stand a pole properly?

Mr EATON: They are not as competent as the men who have been trained to do those jobs, which is why expertise is so significant.

Mr Tenni: It is a short post or a long post.

Mr EATON: No. The trained workers have all the gear. The Minister knows only too well what I am talking about.

The Government contradicts itself in matters of finance. Although I cannot remember the exact figures, the Government decided to construct the Tarong Power Station rather than site the power station at Millmerran, which would have resulted in a saving of $280m. When the Government decided to construct the Tarong Power Station, money was no object. Although I am critical of the economic mismanagement of the industry, construction of the power station at Tarong was of some benefit.

I am not knocking the Government for the sake of knocking it. I acknowledge that electricity was provided for many consumers who occupied residences in remote country areas. Those people have the modern amenities that go with an electricity supply, and they are entitled to them.

Because of the cut-back in staff, there will be a severe drop in maintenance standards. Maintenance cannot be carried out properly. In the future, electricity poles will rot away and accidents will occur. This brings me to the safety aspect, which has been mentioned by previous speakers on this side of the House, who were rightly very concerned about it. In the short term this measure probably looks as though it is an economic proposition, but in the long term it will be a financial disaster. Maintenance must be continuous, especially in the electricity industry, not only out in the fields, but also inside where there is a great deal of very modern, costly and sophisticated equipment.

Mr Tenni: The maintenance stays there—no problem. All the equipment is being maintained.

Mr EATON: Yes, but if the inside machinery is maintained, the outside maintenance will be neglected.

I have seen these modern VIP poles, as they call them, which have become rotten within a short time of being installed. When I was working in the industry, we had to get the lifting wagon out to hold the top of one of these poles while the transformer and everything else was taken off. That was the exception rather than the rule, but it does happen. Luckily for us, at that time, an accident was avoided. It was only sheer luck that the state of the pole was recognised before we actually climbed it. If the rotten part had been a bit higher up, we would have put the ladder over it.

There are many aspects of the electricity industry that the average man in the street does not know about. He takes a lot of things for granted. When one delves behind the scenes in the industry and looks at the managerial sections, one finds that that is where tradesmen are required. Under this legislation, those people will be phased out. This is a short-term solution to an economic problem, but I do not believe that in the long term it will pay off. How will the apprentices of the future get the expertise that is required? So many different things can happen. A service must be provided to the community. The community has a right to demand a continuity of electricity supply. The whole of today's society, whether industrial, household or rural, is geared to expect—and rightly so—continuity of supply.

When I worked in the electricity industry there were times when I worked all night without a break helping to change transformers and to put power back on for farmers, particularly dairy-farmers. A cow cannot understand that the milking machines will not work because there is no power. Even though we had plenty of men working in that area, we still had to work all night. Often after an isolated storm men from other towns would be sent out to help us. However, if there was a major storm on the Atherton Tablelands, the Mareeba, Atherton, Ravenshoe and Millaa Millaa gangs would all have to work all night. At daylight the farmers would be there waiting for us; the cows would be causing problems in the paddocks.

I do not see how the electricity boards will be able to maintain the service that the communities have come to expect. I have only mentioned one part of the agricultural industry. Although farmers can perhaps go to bed in the dark and have tea by candlelight, if the power is off for too long—as it will be under these circumstances—it will cause problems. I have seen those steel-cased transformers opened up like aluminium soft-drink cans when the lightning strikes them.

Mr Tenni: How did they get on with the unions in all the long strikes that we had, with no power?

Me EATON: The Minister knows very well the problems caused by the strike.

Mr Tenni: How did they get on? Who tried to help them? Did you get out and try?

Mr EATON: Those people have to survive. Because of the Government's cut-backs, exactly the same position in the industry will be created as was caused by the strikers at that time. It will be unnecessary. Is it all right when the Government does it?

Mr Tenni: Those gangs have got nothing to do with the Bill. They still stay there. I do not know what you are talking about.

Mr EATON: But the Minister is reducing the work-force.

Mr Tenni: No, we are not reducing those.

Mr EATON: It will create a disturbance in the industry from that angle, and in the long term it will cause problems.

All the major power stations are situated in the south-east corner of the State and more power stations should be built in north Queensland.

Getting back onto the safety angle—this legislation will do away with inspectors.

Mr Tenni: We are not doing away with inspectors.

Mr EATON: Inspections will have to be paid for and problems will occur. There are a lot of old buildings in north Queensland which have not all swung over to the new modern, plastic-covered wiring.

Mr Tenni: We are going to help that under this new legislation.

Mr EATON: I hope that is the case, but at this stage I cannot see that the Government's legislation will help. It is all right to say something, but to do it is a totally different thing. The Government is now saying what it will do, and we will have to wait to see whether it will be done. The Minister claims that the intent of the Bill is good, I only hope that the intent can be carried out.

Hon. M. J. TENNI (Barron River—Minister for Mines and Energy) (9.56 p.m.), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their input to the debate. I will endeavour to comment on each contribution where I see that is warranted. The Opposition spokesman, the member for Wolston, has done his best to scare the public about safety. If we want to be honest, all that he said justifies the proposals in the Bill. I am very pleased that he has done just that. He quoted from a Townsville newspaper article that stated that some electrical contractors will be forced for the first time to buy test equipment. That is an admission that the contractors do not test work that is to be inspected by electricity boards. It is the contractor's responsibility to do safe work. I would imagine it would be his responsibility to have the necessary tools to check things to make sure that his work is safe.

A recent Western Australian newspaper editorial pointed out that recently 30 per cent of installations that contractors knew would be inspected were found to have defects. The State Energy Commission made it clear that new installations would no longer be

inspected but later followed up with inspections. Believe it or not, less than 4 per cent of installations had defects. Clearly, electrical contractors can ensure their work is safe when they know the responsibility is theirs.

One of the things that the member for Wolston did not say is that really the Government has changed nothing. There is nothing to stop somebody having an inspection. The member for Cairns agreed with this. If a person wants to pay, he can have an inspection. If a person is silly enought to engage a person who he believes is not a capable electrical contractor——

Mr R. J. Gibbs: If he is incompetent, why should he be in the industry?

Mr TENNI: That is a good point. I thank the honourable member for raising it. The board, which is set up to deal with these people, is made up of contractors and unions. That is their responsibility and I am pleased that the honourable member brought that forward. I will deal with that further later on.

One of the points raised by the member for Wolston was the provision in the legislation requiring a consumer to maintain in a safe condition a disconnected overhead line that has not been dismantled. There is nothing new about this. An exactly similar provision is contained in the present Act and was included years ago. However, only tonight has the member for Wolston seen fit to bring the matter up.

The honourable member for Wolston has fears about shonky electrical work. So has the Government. Most of it is done by unqualified people, and the honourable member knows that as well as I do. All that the Government can do is police it and prosecute offenders before they kill themselves or someone else. I emphasise that, at a consumer's request, free inspections will still be available every 10 years in newer dwellings and every five years in older dwellings, which are likely to have rubber-sheathed wiring which is subject to deterioration. I do not know whether the honourable member knows of that service, but it has been provided in the past and will continue to be provided. In fact, inspectors will now have more time to do that.

Mr R. J. Gibbs: You did not make that clear.

Mr TENNI: But the service is provided already. All a person has to do is ring his local board, which will tell him that that service is available. I do not have to spell that out for you. You are a grown man. You are the shadow spokesman on electricity matters. Surely to goodness you have the ability——

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr TENNI: I am sorry, Mr Speaker. Through you, Mr Speaker, I wish to say that surely to goodness the Opposition spokesman has the ability to read a telephone book to find the number of his local regional board, pick up a telephone and ask those questions. So that the honourable member for Wolston can inform the people whom he represents, I will repeat that, if they have a newer-style house, every 10 years they are entitled to a free inspection. If it is an old home with the old rubber-covered wiring, every five years, on request, they are entitled to a free inspection.

Even though the number of inspectors throughout the State will be reduced, the ones who remain will have more time to do more of that type of work. In doing so, they will save lives, because the old homes, particularly those with the rubber-covered wiring, are the ones that cause fires. Fires, believe it or not, at times cause loss of life.

What the Government is doing—it is not supported by the Labor Party or the Liberal Party—is protecting the lives of Queenslanders. One would have thought that, being representatives of the people, Opposition members would have recognised that very important point about the protection of the lives of Queenslanders.

I agree that there are some bandit contractors. However, to date, when they have been caught, the Electrical Workers and Contractors Board has been very lenient with them. Following discussions with the board, I am confident that that will change. The

message that I delivered to the board was that it should do what it has been placed there to do—really hit shonky contractors. In other words, the board must be responsible or the Government will replace it or do something to put some backbone into it. The shonky contractors must be penalised. We do not want shonky contractors or people who do not check their work operating in Queensland as licensed electrical contractors.

It is up to the board to take their licences off them for a period of 12 months or two years. That is the best penalty that should be imposed and it is the best protection for the industry. The electricity industry and the unions, who are making much noise, have the majority of representatives on the boards. It is up to them to do something about it.

My remarks about a contractor being able to pay the electricity board or another contractor do not mean that the Government has no confidence in their ability. I see it as a prop for a contractor who has not been facing up to his responsibilities over a transitional period; in other words, there is a way out for that particular contractor.

There is provision in the law now for branding second-hand electrical articles offered for sale, but it is hard to enforce. The proposed ticketing system will help overcome that problem.

The honourable member for Wolston obviously has not been properly briefed about superannuation portability. Our articles have always contained portability provisions. I do not know whether the honourable member for Wolston is aware of that. However, they are not effective, because the other States have not made similar provisions. Perhaps the honourable member could talk to all the socialist States and I could talk to the other States. We will see what we can do about it. We might be able to get all the States to come to the party.

The member for Wolston said that we are lowering our safety standards and giving contractors the opportunity to be master craftsman. He says that we are lowering quality standards and creating demarcation issues. In fact, we have not had a black-out as a result of an industrial dispute since the SEQEB strike. Mr Gibbs claims that we are sending small electrical businesses broke. In fact, we are giving them an opportunity to improve their profits by allowing process workers to do process work, leaving the electrical tradesmen the more skilled work and supervision.

The member for Wolston also says that we are increasing the cost to the public of inspections. In fact, the public will receive the benefit of a $6m cost saving.

The members who oppose the Bill must realise that a person who has spent large sums of money on lavish extensions to his home in the last 12 years has never had to have that work inspected. The Opposition is saying that the invalid pensioners, the war pensioners and the little people who own their own homes and who use electricity should continue to subsidise the inspections on the houses of the wealthy. That is what it amounts to. That is what the Opposition is saying. I will make sure that the pensioners of Queensland get the message that the Labor Party and the Liberal Party are saying that that should continue.

The Opposition is trying to hide that by saying that it affects safety. However, in 12 years of extensions and alterations and rewiring of homes in this State, there has not been an increase in the death rate or injury rate in the electrical industry. Statements made by members of the Opposition that the lives of people in this State will be endangered or that the injury rate will increase are a total fabrication. The Government has allowed 12 years of testing to ensure that those statements are totally wrong. They have in fact been proved wrong over 12 years.

The Government is saying to the little people—the people whom the Labor Party and the Liberal Party supposedly represent—that it will take that cost burden off them in the future and that people who want a service will pay for it. The little person will not have to pay for it every day of the week when he switches on his light. It is not on as far as this Government is concerned. This Government looks after all of the people

in this State. This Government believes that the little people are just as entitled to be looked after as the big people.

I turn to the contribution by the member for Tablelands. I should not have to say anything about the comments that he made. People will read what he had to say in *Hansard* over and over again——

Mr Hayward: They won't believe it.

Mr TENNI: I will deal with the member for Caboolture shortly.

The member for Tablelands really understands the Bill. He pointed out the facts. I thought that, after hearing his contribution, the rest of the Opposition speakers would realise the totally irresponsible manner in which the Opposition spokesman, the member for Wolston, went about his job——

Mr Austin: Shocking, it was.

Mr TENNI: It was disgraceful. Like sheep, the others followed on, even though the truth had been revealed by the member for Tablelands.

The honourable member for Bowen said a lot about nothing. However, when he did speak on worthwhile matters, it was obvious that he had been very badly briefed. Thirty of the Collinsville houses were shifted to Bowen for the Housing Commission to help the people whom the member for Bowen says he represents. I hope that this appears in his local newspaper. The honourable member did not have the decency—perhaps he did not have the knowledge—to admit that it even took place. Apparently he is not serving his electorate in the manner in which he should.

The Chairman of the Bowen Shire Council will readily admit that the commission has had meaningful discussions with that council about the loss of revenue in Collinsville. To date, it has not lost a cent; so the honourable member's comments were completely false. He misled the members of this Parliament and the people of his electorate. I suggest that, before he speaks again in this Chamber, the honourable member check his facts so that he can represent the people of his electorate properly.

I turn to the contribution by the member for Lockyer. All honourable members know the ability of the member for Lockyer. He tried to express the correct views about the amendments contained in the legislation to honourable members and the people of Queensland. I am sure that those who read *Hansard* will stand up and be counted by expressing their opinion on the way in which he spelt out the amendments correctly, which is the only way in which it should have been done.

The member for Mount Isa followed the member for Lockyer. He indicated his party's opposition to the Bill, which he admits contains provisions that are right in principle and in theory are good stuff. Those were his words. His brief contained all the arguments used by vested interests opposed to the principles to frustrate what they are forced to admit is right in principle.

All of those people have my assurance that the gazettal of the regulations to implement the changes will be subject to full consultation and will not be rushed. I have assured everyone who has been to see me that that is exactly the way it will go. Like his advisers, Mr Beard chose to ignore those assurances. He took the Government to task for not consulting with the industry on updating, retraining, etc. In fact, for over three years the Government has been talking to industry representatives. Many times it was felt that agreement had been reached at the negotiating table. The negotiators then went out and lobbied against legislating for the principles that they, like the honourable member, agree are correct.

Since I became Minister for Mines and Energy, I have spoken to people visiting my office and felt that I had agreement. However, within a day or so I have found that I was in the middle of a concerted campaign to frustrate that agreement. Is it any wonder I felt the need to explain the situation to Government members? I know that my predecessors have had similar experiences. Once the legislative framework is in place

and these people know that it is going to happen, I am sure that a workable arrangement will be achieved.

A total of 214 contractors were polled. As Mr Beard said, they have a vested interest in having inspections of their new work paid for by the consumer. If honourable members believe that the little old lady down the street, pensioners and those persons on low incomes should pay for the vested interests of the contractor who has more money than the worker, I feel sorry for them. If that is the Liberal Party's stand, every time a person switches on a light and uses electricity, the Liberal Party believes that those persons should subsidise the millionaires, the multi-millionaires and all those people——

Mr Lickiss: You are being stupid now.

Mr TENNI: I am not being stupid; what I have said is a fact of life.

The Government has said that if anyone does not trust a contractor or believes that he has engaged a contractor who is not capable of doing the job and will perhaps put someone's life at risk, then the person has the right to pay for an inspection by the board or by an outside consultant. I believe that what the member for Mount Isa said was most unfair.

Although a person builds one or two modest homes in his life-time, he pays for the inspection of all the large buildings and mansions in the State. That is just not on. All honourable members know that, if a contractor tests his work, none of the work needs an independent inspection. Where is the fairness in this?

The member for Mount Isa claimed that the Government had not done its homework. I want the honourable member to listen to me, because that matter was raised by many honourable members. The honourable member said that the Government has not done its homework.

Mr Beard: Not homework—spadework.

Mr TENNI: Spadework, homework—honourable members can call it whatever they like.

At the height of the newspaper debate on this issue the Government commmissioned an independent survey of 450 domestic consumers in Queensland. The survey revealed that 88 per cent were confident that contractors could wire dwellings safely; 72 per cent believed that contractors were sufficiently qualified to check their own work; 97 per cent agreed that contractors should accept responsibility for their own work; and 93 per cent believed that contractors should be penalised for faulty work. The honourable member asked: who agreed with the principles in the Bill? I can answer him very clearly. The overwhelming majority of the representative sample of the people of Queensland agreed with the Bill. Even though the minority Labor Party and Liberal Party in this House do not agree with it, following a survey similar to a ballot, the majority of people in Queensland agreed with it.

Mr Smith, the honourable member for Townsville East, referred to excess capacity. He is usually a very genuine person. However, he was absolutely and totally wrong, and I will explain why. At the end of the minerals boom Queensland had an excess capacity. The Government is not afraid to say that clearly, loudly and proudly, but New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia also had an excess capacity. Queensland took the proper steps to overcome the problem.

This Government closed the older power stations. It deferred the commencement of the Stanwell power station. As a result, Queensland now has the most modern electricity-generating system in Australia. Although this Government was criticised by the Labor Party about accommodation at Stanwell and machinery lying idle, it knew that it was taking the correct steps for the people of Queensland. The honourable member's way of measuring excess plant capacity is totally unacceptable to the fair-minded Queenslander.

Mr Smith: They're your own figures.

Mr TENNI: They are not my own figures. The honourable member is basing his claims on the published figures. However, he is unaware of what is necessary in the case of break-downs, normal maintenance and other factors.

A minimum of 28 per cent spare plant is required to cover overhauls, break-downs and many other occurrences in business and industry. The only difference between any other business and any other industry is that this Government must ensure a continuous supply of power to industry and the people of this State. Last year, Queensland had 36 per cent spare plant. During the forthcoming winter, that percentage will be reduced. It will all be absorbed before the Stanwell power station starts up. That is what electricity system planning is all about. By the end of this century, with a growth in demand of 5 per cent, Queensland will need the Tully/Millstream to cover the peaks in demand.

I point out to the honourable member, the people of Queensland and the people of Australia that we will build the Tully Falls scheme so that the people of Queensland will be supplied with the cheapest possible power at a rate that is commensurate with the development of this State. Whether or not the Commonwealth Government and Mr Richardson—Senator Richardson, call him what you like, the people of Ravenshoe have a lot of names for him—agree to the scheme under the silly World Heritage listing, we will build that scheme if the findings in relation to the Millsteam Falls come out on the right side. That statement can be put on record for the future. We will not back off.

Mr Davis: Yes, you will.

Mr TENNI: No, we will not. Because Mr Davis respects the people of Queensland, he will be up there blocking the road so that Richardson cannot get through. Mr De Lacy will be hiding behind a bush house somewhere.

Frankly, the honourable member for Caboolture, Mr Hayward, is quite haywire in his assertions that there has been a cover-up. Now I can understand why he is in this House collecting $43,000 per year instead of collecting $200,000 as an accountant. That is what a good accountant can earn outside this House.

The honourable member claimed that there has been a cover-up. As an accountant, he should know that comparisons of the type that have been deleted from the financial statements are proper by statistical comparisons that should be included as information in the financial report but which do not form part of the financial statement that is to be certified by the auditor.

Mr Hayward: Are you reading it or something?

Mr TENNI: I sat and listened to the gentleman; I ask him to sit and listen to what I have to say. If he does so, he will learn that I can prove how wrong he is.

The honourable member was reasonably critical of the Auditor-General. I point out that the deletion of those figures was proposed by the Auditor-General. This Government believes that the Auditor-General is the person from whom it should accept recommendations, not an accountant who is sitting back, scratching his head and going haywire. The Auditor-General made the recommendations. This Government has abided by his request. I am not about to argue with the Auditor-General. I believe that he is doing a very good job for this State. The one sure thing is that, under his proposal, the honourable member for Caboolture would never be Auditor-General. The figures will continue to be reported because they show that Queensland has the best debt/assets ratio in Australia, even if Mr Hayward cannot recognise it.

We can argue for ever about whether cash or accrual accounting is proper for Government business undertakings. Queensland has opted for cash accounting, which shows the real cash position, and that cannot be hidden. If the Government's critics can show it how to spend accruals or book entries, maybe the Government's financial advisers will persuade the Government to change this system of full disclosure of its cash position. We in the Government believe it is the right way.

As regards the cash position of the Queensland electricity supply industry—the bottom line is: firstly, the Government guarantees increases of no more than half the CPI rate.

Mr Hayward: Don't you have any confidence in your own departmental accountants? Don't you think they can do the job?

Mr TENNI: If the honourable member sits quitely he will learn something. He might decide to resign from this House and go outside as a public accountant and earn some money for himself.

To continue—secondly, the Government is confident that it can improve on this and have a nil increase year in the future. Thirdly, the Government has a double A plus rating for commercial paper borrowings. That is not bad at all considering that the accountant opposite says that the Government is not worth two bob. Our superannuation scheme is actuarially sound. In fact, it is fully funded and this Government will see that it stays that way.

As usual, the honourable member for Cairns parroted the criticisms of previous speakers but had nothing constructive to add to the debate. I only hope that when the crunch comes to build the power station at Tully Falls, the honourable member for Cairns, who has been publicly a 100 per cent supporter of the World Heritage listing to stop this type of proposal, stands up like a man and a member representing the people and is counted in with those people who support this Government in ensuring that the people of north Queensland and Queensland get that scheme under way.

The honourable member for Toowong criticised the proposals for raising the status of electrical contractors and for reducing the size of electricity board memberships, which puts him at odds with both the Government and the official Opposition—the Labor Party.

The honourable member for Port Curtis did not add much to the debate. I do not think that it is worth commenting on his speech.

The member for Mourilyan did not bother to tell the House that although towers did collapse in cyclone Winifred, supply on the main system was maintained. He should have been honest with the people of Queensland and told them that power was maintained. A simple reason why there are more power stations in southern and central Queensland is that that is where most of the demand is. That is also where the low-priced coal is available. I am happy to know—very happy to know—that I shall have his support when I try to get Senator Richardson to see the light about the need for the Tully/Millstream hydroelectric scheme. I worry about that, because I can recall that during the debate on the World Heritage listing the honourable member supported Senator Richardson and then went up to Ravenshoe and supported the people. He had two bob each way. He realised his mistakes. I must admit that since then he has been fairly good.

I thank all honourable members for their contributions. I hope that I have played a part in trying to clear up those points that the Opposition was not aware of. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 42		NOES, 37	
Alison	Lingard	Ardill	Milliner
Austin	Littleproud	Beanland	Palaszczuk
Berghofer	McCauley	Beard	Schuntner
Booth	McKechnie	Braddy	Shaw
Borbidge	McPhie	Burns	Smith
Burreket	Menzel	Campbell	Smyth
Chapman	Muntz	Casey	Underwood
Clauson	Neal	Comben	Vaughan
Cooper	Nelson	D'Arcy	Warburton
Elliott	Newton	De Lacy	Warner
Fraser	Randell	Eaton	Wells
Gately	Row	Gibbs, R. J.	White
Gibbs, I. J.	Sherrin	Goss	Yewdale
Gilmore	Simpson	Gygar	
Glasson	Slack	Hamill	
Gunn	Stoneman	Hayward	
Harvey	Tenni	Knox	
Henderson	Veivers	Lee	
Hinton		Lickiss	
Hobbs	*Tellers:*	McElligott	*Tellers:*
Katter	FitzGerald	Mackenroth	Davis
Lester	Stephan	McLean	Prest
PAIR:			
	Hynd		Scott

Resolved in the affirmative.

Committee

Hon. M. J. Tenni (Barron River—Minister for Mines and Energy) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3, as read, agreed to.

Clause 4—

Mr TENNI (10.31 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 2, line 24, after 'Division I—The' insert—

'Queensland'."

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 5—

Mr R. J. GIBBS (10.35 p.m.): The Opposition opposes clause 5. I have mentioned a number of reasons why previously, but I wish to expand upon those reasons at this stage. Clause 5 means that the standard of work which, in the past, has been basically respected by Queenslanders, and the safety factors within the industry itself will be seriously eroded.

So that there can be no mistake about what members on the Government side of the Chamber will be voting for and because I know that the intelligence on that side of the Chamber is such that most Government members would never have read this piece of legislation, let me spell out clearly to the Chamber what the clause deals with. In part, the clause states—

"(a) manufacturing, assembling or repairing electrical articles in a factory registered under the *Factories and Shops Act 1960-1987* where the principal manufacturing process carried on is making, assembling, altering, repairing or adapting of electrical articles;

(b) constructing for and on behalf of an Electricity Authority and under its supervision an overhead electric line on supports that do not already carry an overhead line that is connected to a source of elecricity supply . . . "

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Booth): Order! There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The honourable member for Wolston is trying to make a point and I suggest that other honourable members listen.

Mr R. J. GIBBS: The fact is that in the past this type of work was carried out by qualified electricians. It is now to be carried out by people who have the qualifications of a process worker.

Mr Tenni: That is not right.

Mr R. J. GIBBS: Yes, it is. In fact, in his second-reading speech the Minister used the term "process work".

What it will mean is that under the supervision of a qualified person these non-professional people will be able to erect, repair and assemble electrical goods and items, carry out work on overhead power lines and the repair of ducts, conduits and troughing in which electrical wiring will be carried.

Earlier today I made the point that these provisions will lead, firstly, to further demarcation disputes in the industry—that is a reality—and I questioned how on earth a person can competently supervise this type of work. The Minister based much of his argument for these amendments on economics. That is his rationale. I ask the Minister whether these supervisory staff will be engaged at the construction stage of an overhead power line. Will they be standing around below the towers while others go up and do the work? Will supervisors have to be employed to go up and inspect the work after it is done or will they be perched there on a pole beside the person as the work is being done, looking over his shoulder and supervising the job? It is an unsatisfactory and unworkable scheme.

I say to the Minister that it is a recipe for disaster within the industry. The Government is seriously further eroding the safety standards that Queensland people have come to expect within the electricity industry. I do not believe that the Minister's argument can be substantiated on economic grounds. The Opposition opposes the clause.

Mr TENNI: I do not accept the Opposition's objection. That was a stupid statement for the member for Wolston to make. He knows that every electrical appliance that he uses in his own home is built by process workers with a supervisor checking on the job at the end.

Mr R. J. Gibbs: That is not correct.

Mr TENNI: Yes, it is. Electric drills, vacuum cleaners and all other tools and appliances are built by process workers and checked by qualified supervisors.

The member for Wolston referred to people being up power poles and supervisors being employed to watch over the work. Let us be honest with the people of Queensland; the member for Wolston knows that supervisors are already on those jobs. What the Government is saying is that it is necessary to have only one person with those qualifications, not everybody. The Government rejects the Opposition's objection to clause 5.

Mr EATON: I support my colleague in objecting to the clause. The clause mentions electrical linesmen, electrical fitters and electrical mechanics. Over the years, a person who had obtained his electrical certificate in Queensland would be accepted in any State in Australia. The provision in this clause will be the thin end of the wedge in a breaking-down of the rules. It will allow the shoddy operators to come into the industry. I do not know about New Zealand, but I have worked in other States in which the standards are not as high as they are in Queensland. In fact, in South Australia a person could start an electrical business without having served an apprenticeship. This clause will cause a downgrading of the rules that have been a safeguard for not only the consumers of Queensland but also the public as a whole.

The standard of work of Queensland's tradesmen has been far above that of many other States. The alteration of the Act regarding electrical linesmen, electricians and electrical fitters will lead to a breaking-down of the rules. In the long term, society, as well as the Government, will pay for it.

Mr SMITH: The Minister is ignoring the fact that process workers produce complex goods under tight supervision and in a very controlled environment. It is one thing to say that unskilled workers perhaps can produce a complex motor car; but a qualified person is needed to maintain it.

In a situation in which a qualified person is only required to supervise, where will the supervisor or potential supervisor obtain his training if all the people who are subordinate to him are unqualified people? The electrical industry will be in the same position as the building industry, which is completely into the mode of having subcontractors. That trend has generally deskilled the industry. At present the building industry is facing a crisis in terms of numbers of tradesmen. As a result of this legislation, the electricity industry will face a similar crisis further down the road.

Mr TENNI: It is obvious that pre-selection for the Labor Party is just around the corner. It has got Opposition members off their backsides. They are doing a very good job. I am sure that the ETU will give the members who have spoken tonight its total support in their pre-selection battles.

Question—That clause 5, as read, stand part of the Bill—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 49		NOES, 29	
Alison	Lickiss	Ardill	Yewdale
Austin	Lingard	Braddy	
Beanland	Littleproud	Burns	
Beard	McCauley	Campbell	
Berghofer	McKechnie	Casey	
Borbidge	McPhie	Comben	
Burreket	Menzel	D'Arcy	
Chapman	Muntz	De Lacy	
Clauson	Neal	Eaton	
Cooper	Nelson	Gibbs, R. J.	
Elliott	Newton	Goss	
Fraser	Randell	Hamill	
Gately	Row	Hayward	
Gibbs, I. J.	Schuntner	McElligott	
Gilmore	Sherrin	Mackenroth	
Glasson	Simpson	McLean	
Gunn	Slack	Milliner	
Gygar	Stoneman	Palaszczuk	
Harvey	Tenni	Shaw	
Henderson	Veivers	Smith	
Hinton	White	Smyth	
Hobbs		Underwood	
Katter		Vaughan	
Knox	*Tellers:*	Warburton	*Tellers:*
Lee	FitzGerald	Warner	Davis
Lester	Stephan	Wells	Prest
PAIR:			
	Hynd	Scott	

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clauses 6 to 15, as read, agreed to.

Clause 16—

Mr R. J. GIBBS (10.51 p.m.): The Opposition also opposes this clause. I am aware that the Liberal Party intends to move an amendment to it. The Opposition will be supporting that amendment. However, years of experience have taught me that moving amendments in this Chamber is little more than a wasteful exercise.

There is no doubt that this clause is the one that will win the Labor Party the Barambah by-election next week-end.

It comes down to the basis of membership of electricity boards. I will reiterate the argument that I put forward today. I applaud the action taken by the Minister—I mean that—to reduce the membership of the boards from eight to five and to cut down the meeting fees. I believe that there is every justifiable reason to do that. However, I do not believe that one can take away from the local authorities the right to nominate the people they wish to have as their representatives on the electricity board for a particular area.

Mr Tenni interjected.

Mr R. J. GIBBS: The Minister is taking away that right. He is insisting that the local authorities provide him with a panel of five people, and from that panel of five he will select two members. What will remain is the Government's past and proven track record of providing jobs for the boys and, probably in some cases, for the girls. I doubt very much the Minister's ability and his genuineness in picking the best two people.

Mr Tenni: We're going to put Tom Pyne on.

Mr R. J. GIBBS: As I said earlier, I am sure that if it was left to the decision of the local authorities and the FNQEB, they would select Tom Pyne to be one of their representatives on the particular board. I reiterate my argument that further representation on those boards should be made on the basis of one representative from the consumers in those particular areas and one representative of the employees working on the various sites or locations throughout those areas.

The Opposition opposes clause 16 in its current form. The Opposition will support the amendment that I understand will be moved by the honourable member for Toowong.

Mr SMITH: I reiterate the point that this clause is part of the Government's continuing move to rid itself of dissenting opinion from local government representatives. The local government representatives on the NORQEB board will be reduced from five to two, but it is quite clear to me—I challenge the Minister to deny it—that the major city within that board structure, which is Townsville, will be unrepresented. It is quite clear that the Minister intends to cut the head off the mayor, who is presently the deputy chairman, and that Townsville will be left with the situation that the immediate council representation will be Thuringowa city, which means effectively that the tail is wagging the dog. I made that point earlier. The Minister is reducing to puppet status the members who remain on the board, because the moment they speak out they will be gone. If the local authority took the action it should take in this instance, it would be perfectly entitled to refuse to put forward the name of any member for selection on a shonky set-up such as this, because the Government is really controlling all the strings. I said to the Minister earlier that he might as well run the electricity supply industry from a central location and not bother about preserving the facade of the boards.

Mr BEANLAND: I rise to move and speak to an amendment to clause 16 which will overcome some of the problems that I have already mentioned. I move the following amendments—

"At page 7, line 11, omit—

'2'

and substitute—

'3' ";

"At page 7, line 12, omit—

'from a panel of 5 persons nominated'."

By the removal of the words "from a panel of 5 persons nominated", local authorities will be allowed to elect their own members. That is the very same matter as I mentioned earlier.

Local authorities have always elected their own members. This Government is endeavouring to set up a panel so that it will have the final choice as to which local government members it will appoint to the electricity boards.

As I indicated earlier, at present local authorities are represented by five of the eight members of electricity boards. By reducing that number from five to two, this Government is changing the relativity. Local authorities strongly believe that they are entitled to three of the five members if the size of the boards is to be reduced as such.

I am aware that the Minister has received some very strong representations from local authorities throughout the State. There is a great deal of discord and dissatisfaction with the Minister over this particular clause.

One of the ways in which this Government can regain some of its lost support from local authorities is to accept the proposed amendments. Without that support the Government will find that local authorities will no longer consider the National Party State Government to be the traditional friend of local authorities that it has been for so many years.

As I indicated earlier, the Minister was also responsible for reducing local authority representations on harbour boards. Local authorities are now most adamant that that should not recur.

The important role of local authority representatives on electricity boards must be pointed out. Electricity has a significant role to play in the infrastructure and development of local authorities. Many local authority members are now operating in relatively large local authority areas that have huge annual budgets. In some cases it would not be unusual for a local authority to have a turn-over of the order of $50m or $60m. We are dealing with large businesses in local authorities and electricity boards.

I believe that my proposed amendments will overcome the concerns of local authorities in this State.

Mr PREST: I support the remarks that were made by the spokesman for the Liberal Party in relation to appointees to electricity boards. The Opposition maintains that they should be members of local authorities.

The Minister has stated that those authorities must submit a list of five names from which two will be selected. As I pointed out earlier, the CEB area comprises 20 local authorities. If those local authorities consider that they should be represented on the board, they have to submit five names each, which are then considered by the CEB, and two names are then selected by the Minister. That means that, when the selection panel is considering 100 or more names that have been submitted, one of the main criteria will be that those persons who are appointed to the board must be members of the National Party. That is one way of increasing the National Party membership in those areas. Everyone would be aware that, unless a person is a card-carrying member of the National Party, he does not stand a chance of being selected either as a representative of the local authority or as a Government appointee.

Some month or so ago the *South Burnett Times* contained an article about 17 councils which, at a conference, called for the sacking of Mr Tenni. From that it can be seen that he is not thought of very highly by local authorities throughout Queensland. Therefore I believe that the Minister should change his attitude to the selection and appointment of board members. All four should be members of a local authority.

Mr BEARD: I support the comments made by the Opposition spokesman and the amendment moved by the honourable member for Toowong. Particularly in the far-flung areas of the State, a part of the State which I represent, the representation by local authority members on port authorities and on electricity boards is taken very seriously indeed and is a visible proof of the fact that those people who live in the far-flung areas of the State, who contribute to the wealth of the region and the State, do have some say in what is being run there.

I have no political axe to grind. For the last 15 years, up until recently, a Labor member of the Mount Isa City Council, who is presently the Mayor of the city of Mount Isa, was a very worthy representative on the Townsville Port Authority. In being a representative on that port authority, he was not a member of the Labor Party; he was representing the people of Mount Isa, and he did so very well indeed. He was seen as such not only by the people of Mount Isa but also by the people of the surrounding districts. Similarly, his predecessor as Mayor of Mount Isa, who was actually a Liberal Party member, Alderman Franz Born, was for some time chairman of NORQEB.

Politics did not come into it. The people who live in that part of the State see that those local authority representatives, who have been elected by them to a local authority and then appointed by that local authority to one of these boards, are in a very real sense representing them. I am sorry to have to say to members of the National Party that, if they travel round this State, all too often they will find people who will not stand up and say that they belong to the Labor Party or the Liberal Party, because their business or something else will suffer. National Party members are living with that reputation now. By the passage of this legislation they are inviting the accusation of cronyism, which all too many people in this State, including me, will be only too ready to believe about the people who are selected by the Minister for appointment to these boards. I strongly support the amendment.

Mr TENNI: When changes or amendments such as the one proposed by the Liberal Party are supported, people should remember the days when the Liberal Party was in Opposition in the Brisbane City Council, when Queensland had a coalition Government, and a request was made by the Liberal Party to the then Liberal Minister for Health that, because the Labor Party in control of the Brisbane City Council was appointing all Labor people to the hospitals in the Brisbane area, members of the hospital boards in Brisbane be appointed by the Governor in Council. The Liberal Party, which was in opposition in the Brisbane City Council, had the right to appoint Liberal Party members on the hospital boards in the Brisbane area. That is a fact of life. That is the truth to the people of Queensland. That is a bit of a rebuttal to what has been said by members of the Liberal Party. However, let me say that, prior to that request of the Liberal Party, the Labor Party put all its henchmen on the Brisbane hospital boards. Honourable members opposite should not talk to me about looking after one's mates. In this case this Government will not be looking after its mates.

Opposition members interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Booth): Order! The Committee will come to order.

Mr TENNI: Honourable members opposite will laugh on the other side of their face. This Government is genuinely interested in people who have the qualifications and who will be appointed to look after the overall districts of each board.

One man I would possibly try to get on the board—if the councils will nominate him as one out of the five members—is a life-time member of the Australian Labor Party, Chairman of the Mulgrave Shire Council, Tom Pyne. I believe that he has the ability and qualifications to be a member of the board of FNQEB in Cairns. He is not a member of the board at the moment, but he is one man I would like to appoint as a member.

I say to the members of this Committee and to the people of Queensland that this Government will not do what the Liberal Party did and what the Labor Party did when it held office in Brisbane. The Government will be fair in distribution of membership appointments. I do not care what the political colour of the nominee is, provided he is located in the correct area and has the ability to handle a responsible task. If members of the opposition parties want to carry on cronyism and acts that they carried out in the past, they can do so; but the National Party Government will not be a party to that type of action. I reject totally the amendments put forward.

Question—That the expression proposed to be omitted (Mr Beanland's first amendment) stand part of the clause—agreed to.

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

AYES, 42		NOES, 38	
Ahern	Lingard	Ardill	McLean
Alison	Littleproud	Beanland	Milliner
Austin	McCauley	Beard	Palaszczuk
Berghofer	McKechnie	Braddy	Schuntner
Borbidge	McPhie	Burns	Shaw
Burreket	Menzel	Campbell	Smith
Chapman	Muntz	Casey	Smyth
Clauson	Neal	Comben	Underwood
Cooper	Nelson	D'Arcy	Vaughan
Elliott	Newton	De Lacy	Warburton
Fraser	Randell	Eaton	Warner
Gately	Row	Gibbs, R. J.	Wells
Gibbs, I. J.	Sherrin	Goss	White
Gilmore	Simpson	Gygar	Yewdale
Glasson	Slack	Hamill	
Gunn	Stoneman	Hayward	
Harvey	Tenni	Innes	
Henderson	Veivers	Knox	
Hinton		Lee	
Hobbs	*Tellers:*	Lickiss	*Tellers:*
Katter	FitzGerald	McElligott	Davis
Lester	Stephan	Mackenroth	Prest
PAIR:			
Hynd		Scott	

Resolved in the affirmative.

Question—That clause 16, as read, stand part of the Bill—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 42		NOES, 39	
Ahern	Lingard	Ardill	McLean
Alison	Littleproud	Beanland	Milliner
Austin	McCauley	Beard	Palaszczuk
Berghofer	McKechnie	Braddy	Schuntner
Borbidge	McPhie	Burns	Shaw
Burreket	Menzel	Campbell	Sherlock
Chapman	Muntz	Casey	Smith
Clauson	Neal	Comben	Smyth
Cooper	Nelson	D'Arcy	Underwood
Elliott	Newton	De Lacy	Vaughan
Fraser	Randell	Eaton	Warburton
Gately	Row	Gibbs, R. J.	Warner
Gibbs, I. J.	Sherrin	Goss	Wells
Gilmore	Simpson	Gygar	White
Glasson	Slack	Hamill	Yewdale
Gunn	Stoneman	Hayward	
Harvey	Tenni	Innes	
Henderson	Veivers	Knox	
Hinton		Lee	
Hobbs	*Tellers:*	Lickiss	*Tellers:*
Katter	FitzGerald	McElligott	Davis
Lester	Stephan	Mackenroth	Prest
PAIR:			
Hynd		Scott	

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clause 17—

Mr TENNI (11.17 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 7, line 25, after 'appearing in' insert—

'and'."

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 17, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 18 to 46, as read, agreed to.

Insertion of new clause—

Mr TENNI (11.19 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"At page 17, after clause 46, insert—

'46A. Amendment of s. 238. Annual budget to be prepared and submitted to the Commission. Section 238 (3) of the Principal Act is amended by omitting the words "31 July in that year" and substituting the words "30 April in the year preceding the year to which they relate".' "

Amendment agreed to.

New clause 46A, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 47 to 73, as read, agreed to.

Clause 74—

Mr TENNI (11.20 p.m.): I move the following amendments—

"At page 27, line 13, after '14' insert—

'sitting' ";

"At page 27, line 18, omit—

'he'."

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 74, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 75 to 80, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

Third Reading

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

STAMP ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. B. D. AUSTIN (Nicklin—Minister for Finance and Minister Assisting the Premier and Treasurer) (11.24 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill to amend the Stamp Act 1894-1987 in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. B. D. AUSTIN (Nicklin—Minister for Finance and Minister Assisting the Premier and Treasurer) (11.25 p.m.): I move—

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

This Bill is a further step by the Government in its determination to counter stamp duty avoidance. The Bill provides for substantial amendments to the Stamp Act dealing with avoidance. It also aims to streamline the administration of the Act. Some new exemptions are also to be provided, some existing concessions have been reviewed and some anomalies are to be corrected.

The Bill proposes a number of major new measures to counter moves to avoid the full payment of stamp duty. There are also measures to tighten existing anti-avoidance measures. For example, among the new measures, conveyance duty is to apply in full

to the transfer of shares in companies where that company's assets comprise 80 per cent or more of land valued at $1m or more.

Again, the use of "layer" policies to abuse the 25 per cent of premium limitation in insurance duty is countered. It will be an offence to store or act on a document not lodged under this Act unless the Commissioner of Stamp Duties is advised.

Included in the tightening of existing anti-avoidance measures are the redefining of terms such as "conveyance" and "transfer" to ensure conveyance duty applies in all relevant cases. To discourage participation in schemes of avoidance, disclosure requirements are tightened and the maximum penalty for non-compliance is increased to $5,000 and double duty for the non-disclosure of all relevant facts and circumstances.

There will be a new mortgage duty exemption for school parents and citizens associations' loans, and the principal place of residence exemption is to be broadened to cover certain situations not now covered.

I have outlined only a few of the many provisions in the Bill which arise from the continual review of the stamp duty laws. To help members and the public understand these changes, I move under Standing Order 241 (c) to table detailed explanatory notes and ask that these be incorporated in *Hansard.*

Leave granted.

Whereupon the honourable member laid on the table the following document—

EXPLANATORY NOTES

BILL TO AMEND THE STAMP ACT 1894-1987

A. *PROPOSALS OF AN ANTI-AVOIDANCE NATURE*

1. *LAYER POLICIES (Clause 81 (k) (vi) (B) (iii))*

General insurance attracts duty at a rate of .07% of the sum insured to a maximum of 25% of the premium.

An insurance duty avoidance practice which involves persons entering into a number of policies pursuant to the one arrangement and gearing the sums insured and premiums thereunder to artificially manipulate the 25% of premium limitation (i.e. by matching high sums insured with low premiums and vice versa) is proposed to be countered.

Under the new anti-avoidance provisions, the Commissioner may, in certain circumstances, either disallow the premium limitation (unless satisfied of certain matters) or he may aggregate the policies and assess them as one policy while continuing to allow the application of the premium limitation.

2. *TRANSFERS OF SHARES IN COMPANIES OWNING PREDOMINANTLY LAND (Clauses 5 and 59-65)*

There are new provisions imposing conveyance duty in certain circumstances on acquisitions of majority interests and interests further to majority interests in shares in companies owning predominantly land.

(a) *Principal Provisions*

— *Clause 60*

Meaning of "prescribed provisions". (new s. 56F)

New proposed sections 56FA to 56FO are, for convenience, throughout the new proposed sections, referred to as the prescribed provisions.

Interpretation (new s.56FA)

Some of the more important definitions are—

- "land" which includes an estate or interest in land (but not the interest of a mortgagee), fixtures to the land and mining tenements;
- "associated persons" which is used in a provision designed to ensure that persons cannot circumvent the requirement that 80% of the assets of the company to which the prescribed

provisions apply comprise land by watering down such assets through transactions with such persons;

- "related persons" who are grouped for the purpose of determining whether a person (with persons who are related) has acquired a majority or further interest.

There are provisions which provide for the manner in which a person's entitlement in a company or a trust is to be determined.

Lodgement of statements where trust acquires interest (new s. 56FB)

This provision requires a person acquiring shares as trustee to make up a relevant statement for the purposes of the prescribed provisions but where a similar statement is made up by the person who has the beneficial interest, duty paid by the trustee is to be refunded.

— *Clause 61:—*

Valuation of Land (s. 56FC)

Under this proposed new section, the Commissioner may require the lodgement of statements in respect of the full unencumbered value of any land owned by a company for the purposes of determining whether the prescribed provisions apply or for assessing duty having regard to that value.

It also allows persons to require the Commissioner to give a determination as to whether he considers the provisions apply to the shares of a particular company, but subject to him exercising relevant powers for the obtaining of a valuation.

Charge may be recorded on title. (new s. 56FD)

New section 56FD provides for the Commissioner:

- where he considers that there is a liability for a dutiable statement to be made up in respect of a share acquisition in a corporation; and
- where the corporation or a subsidiary is the registered proprietor of the land in Queensland,

to be able to record a charge on the register and thereby to prevent further dealings without his consent, which is required to be given in certain circumstances.

Charge on land (new s. 56FE)

This proposed section provides that where a record is made on the title under the preceding provision, the duty is to be a statutory charge which will continue in force notwithstanding the disposition of the land.

— *Clause 62:—*

New ss. 56FF, 56FG and 56FH

Power of Sale (new s. 56FF)

Where—

- a corporation or subsidiary has been determined to be liable for duty under proposed new section 56FI or 56FJ below; and
- duty in respect of the relevant acquisition to which the statement relates has not been paid; and
- a charge has been recorded under section 56FD on the title to land which that corporation or subsidiary owns,

the Commissioner may apply to the court for an order for the sale of the land and the distribution of the proceeds of sale to meet that duty.

Application of proceeds of sale (new s. 56FG)

New proposed section 56FG provides for how the proceeds of sale of property under s. 56FF are to be applied, namely, first, to expenses of sale, then to persons having a prior charge and then to the duty and penalty, and the balance as the Court determines.

When statement to be lodged (new s. 56FH)

This proposed new section requires persons acquiring a majority interest or an interest further to a majority interest (including having regard to the interests of related persons)

in a corporation to which the prescribed provisions apply to prepare and lodge a statement with prescribed details in respect of the acquisition.

— *Clause 63:—*

Corporation to lodge a statement (new s. 56FI)

Where there is a relevant acquisition of shares in a corporation, the corporation is required to make up a statement corresponding with that required to be made up by the person making the relevant acquisition.

The corporation may be liable for duty on the statement if the Commissioner determines this to be appropriate in the particular case where the person making the relevant acquisition does not pay duty as required. The Commissioner may relieve the company of the obligation to make a statement where he is satisfied that the person who made the relevant acquisition has complied with his obligations in respect of making up a return under proposed new section 56FH.

Subsidiary to lodge a statement (new s. 56FJ)

There is a corresponding requirement to new proposed section 56FI in respect of subsidiaries in the corporations to which the relevant acquisition applies.

Statement chargeable with duty (new s. 56FK)

This proposed new section provides for full ad valorem conveyance duty to apply to the dutiable value determined in accordance with the section.

— *Clause 64:—*

Corporations to which prescribed provisions apply. (new s. 56FL)

The prescribed provisions apply to corporations which are not listed companies and which are "landholders".

Under subsection (2) of the proposed new section, a corporation is a "landholder" if the value of land in Queensland to which it is entitled or the value of land in Queensland of which it is co-owner (or both) exceeds $1M. and the value of all land to which the company is entitled comprises 80% or more of the assets of the company. The provision allows for these tests to apply having regard to direct interests or direct and indirect interests of the corporation in land.

Subsection (3) provides for the operation of the concessions for transfers from prescribed ascendants to prescribed descendants of qualifying family rural and small business property to shares to which the prescribed provisions apply.

Subsection (4) is to ensure that assets which might be used to water down the land component of the company are excluded for the purposes of determining whether the 80% of land to assets test is met.

Subsection (5) provides for land of the corporation which is subject to a contract of sale by it still to be regarded as land of the corporation.

Subsection (6) defines land to which the corporation is entitled to include that held by a "subsidiary", as defined.

Meaning of relevant acquisition. (new s. 56FM)

A relevant acquisition is the acquisition of a majority interest (including an acquisition over the preceding three years) or an acquisition whereby a person who also has a majority interest acquires a further interest.

There is an anti-avoidance measure to prevent persons circumventing the provisions by obtaining rights to acquire shares within the 3 year period and exercising that right outside the relevant 3 year period.

Previous acquisitions before the commencement of the Act may not be had regard to for the purpose of determining whether there has been a relevant acquisition.

Meaning of interest, a majority interest and further interest.(s. 56FN).

This section defines such interests.

— *Clause 65:—Special directions as to duty (new s. 56FO)*

The provision

- allows for duty not to apply under the prescribed provisions where the Commissioner is satisfied that the person would not have been liable for ad valorem duty if the relevant land had been transferred by way of conveyance or transfer and that such instrument would not have been executed with an intention of avoiding duty; and
- provides for mortgage duty not to apply where a transfer of shares by way of security is a relevant acquisition for the purposes of the prescribed provisions.

(b) *Associated Amendments*

— *Clause 5*

Special directions where property comprises certain shares (new S. 2B)

This new section deems majority interests in companies owning predominantly land to which the prescribed provisions would, if those shares were disposed of, apply to be "property in Queensland" for the purposes of the Act and to be real property in Queensland for the purposes of another anti-avoidance provision (which is described at clause 55).

The section also provides for how such shares are to be valued i.e. the same value as they would have under the prescribed provisions, if disposed of.

— *Clause 59*

Conveyance of other property by way of security (Amendment of s. 56E)

Section 56E provides for conveyance duty to apply where a person who has taken a transfer of property (other than land) by way of security and has paid the low rate of security duty (or an assignee from that person) obtains beneficial ownership of the property.

The clause provides specific directions as to how this provision is to apply where the subject property comprises shares which, if disposed of, would attract duty as a relevant acquisition under the prescribed provisions.

3 *UNIT TRUST SCHEME PROVISIONS TO BE TIGHTENED (Clause 57)*

Section 56B imposes duty on dispositions of interests in private unit trust schemes at conveyance duty rates on the full value of the trust property represented thereby.

The current definition of "unit trust scheme" which seeks to exclude genuine public unit trust schemes from the section's scope excludes, inter alia, those schemes in respect of which there is a deed approved for the purposes of the Companies Code.

Units in public unit trust schemes, on transfer, attract duty at the concessional duty rate of .6% on the net value of the trust property represented thereby.

However, a scheme under an approved deed may operate as a private unit trust and it is therefore proposed to impose additional requirements before a scheme under an approved deed is regarded as being of a public nature.

In this regard, it is proposed that a unit trust scheme not be regarded as public where no units have been issued to the public or where fewer than 50 persons are beneficially entitled to units under the scheme or where 20 or fewer persons are entitled to 75% or more of the total issued units in the scheme. The new definition "public unit trust scheme" and the adjustment to the definition "unit trust scheme" provide accordingly.

The Commissioner is, however, allowed to regard a scheme which might otherwise be regarded as not being a public scheme because no units have been issued to the public to be a public scheme where he is satisfied that units will be issued to the public to an appropriate extent within twelve months of the approval of the deed.

It also allows for the status of the trust to be examined according to the new tests before and after a disposition or a series of dispositions.

For the purpose of determining the number of persons who are beneficially entitled to units under the scheme, persons are treated as beneficially entitled to all units also held by a related person.

The provisions will also apply where the trustee owns property in Queensland (or rights arising from property in Queensland) through tiers of trusts.

Whereas currently the provision only imposes penalties on the trustee for registering a disposition of units in respect of which there is not a dutiable instrument, persons disposing

of and acquiring units in a unit trust scheme to which the section applies are to be required to prepare and execute a dutiable document in respect of the disposition.

4. *COMPANIES INVOLVING TRUSTS (Clauses 5 & 58)*

— *Clause 58*

Section 56C which currently imposes full ad valorem conveyance duty on transfers of shares in companies which are trustees of discretionary trusts on the full unencumbered value of the trust property represented by such shares is to be replaced.

The existing provision is designed to counter possible duty avoidance, by persons purportedly only taking over the shares for the purpose of operating the company as a trustee, where it is really part of an arrangement whereby those persons are acquiring the shares e.g. with the intention, after the shares are transferred, of either destroying the trust documents and operating the company not as a trustee or amending the trust documents and leaving them unstamped, controlling the trust for their own benefit or with the trust deed worded such that the beneficiaries are the shareholders of the trustee company from time to time.

On review, the same avoidance that the section was designed to counter could be effected in respect of transfers of shares in companies which are trustees of trusts generally and not just of discretionary trusts and the proposed new section 56C is expanded accordingly.

It is also tightened to ensure that persons cannot avoid its operation by structuring holdings of those shares through tiers of companies above the trustee company holding the relevant Queensland property.

At the same time, it does not apply in cases of transfers not motivated by gaining a benefit under the trust or where the connection of the trust property to the shares is remote.

In this regard;

- Certain companies are specifically excluded from the operation of the provisions, viz., listed companies, authorised trustee corporations. There is also provision for prescribing other classes of companies to which the provision is not to apply.
- The Commissioner is also to be able to determine duty not to apply where he forms the opinion that the relevant share transfer was not made in the contemplation of the disponor disposing or the disponee acquiring for himself (or any person) any benefit in relation to property held in trust.

Where the Commissioner having regard to particular matters determines duty not to apply and he later discovers representations on which his satisfaction was based were untrue, or criteria of which he was satisfied are not in retrospect met, he may withdraw the concession. There is provision for persons to notify the Commissioner where criteria for the determination are not in retrospect met, with a penalty for failure to notify.

Apart from these changes, the operation of the new provision is broadly as at present, namely, where there is a disposition of a relevant share the company is not permitted to register or act on the basis of the disposition unless it receives an instrument duly stamped evidencing the disposition. The new provision will also oblige the disponer and the disponee to prepare a dutiable instrument (as in the amendment to section 56B at clause 57).

— *Clause 5*

New section 2B deems shares in companies of a kind to which section 56C applies to be property in Queensland for the purposes of the Act and provides for how they are to be valued for that purpose i.e. as if disposed of under section 56C.

5. *LONG TERM LEASES TO AVOID CONVEYANCE DUTY (Clause 53)*

Proposed new section 53B relates to the possibility of conveyance duty avoidance by an intending purchaser taking out a long term lease in respect of the property to be purchased, with the purchase moneys (or part thereof) paid upfront as rent and the property then being sold for nominal consideration and at low value, in that, the property is tied to the lease without further rental to be paid for a long period.

The new section will give the Commissioner the power to assess on the full value of the land without regard to the lease and with an offset for lease duty paid.

6. *MEANING OF "CONVEYANCE" OR "TRANSFER" (Clauses 30 and 50)*

— *Clause 50*

The definitiion of "conveyance" or "transfer" in section 49(1) is strengthened to ensure that instruments which vest property upon notification, registration or recording with a Registrar are dutiable as a conveyance, subject to listed and subsequently prescribed exceptions.

The purpose is to ensure that persons cannot achieve a conveyance of property, for example, by use of a request under the Real Property Act without paying duty or being specifically considered for exemption.

— *Clause 30*

Allows the Registrar of Titles to refer relevant instruments to the Commissioner for determination before registering them.

7. *DUTY PAYABLE WHERE NO DUTIABLE INSTRUMENT (Clause 55)*

These amendments are to strengthen the provision which is designed to ensure that duty attaches to shifts of interests in land and associated moveable chattels without a dutiable document. They extend the provision to acquisitions of such property generally.

They also extend to the requirement to make up a dutiable statement to persons who obtain an interest in such property as a result of acquiring an interest in a trust which owns such property (including through tiers of trusts) or because a trust in which a person has an interest (including through tiers of trusts) acquires such property.

The purpose of the amendments is to ensure that persons cannot achieve a change of interest in such property without being liable for duty or their circumstances being specifically considered for exemption.

There is to be provision for retrospective exemptions and for the Commissioner to determine a person who has obtained a relevant interest not to be liable where in view of all of the facts and circumstances of the case and the extent of the person's connection to the acquisition he considers this appropriate.

It will also be a defence to an offence for failure to make up a dutiable statement under the section that a person did not know and could not on the exercise of due diligence have known that an acquisition of the kind to which the provisions apply had occurred.

8. *DUTY ON TRANSACTIONS ON REGISTERS OF QUEENSLAND INCORPORATED COMPANIES (Clauses 33, 34, 35 and 81)*

Section 31H was introduced to counter a number of variations to the share duty avoidance schemes known as the Darwin Shuffle because they relied in some part on the use of the Northern Territory as a tax haven for share duty.

The provisions currently require duty to be paid on entries to the registers made of Queensland incorporated companies where the register is not in a place recognised as not being a tax haven.

The proposed amendments to section 31H (at clause 35) strengthen the existing provision by ensuring that it applies to entries to all registers of Queensland incorporated company shares and that, where full duty at Queensland rates has not been paid or the instrument is not duly stamped in Queensland, the company return under the provision attracts duty on the shortfall.

Queensland exemptions will be able to be claimed in the company return or by the transferee after the duty is paid. (Exemptions in other places will no longer be recognised.)

Transactions on prescribed overseas stock exchanges continue to be excluded from the scope of the provisions.

In association with the amendments at clause 35, the opportunity has also been taken (at clause 81) to clearly describe the types of transfers of marketable securities to which Queensland stamp duty is to apply i.e. those in Queensland incorporated companies or those on registers in Queensland.

Provisions requiring companies to keep records for duty verification purposes, in section 31G, have been removed by clause 33 and replaced (by clause 34) with section 31GA

which has requirements for the retention of records of share transfers in Queensland incorporated companies wherever the share register is located.

9. *MEANING OF "MORTGAGE" (Clause 72)*

This amendment is designed to ensure that mortgages securing the obligations of borrowers for finance provided by bill or promissory note facility arrangements are dutiable as mortgages under the Act.

The amendments ensure that the new provisions do not have retrospective effect in relation to mortgages where the underlying bill facility agreement was entered into before the amendments commence where the arrangements are for a fixed term and a fixed amount or where there was an approval given before the commencement of the Act for a term and a specified amount. However, in the case of continuing facilities, duty will apply where the term or amount is varied.

10. *SECURITIES OVER CERTAIN SHARES AND UNITS (Clause 75)*

It is proposed that mortgage duty apply under new section 71 where property is secured on Queensland incorporated shares, shares of a kind to which Section 56C applies or shares in corporations of the kind to which the prescribed provisions (as defined at clause 60) apply and to units in unit trust schemes to which Section 56B applies.

These amendments therefore impose duty where securities are effectively taken over Queensland property where duty might otherwise be avoided by locating relevant shares, interests etc. in tax havens.

The section also provides for how the shares and units are to be valued for the purpose of determining the extent to which a security over such property relates to Queensland and allows for the duty not to apply or for an offset of duty where the Commissioner is satisfied the duty has been paid in another State or Territory.

11. *STORING ETC. INSTRUMENTS NOT DULY STAMPED (Clause 26)*

It is to be an offence for a person to store or act on the authority of or in reliance on or in pursuance of an instrument not lodged in compliance with the Act, unless the person notifies the Commissioner of prescribed matters in respect of the instrument. Penalty for breach is late lodgement penalty as if the person were a party to the instrument. It is to be a defence if the person did not know the instrument was one required to be so lodged but not lodged.

B. *PROVISIONS TO GENERALLY TIGHTEN ACT*

1. *INSURANCE DUTY PROVISIONS (Clauses 3, 4, 39-49 and 81)*

The existing scheme of provisions in this area has on review been found to be in need of strengthening. The existing provisions are completely removed and a new scheme proposed to modernise and tighten the provisions.

— *Clause 3*

Provides for the new scheme of provisions at clauses 39 to 49 to commence on 1st July, 1988.

— *Clause 4*

Tightens the definition "policies of insurance" and provides for a definition of "risk in Queensland".

— *Clause 39*

Policies Executed outside Queensland (new s. 46)

This clause strengthens the charging provisions in respect of such policies by specifically attaching duty to those which relate to "Queensland risks", as newly defined. It also provides for how duty is to be calculated where there needs to be an apportionment between Queensland and ex-Queensland risks, etc.

— *Clause 40*

Policies executed in Queensland (new s. 46A)

This new section provides specific guidelines for the apportionment of duty on Queensland policies relating to ex-Queensland risks.

Broadly, the provision allows for a reduction to the extent that duty is paid in respect of such risks in the other States and Territories, except to the extent that duty would be required to be paid in Queensland (because of its Queensland connection) if the policy were executed outside of Queensland.

— *Clause 41*

Risk of consequential loss or damage (new s. 46B)

This provision recognises that a risk of a consequence of an event may under a policy be a risk in one State or Territory caused by an event in another.

In such cases the provision allows a consequence in another State or Territory to predominate over the Queensland connection of the event giving rise to the consequence, where duty is payable in that other State or Territory and the consequence is a genuine one in a physical sense and not a paper one.

Where the extent to which a consequence is attributable to various States or Territories is unascertainable, the State or Territory where the event giving rise to the consequence may occur may be had regard to.

— *Clause 42*

Insurance with no executed policy (new s. 46C)

This is an anti-avoidance measure. It provides for how unexecuted policies are to be dutiable and makes any documents in relation to the insurance with the relevant Queensland connection dutiable and requires a statement to be created in the absence of such documents.

Relief from duty where duty also chargeable in other States and Territories (new s. 46D)

This will allow the Commissioner to offset duty in appropriate cases.

— *Clause 43*

Liability for duty on policy and lodgement (new s. 46E)

This clause provides for the insurer, the person who takes out the insurance and the broker(s) acting in the transaction to be liable for duty on a policy whether or not a party to it and for persons with custody or control of the policy to be liable for lodgement of the policy.

Approved Insurers to pay duty by return (new s. 46F)

This provides for insurers to register and account for duty by return under the new general return provision provided for in clause 17.

The provision extends to brokers carrying on insurance business in Queensland but brokers will not be liable to register where acting for insurers who are approved or in respect of insurance effected with insurers who are approved.

— *Clause 44*

Policy of Temporary Insurance (new s. 47)

This provision exempts cover notes and allows for the recalculation of duty and an offset of duty paid where a temporary policy overlaps with the policy which was always intended to replace it, provided certain qualifying criteria are met.

— *Clause 45*

Policies of Marine Insurance in Sets (new s. 47A)

This new section repeats an existing provision in the Act.

— *Clause 46*

Workers' Compensation Insurance (new s. 47B)

This provision updates an existing provision which currently refers to the State Government Insurance Office as collecting duty on such insurance and replaces it with one correctly referring to The Workers' Compensation Board of Queensland.

— *Clause 47*

Continuous Insurance (new s. 48)

The provision deems such policies of continuous insurance to be renewed every 12 months until termination.

— *Clause 48*

Assessment of Duty where sum insured or premium unascertainable(new s. 48A)

This new clause provides for duty to be calculated on estimates where the sum insured and/or premium is or are unascertainable or subject to variation and for later review of estimates provided.

— *Clause 49*

Sum Insured or Premium Varied (new s. 48B)

This clause is to provide for policies to be new and separate instruments upon any increase to the sum insured or the premium during their term with an offset for duty paid.

— *Clause 81*

Paragraph (k) (i), (iii) (A) & (B), (v) and (vi) (B) (i) & (ii) in conjunction with the new definition policies of insurance remove specific references to renewals which are already within the definition.

Paragraph (k) (ii) redrafts the existing provision for nominal duty to apply to public liability policies to make it clear that professional indemnity policies are not within the concession where the concession has been incorrectly extended to them in practice.

Paragraph (k) (iv) provides for insurance duty on policies covering accidental injury or death in connection with aircraft travel to be 5% of the premium (as under section 48A at present which is omitted by clause 48 above).

Paragraph (k) (vi) (A) omits an unnecessary provision which specifies that duty may be accounted for on a particular type of insurance policy according to the regulations.

Paragraphs (k) (vi) (B) (iv) and (k) (vii) and (viii) are minor technical amendments.

Paragraph k (ix) exempts the health insurance which is not currently dutiable but would as a consequence of new provisions in the Bill in this area be dutiable.

2. *CONTRACT/TRANSFER SPLITTING (Clause 52)*

New subsections (1) to (6) of section 53 replace existing section 53 (1) and the proviso to section 54 (1) which are designed to prevent the avoidance of the progressive scale of conveyance rates by breaking up transfers (s. 53 (1)) and contracts for sale (s. 54 (1)) pursuant to the one transaction into transfers and contracts in respect of fractional interests or separate properties.

A number of deficiencies have been identified with the existing provisions and there are no clear guidelines for a person should they raise the possibility of aggregation with the Commissioner.

The new provision—allows for the aggregation of different types of instruments pursuant to the one transaction or the one series of transactions—specifically contemplates different transferees and different transferors and—sets up the presumption that the provisions apply in certain circumstances so that persons are required to submit the possibility of aggregation for the Commissioner's consideration in those cases.

3. *CERTAIN CONTRACTS TO BE CHARGEABLE AS CONVEYANCES (Clause 54)*

New section 54 (1) and (2) improve the wording of the existing section 54 (1) which attaches duty to contracts or agreements as if they were conveyances.

The proviso to the subsection that relates to contract splitting has been omitted in conjunction with the new section 53 (1) to (6) inserted by clause 52.

4. *AGENT ACQUIRING FOR PRINCIPAL (Clauses 52, 54 and 81)*

New section 53 (9) & (10) (in clause 52) tighten the conditions for nominal conveyance duty to apply on a transfer from a person who has bought as agent for another person

with purchase moneys provided by that other person pursuant to a written authority predating initial purchase.

This concession is to be provided for in the body of the Act rather than the First Schedule where it is currently located (new subsection 53 (9)). Under amendments at clause 81 the references in the Schedule are cross referenced. Clause 52 also strengthens the concession by providing that the Commissioner shall not be satisfied its terms are met solely on the basis of the presentation of the written authority purporting to comply with the provision and the Commissioner will therefore need to be generally satisfied as to the genuineness of the arrangement.

The amendment to section 54 (6) (at clause 54) in respect of transfers pursuant to contracts when an agent has contracted on behalf of a principal corresponds with the insertion of section 53 (9) by clause 52.

5. *RESCISSION (Clause 54)*

New subsection 54 (8) inserted by clause 54 clarifies the meaning of rescission (which would allow for non-dutiability of a contract or a refund of duty paid on the contract) to clarify that it does not include effective subsales where a purchaser may substitute another purchaser under the terms of his agreement with a vendor.

6. *DEFINITION—FULL UNENCUMBERED VALUE (Clauses 4 and 5)*

The wording of the current definition "full unencumbered value" is tightened in certain regards, particularly in so far as it relates to trust property and interests and partnership interests.

The new definition of "full unencumbered value" also omits provisions which in respect of trust and partnership property provided that only the value of the Queensland property component should be had regard to. The new definition provides for such apportionment only where it is necessary under a relevant provision to determine the extent to which the instrument or transaction relates to property in Queensland.

7. *CHARGE OF DUTIES (Clause 6)*

Section 4 is the general charging provision of the Act which, inter alia, charges duty on instruments executed out of the State relating to Queensland property, etc..

It is to be generally strengthened by providing, inter alia, for

- a trust, an instrument or transaction to relate to Queensland property, where it relates to an instrument or transaction that relates to Queensland property;
- rights arising from an instrument which relates to property in Queensland to be regarded as property in Queensland;
- the prevention of persons avoiding a Queensland property connection through multi-tiered trusts or establishing relevant trusts outside Queensland.

At the same time the Commissioner is to be allowed to determine the connection with Queensland not to be present where the connection with Queensland through these provisions is inconsiderable and for an offset of duty where duty arises because of the extended specified connection for duty where duty is also payable in another State or Territory.

7. *MOTOR VEHICLES (Clause 66)*

Section 57A provides for specific directions as to duty on applications for registration and transfer of registration of motor vehicles.

The amendments are broadly designed:—

- to ensure that both the transferor and the transferee are liable for the payment of the duty and to provide for the duty to be recoverable as a debt;
- to clarify the meaning of "list price";
- to require the transferor and the transferee both to make a declaration as to value in order to reduce the possibility of the purchaser generally who pays the duty understating the value;
- to provide for a suitable deterrent penalty for persons who understate the market value of a vehicle;

- to require evidence be submitted as to the market value of a vehicle where the Commissioner is not satisfied with the market value stated by the parties and to assess on the basis of what is in his opinion the true market value of the vehicle;
- toprovide for licenced motor dealers, in consideration for an exemption provided for vehicles acquired by them for the purposes of onsale to maintain records and provide proper receipts in respect of the business carried on by them;

  (There is a penalty of double the duty that would otherwise have been chargeable on any vehicle in respect of which the requirements are not complied with.)
- to provide for an assessment to be made and therefore late payment penalty to apply where an application is not accompanied by the correct duty;
- to provide for a refund of duty to be made on registrations cancelled within three months of sale where the sale has been cancelled.

8. *FACTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES AFFECTING DUTY TO BE DISCLOSED (Clause 18)*

The present section 16 requires the parties and those preparing the instruments to set out in an instrument all facts and circumstances affecting the liability of the instrument for duty but recognises declarations being lodged to remedy deficiencies in the instrument in this respect.

The clause generally tightens the section by replacing the section with one which:—

- applies to parties to documents and to persons lodging documents on the parties' behalf and places the obligation on them to disclose all relevant facts and circumstances in the relevant instrument or declaration;
- penalises persons preparing documents containing false particulars or preparing or making declarations which do not fully and truly set forth the true facts and circumstances affecting duty;
- provides for a maximum penalty for non-compliance of $5000 plus double duty to ensure the provision is an effective deterrent to duty evasion by non-disclosure of relevant facts and circumstances, subject to the defence of a person proving that the relevant facts were not within his knowledge after he made all reasonable enquiries for the purpose of ascertaining those facts and circumstances.

Associated Amendment (Clause 52)

Clause 52 omits a penalty under section 53 of $1,000 for persons engaged or otherwise concerned in the false certification of consideration for a conveyance. It is redundant following the strengthening of section 16.

9. *EX-QUEENSLAND SECURITIES (Clause 74)*

New section 70 is designed to ensure that security duty concessions provided in the First Schedule which provide for the duty not to apply to the extent that a security relates to property, etc. in another State or Territory are only allowed where relevant duty is paid in that other State or Territory.

C. *AMENDMENTS RELATING TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ACT*

1. *AMENDMENTS TO IMPROVE COLLECTION OF DUTY*

(a) *Duty accounted for by returns (Clause 17)*

New proposed general return section 13A enables persons to apply to account for duty by return or for the Commissioner to require them to do so.

It will give the Commissioner flexibility as to the nature of returns, their frequency, the form of endorsements of duty paid to facilitate effective cross-reference to returns etc.

It also will allow for the collection of general information relating to instruments to facilitate the monitoring of various aspects of the relevant duty base.

There are penalties for non-lodgement, false returns etc.

(b) *Lease Duty (Clauses 68-71)*

The current scheme of provisions in this area is that leases which are for an indefinite term or for a definite term exceeding three years are required to be presented at three-yearly intervals for upstamping.

The follow up system necessary to ensure lodgement is a major administrative exercise which is often unproductive.

New Section 64A (Clause 70) therefore provides for leases generally to be assessed in respect of their full term where for a fixed term (however long) and where for a fixed term with options or an indefinite term to—

- where the maximum possible term is less than 6 years, for that term;
- where the lease is indefinite or for a possible term greater than 6 years, for the initial fixed term or 6 years whichever is the greater, and thereafter at six-yearly intervals (for 6 years or the remaining possible term, whichever is the lesser) until termination.

There are some associated amendments:—

- to improve the wording of the provision which imposes duty on agreements for leases as if they were leases and to provide for a lease for a fixed term and thereafter until determined to be treated as a lease for a definite term (unless the lessee and lessor are related, in which case it is deemed to be a lease for an indefinite term); (Clause 68)
- to ensure that where an instrument increases the rent under a lease for it to be dutiable as a lease for the additional rental; (Clause 69)
- to provide for the calculation of the rent on which the duty is to be payable and to facilitate so far as possible the upfront stamping of the lease but reserving to the Commissioner the right to review whether the estimate of rent has, in retrospect, been accurate; (Clause 71).
- to provide for duty to be refunded where it has been paid in respect of an option which is not exercised (Clause 71).

(c) *Minimum value for certain shares or stock (Clause 51)*

New s. 51E. is to deem that no company is valued at less than $800 (allowing for establishment costs etc.) for the purposes of calculating share duty.

2. *GENERAL ADMINISTRATION*

(a) *Minor Amendments*

The general administration provisions have been reviewed and there are a number of minor provisions which are redundant or where it has been identified that the wording can be improved or which require amendment following other proposed amendments in this area. (See clauses 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16 and 27)

(b) *Duty a debt and recoverable by Commissioner (Clause 7)*

This is a minor technical amendment to ensure that in accordance with the usual practice unpaid (unappealed) duty may be sued for in Brisbane in courts of competent jurisdiction and to ensure that it cannot be required to be sued on where the debtor resides.

(c) *Delegation and Commissioner's opinion (Clause 11)*

These new provisions specifically provide for the delegation by the Commissioner of his powers and duties under the Act.

(d) *Disclosure of information (Clause 14)*

This new provision tightens the secrecy provisions.

It generally only allows information to be communicated in accordance with the"Revenue Laws (Reciprocal Powers) Act 1988" or the Stamp Act. Under the Stamp Act such communication is only allowed for the purposes of the administration of the Stamp Act or legal proceedings arising out of that Act.

There are new strong penalties for breach of the secrecy requirements (Maximum—$5,000 or imprisonment of 6 months or both)

There is a new provision enabling the Commissioner to communicate information to police and justice authorities to enforce a law designed to protect the public revenue.

(e) *Assessment of duty by Commissioner (Clause 20)*

Section 22 (the general assessment provision) is to be modernised and is to apply also to instruments which come into the Commissioner's possession, other than by lodgement.

(f) *Default assessment of duty (Clause 21)*

Section 22A (the existing default assessment provision) is to be extended to allow for the default assessment of company charges on the basis of information provided by a tax authority of another State or Territory.

At the same time, a provision in the current default assessment provision which prevents the Commissioner proceeding for penalties for non-lodgement, false returns etc. when a default assessment is made, is to be omitted.

(g) *Commissioner may require information etc. (Clause 22-24)*

Commissioner may require information (Clause 22—new s. 23)

The purposes for which the Commissioner may seek information under existing section 23A are proposed to be widened under new section 23 to ensure that the Commissioner, inter alia, may request information to determine whether a person is complying with the Act in a relevant respect.

The formal enquiry procedure under existing section 23 is proposed to be omitted as the informal procedure under existing section 23A (which is replaced by new section 23) is generally considered to be adequate.

Offence not to comply with s. 23 (Clause 23—new s. 23A)

This clause provides for maximum penalty of $2000 for failure to comply with the Commissioner's request for information.

It is a defence to the offence that a defendant would not, if he exercised due diligence, have been able to comply.

A person may not refuse to answer a question or provide information on the ground that it might incriminate him because the answer or information is precluded from being admitted in criminal proceedings.

As at present, there is a continuing offence provision for failure to comply and the facility for a court order to be obtained requiring compliance.

False or misleading statements (Clause 24—new s. 23B)

There is a penalty of 100 penalty units or 12 months imprisonment or both for making or giving false or misleading answers or statements when complying with a section 23 notice.

It is a defence that, on reasonable grounds, the defendant believed the answer or statement was neither false nor misleading.

Penalty duty when section 23 not complied with (Clause 24—new s. 23C)

There is a penalty for non-compliance with a notice under existing section 23A of $500 plus double duty.

However, if the notice has not been complied with, the Commissioner may not have the information sufficient to ascertain the relevant amount of duty for the purpose of asking for that penalty.

This clause therefore provides for the Commissioner to demand a penalty equal to the amount of duty when assessing, reassessing or default assessing, with provision for him to remit that penalty (or a part of it).

(h) *Powers of Investigation*

Generally (Clause 28)

These powers are to be clarified and modernised.

Investigating officers approved by the Commissioner will be able to conduct enquiries into matters arising in connection with the Act and to ascertain the amount of duty

chargeable, facts relevant to whether liability under the Act arises and whether persons have complied with the provisions of the Act, etc.

The powers are—to enter on land or premises—to have full and free access to records—to require the production of records in a person's custody or control—to require persons to furnish information and answer questions—make copies and take extracts from records—when records are not in writing in English and decipherable on sight, to require a statement to be produced regarding the contents of those records and—to require reasonable assistance to be provided to him by an occupier of premises. Such powers would be contained by the purposes of the investigation and may only be exercised at reasonable times.

The section also incorporates the current provisions for the Commissioner to be able to appoint police officers as inspectors, in certain cases to inspect public records without fee and for investigators to be able to take unstamped instruments into their possession.

Restriction on entry (Clause 29)

This provides for investigating officers to be able to be required to produce a Commissioner's certificate to prove their authority and provides that a warrant must be obtained for them to enter a dwelling.

Obstruction of an investigating officer (Clause 29)

Penalty: 40 penalty units or 3 months imprisonment or both.

False or misleading statements (Clause 29)

False or misleading statements to an investigating officer. Penalty: 100 penalty units or 12 months imprisonment or both.

(i) *Evidentiary Provisions (Clause 77)*

These amendments are designed to facilitate the recovery of duty. They allow matters to be certified by the Commissioner for this purpose e.g. that the person made an instrument in respect of which an assessment was made, as to the particulars of the assessment, that the notice was duly served etc.

It also allows for an officer to be authorised to appear on the Commissioner's behalf and to be deemed to represent the Commissioner and to be entitled to conduct the proceedings and give evidence.

It is also to be deemed that proceedings instituted in the name of the Commissioner have been duly instituted by him or on his behalf. There is also power for the Commissioner to make a certificate certifying someone to be his delegate in a particular respect.

(j) *Service of documents on Commissioner (Clause 78)*

This clause provides for service to be accepted by a person authorised in writing by the Commissioner to accept service on his behalf.

(k) *Amendment of Assessments (Clause 79)*

This new clause replaces the existing section 80 which provides for the Commissioner to reassess duty upwards where he determines it to be assessed at an insufficient amount and specifies those cases where duty can also be reassessed downwards, namely—where there has been a mistake of fact or an arithmetic error (and the person applies for reassessment within two years) or—where a matter is subject to a current appeal or—where an instrument has not been assessed in accordance with the Commissioner's consistent interpretation of instruments of that kind at the time.

There is specific provision in relation to appeals in respect of reassessments to ensure that where an assessment downwards is made and the parties have not previously appealed against an assessment or reassessment, the reassessment does not open up a new avenue for appeal for them.

Allowance in case of stamps becoming useless (Clause 76)

Section 75 of the Act currently provides for the Commissioner to make an allowance in respect of stamps which have been rendered useless by being inadvertently spoiled. The current wording of the Act is not clear and it is proposed that the circumstances where the allowance can be made be specified clearly in the Act so that all persons will be aware of its scope.

D. *AMENDMENTS RELATING TO EXEMPTIONS*

1. *DUTY RELATING TO PRINCIPAL PLACE OF RESIDENCE ETC. (Clauses 3 and 56)*

Clause 56 provides for the principal place of residence concessions to be allowed to be apportioned where not all of the parties are acquiring the residence to reside thereon or where e.g. one of two joint purchasers is acquiring his interest in his first principal place of residence and the other in his principal place of residence (but not his first).

It also provides for the concession to apply where there is more than one residence on the one title and each of the residences are to be resided in separately by one or more of the separate purchasers.

The widening of the principal place of residence concession in these respects is to be effective from 15th September, 1987 to validate present administrative arrangements (clause 3).

New definitions and directions as to the calculation of duty are necessary to implement these new concepts under the provisions: - new section 55A (2A) provides for the symbols to be applied in the formulae for calculating relevant duty;

— new section 55A (2B) provides for the calculation of duty where the place of residence is the only property but not all parties are acquiring the property as their first principal place of residence or principal place of residence;

— new section 55A (2C) applies in the case at (2B) above but where there is property in addition to the place of residence;

— new subsection 55A (2D) applies where there are two residences on the one title and the property does not include property other than the residences and all of the acquirers are to reside in one or more of the residences and each of the residences are to be resided in by one or more such acquirers;

— new subsection 55A (2E) applies where

- there is more than one place of residence and each of the residences is not to be occupied by one or more of the acquirers; or
- there is property in addition to the residences to be resided in by the acquirers and the case would, apart from this, be covered by subsection (2D).

Provisions corresponding with those for the existing principal place of residence concessions, where the Commissioner may withdraw the concessions where the criteria for the concessions are not in retrospect met are to apply and similarly, the penalties e.g. for failure to notify in the circumstances for withdrawal, where there is a false claim for the first principal place of residence concession etc.

2. *RELIGIOUS/EDUCATIONAL/CHARITABLE INSTITUTION EXEMPTIONS*

Conveyance duty exemption for educational, religious and other institutions (Clauses 31, 36, 67 and 81)

Section 59E (see clause 67) replaces the existing conveyance duty concession for educational institutions, religious bodies and institutions engaged in the relief of poverty, and in the care of sick, aged, infirm, afflicted and incorrigible persons or of children.

Currently some relevant provisions require Ministerial approval of the institution or Executive Council approval of the denomination to which the religious body appertains.

The new section provides for these matters to be determined by the Commissioner according to ordinary principles.

The concession has also been tightened by requiring that a conveyance or transfer (other than of listed marketable securities) has to be for a qualifying purpose i.e. religious, charitable, or educational.

The exemption for listed securities is preserved in clauses 31 (for broker transactions), 36 (for London broker transactions) & 81 (for transfers generally).

The section also allows the Commissioner the power to either refuse the concession at the outset and allow a refund (subject to certain matters being later demonstrated to his satisfaction) or to give the concession on conditions and require the persons to notify him where those conditions are not in retrospect met. There is also a penalty for failure to notify these matters.

Securities for Loans to or Debts of Educational/Charitable/Religious Bodies (Clause 73)

This clause corresponds with clause 67. It replaces certain existing concessions for security instruments in respect of loans to and the debts of such institutions.

The principal purposes are to streamline the administration of the exemption and to ensure that it only applies in respect of loan monies borrowed for the purposes of being expended or debts incurred for a relevant qualifying purpose.

3. *RESTRICTIONS ON EXEMPTION ON INSTRUMENTS SECURING ADVANCES TO CERTAIN BOARDS AND CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATIONS (Clause 74)*

New section 69B is designed to overcome a difficulty with an exemption for securities in respect of grower advances and other marketing expenses of primary producer boards and co-operatives. The concern is that where an exemption is given for an instrument for a loan for a qualifying purpose (which may also be used to secure further advances), the instrument may subsequently be used for a non-qualifying purpose which will then benefit from the concession.

It is therefore proposed that, the body notify the Commissioner in such circumstances.

4. *STAMP DUTY ON CREDIT CARD BUSINESS (Clauses 3 & 37)*

This amendment is to ensure that all genuine store cards are liable for credit card duty only in respect of transactions other than with the relevant store. (Clause 37)

This clause is to be effective from 1st July, 1985 the date of the previous amendment which specifically provided for the treatment of store cards. (Clause 3).

5. *Sales of Crown Land*

A long standing practice whereby conveyance duty has been collected on certain sales of Crown Land is to be validated.

Certain other conditional sales of Crown land (viz, special leases, non-competitive perpetual leases and development leases) are to be similarly charged.

The relevant amendments involve:—

- the removal of the concession for deeds of grant from the Crown and its replacement with specific exemptions for grants to trustees for public purposes, agricultural farm leases, grazing homestead freeholding leases, and perpetual lease selections which are to remain exempt (clause 81)
- the insertion of new Section 45A (by clause 38) which provides for the Land Administration Commission to collect duty on conditional sales of Crown Land (other than exempt sales as specified in the First Schedule to the Act—see Clause 81) and for the Commission to be able to denote on the instrument that duty has been paid.

  (The section also validates the Commission's past actions in this respect.)
- deeming conveyance duty always to have applied to contracts or agreements for the sale of Crown land on which duty has been collected (Clause 80).

6. *MISCELLANEOUS EXEMPTIONS/CONCESSIONS (Clause 81)*

- Clause 81 (b) removes an open ended exemption whereby the Governor in Council may approve persons eligible for exemption on applications for registration and transfer of registration of motor vehicles.

  It is replaced by a specific exemption for institutions of the kind to which it has been extended in practice, viz., public benevolent institutions where the motor vehicle is necessary and is principally used for the carrying out of the institution's work of a public benevolent nature.
- Clause 81 (c) provides for a replacement exemption from cheque duty for institutions of a religious/educational/charitable nature in conjunction with the new provisions at clause 67.
- Clause 81 (d) provides for a security duty exemption for Parents and Citizens Associations.
- Clause 81 (e), inter alia, provides an exemption for transfers of property from the Public Trustee to the beneficial owner who was previously under a disability and on the vesting of property in a trustee upon a statutory trust for sale.

- Clause 81 (h) allows for additional security to an instalment purchase agreement to be treated as a collateral security and provides an exemption for security documentation securing advances to Parents and Citizens Associations.
- Clause 81 (j) omits a redundant exemption for life policies for less than $100.

E. *MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS*

1. *LIABILITY IN RESPECT OF STAMP DUTIES PAYABLE UPON INSTRUMENTS (Clause 26)*

The clause omits those provisions in Section 26 which provide for:—

- duty to be paid within one month of notification of assessment and for penalty for failure to so pay of 10% of the duty for the first month late, plus 20% if over a month late plus 20% per annum after the first year;
- the Commissioner, a Deputy or an authorised officer to impose a lesser penalty in lieu of proceeding for an offence for late lodgement or late payment;
- a penalty to be calculated to the nearest 10 cents;
- a definition of authorised officer for the provisions.

The new substitute paragraphs in section 26 (3) provide for—

— the provision which deems instruments to be re-executed on the date of an alteration to apply to altered copies.

— late payment penalties in all cases to be imposed by the Commissioner.

— the basis for charging late lodgement penalties (in lieu of court proceedings) and late payment penalties imposed by the Commissioner to be specified to be 3% where less than one month late plus 2% per month (or part of a month) thereafter to the next highest $1, with a discretion in the Commissioner to remit duty where he considers it appropriate to do so.

The clause also deletes a provision which allows the Commissioner to delegate the power of allowing extensions of time for lodgement of documents, as this is unnecessary following the amendment at Clause 11.

2. *EVIDENCE OF PARTIES TO INSTRUMENTS (Clause 25)*

This amendment clarifies the status of copies where they constitute dutiable documents because the original is not available.

3. *GENERAL DIRECTION AS TO THE CANCELLATION OF ADHESIVE STAMPS (Clause 19)*

Where the Act does not specify otherwise, an adhesive stamp is to be cancelled by the person who affixes it.

4. *DEFINITIONS (Clause 4)*

For the most part this clause arranges existing definitions in Section 2 in alphabetical order and makes punctuation, etc. consistent.

It also inserts new definitions, and tightens existing definitions in certain regards.

5. *Other Minor Amendments*

Clause 52 replaces a provision in section 53 which limited the duty charge on several conveyances of the one property. The new provision (section 53 (7)) allows duty paid on one instrument to be offset against duty chargeable on others.

Mr AUSTIN: I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr De Lacy, adjourned.

REVENUE LAWS (RECIPROCAL POWERS) BILL

Hon. B. D. AUSTIN (Nicklin—Minister for Finance and Minister Assisting the Premier and Treasurer) (11.27 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill to provide for the reciprocal enforcement of revenue laws and for related purposes."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. B. D. AUSTIN (Nicklin—Minister for Finance and Minister Assisting the Premier and Treasurer) (11.28 p.m.): I move—

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

The Bill is proposed to facilitate Queensland's participation in a Commonwealth/State/Territory co-operation legislative scheme for countering tax avoidance and evasion which is to allow for reciprocal assistance among taxation authorities in investigations and the exchange of information.

States and Territories with corresponding laws in this regard and with corresponding safeguards for the protection of the confidentiality of information disclosed under the scheme will be empowered to request that investigations be able to be conducted by them or on their behalf where investigations extend beyond State and Territory borders.

Investigations of other States' and Territories' taxation matters in Queensland under the co-operative scheme will be scrutinised before they are able to be conducted and will be subject to strict conditions, supervision and direction.

The co-operative scheme will also allow for the exchange of information among taxation authorities, for example, the reference of copies of documents which appear to be dutiable in another State or Territory but are unstamped, the results of a pay-roll tax investigation in respect of a nationally operating employer, etc.

Queensland will benefit under the scheme from corresponding legislation of the Commonwealth, the other States and the Northern Territory.

The provisions of the new proposed Act are detailed and largely procedural. Therefore, rather than take up the time of Parliament now by explaining them, under Standing Order 241 (c), I table explanatory notes and ask that these be incorporated in *Hansard.*

Leave granted.

Whereupon the honourable member laid on the table the following document—

EXPLANATORY NOTES

A BILL TO PROVIDE FOR THE RECIPROCAL ENFORCEMENT OF REVENUE LAWS

A. PARTICIPATING STATES AND RELATED APPROVALS

Clause 2 (4) provides for a law of the Commonwealth or a State or Territory to be recognised as a law corresponding with this proposed Act.

Under clause 2 (3), unless the Commonwealth or the relevant State or Territory has agreed to introduce corresponding legislation, Orders in Council may not be made under clause 2 (2) approving:—

— those Commonwealth, State and Territory taxation laws to which the Queensland co-operative scheme legislation extends; and

— Commonwealth, State or Territory revenue offices which are to be "designated offices" in respect of those laws (e.g. for the purpose of the holders of those offices referring matters for investigation in Queensland under our scheme legislation); and

— the Queensland revenue office which is to be "the relevant principal Queensland revenue office" in respect of a Commonwealth, State or Territory taxation law (e.g. for the purpose of the holder of this office approving investigations in Queensland of matters arising under that taxation law).

Clause 3 facilitates Queensland taking advantage of the Commonwealth co-operative scheme legislation. It authorises relevant Queensland revenue officers and persons authorised by them to be State taxation officers for the purposes of that legislation.

The definitions in clause 2 (1) support this scheme of approvals, for example:—

"recognised revenue law": a taxation law of the Commonwealth or another State or a Territory approved by the Governor in Council as one to which this Act applies;

"authorised revenue officer": a Queensland revenue officer or a revenue officer from another State or a Territory who is authorised to exercise investigation powers under the Act;

"designated Commonwealth revenue officer" and "designated State revenue officer": a holder of a prescribed office in respect of a recognised revenue law;

"relevant principal Queensland revenue officer": a Queensland revenue officer approved by the Governor in Council to be the officer relevant for various functions and approvals in respect of a particular recognised revenue law.

B. INVESTIGATIONS IN QUEENSLAND REGARDING MATTERS UNDER RECOGNISED REVENUE LAWS OF OTHER STATES AND TERRITORIES

1. *Approval of Investigation (Clause 4)*

- A designated State or Territory revenue officer must apply in writing for the conduct of an investigation in Queensland into a matter arising under a recognised revenue law (sub-clause (1)).
- The application must sufficiently disclose the reasons for which the investigation is sought to be conducted and may request that the relevant principal Queensland officer (or a Queensland revenue officer authorised by him) conduct the investigation on that State's or Territory's behalf (sub-clause (2)).
- When the relevant principal Queensland officer approves an investigation he must do so in writing and—
  - — specify whether he (or a Queensland revenue officer authorised by him) or the designated State or Territory revenue officer (or an officer authorised by that officer) is to conduct the investigation; and
  - — specify the conditions of his approval, including that it is to be conducted in respect of the matter and in the manner authorised by him and under his supervision and direction and subject to such reporting as he may require (sub-clause (3)).

An approval of an investigation may be revoked or varied. (Sub-clause (4)).

A person approved to conduct an investigation may exercise the powers under clause 5 subject to specified conditions. (Sub-clause (5))

2. *Investigation Powers*

(a) *Generally (Clause 5)*

The "authorised revenue officer" conducting an investigation under the Act is to be provided with powers which may be necessary for the conduct of an effective investigation, including—

- entering upon land and premises;
- access to records and the power to require their production;
- the power to require persons to furnish information and answer questions about records and information furnished;
- the power to require persons to provide reasonable assistance.

The powers provided under this section are subject to the purpose of the investigation and may only be exercised at reasonable times.

(b) *Restriction on entry in course of investigation (Clause 6)*

Clause 6—

— requires an investigator to produce a certificate proving his authority to conduct an investigation into a relevant matter, if required by the occupier of premises into or land onto which he has entered in the course of an investigation (sub-clause (1));

— establishes the presumption that, unless the contrary is proved, where a Queensland Commissioner issues such certificate, the investigation and investigator are duly

approved and authorised under the Act and the investigation is subject only to the conditions (if any) specified in the certificate (sub-clause (2)); and

—requires a warrant approved by a stipendiary magistrate if an investigator is to enter a dwelling house (sub-clauses (3) to (6)).

(c) *Powers to obtain Information (Clauses 8 and 9)*

A relevant principal Queensland revenue officer or a designated State or Territory revenue officer may, for the purposes of an investigation, require persons to produce information and records to him (or another approved revenue officer) or to attend before him (or another approved revenue officer) and answer questions.

Various sub-clauses provide e.g. for:—

- information and answers to be required to be provided on oath or by statutory declaration;
- the making of copies or the taking of extracts from information and records provided in accordance with the notice;
- scales of expenses to be prescribed for those attending in accordance with the requirements of the section;
- a Queensland revenue officer to be able to be present when a person complies with a notice before an officer from another State or Territory.

C. EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

1. *Provision of information to certain Commonwealth, State or Territory revenue officers, etc. (Clause 13)*

A relevant Queensland revenue officer and any person authorised by him may under this clause communicate information disclosed or obtained under this Act or a Queensland revenue law either, to any person with the consent of the person to whose affairs the information relates, or to—

- another Queensland revenue officer for the purposes of a Queensland revenue law;
- a Commonwealth, State or Territory revenue officer for the purposes of a recognised revenue law; or
- a legal representative of the Crown aiding a Queensland, Commonwealth, State or Territory revenue officer in connexion with the administration of a Queensland or a recognised revenue law.

Persons to whom such information is communicated are able to communicate the information to other such persons with the relevant Queensland revenue officer's consent and on such conditions as that officer may impose.

The use of information obtained under this Act or a Queensland revenue law is limited to the administration of this Act or a Queensland revenue law or a recognised revenue law or legal proceedings arising therefrom or reports of such proceedings.

Penalty: 200 penalty units or 6 months imprisonment or both.

2. *Information obtained under a corresponding law (Clause 14)*

This clause to a corresponding extent to clause 13 protects the confidentiality of information provided to Queensland taxation authorities by Commonwealth and other State and Territory taxation authorities under the co-operative scheme.

3. *Disclosure to Court (Clause 15)*

A person cannot be required to communicate to the court information which he has acquired pursuant to authority conferred by this Act or a corresponding law or which has come to his notice in the performance of his duties under such Act or law, except where it is necessary to do so for the purposes of this Act, and Queensland revenue law or a recognised revenue law.

D. MISCELLANEOUS

1. *Procedural Matters*

(a) *Certification of copies and extracts (Clause 16)*

A Queensland revenue officer may certify copies of records or extracts therefrom where he holds the record from which the copy or extract is taken.

Where a Queensland revenue officer holds a copy or extract certified by a Commonwealth, State or Territory or another Queensland revenue officer, to be a true copy or true extract, he may certify it to be such or may copy or take extracts from such copies or extracts and certify them to be true copies or true extracts, as the case may require.

(b) *Evidentiary value of copies and extracts (Clause 17)*

This clause provides for the admissibility in proceedings in court in Queensland of copies or extracts certified in accordance with clause 16.

(c) *Use in legal proceedings of answers and information obtained under a corresponding law (Clause 19)*

Where, in the course of an investigation in respect of a Queensland revenue law conducted under a corresponding law in another State or Territory, an answer is provided to a question or information is furnished, it is admissible in a Queensland court.

Where the person so providing the information or answer could but for the provisions of a corresponding law have refused to so answer or to provide the information on the grounds that it might incriminate him or make him liable to penalty, the information is not admissible in criminal proceedings in Queensland against the person or any proceedings for an offence, except against a Queensland revenue law.

Answers and information by an officer of a corporation acting under authority bind the corporation and therefore are admissible in court against the corporation.

(d) *Conduct of prosecution proceedings (Clause 21)*

Proceedings for prosecution are to be brought in the official name of the relevant Queensland revenue officer by that officer or another officer authorised by him.

(e) *Service of notice (Clause 22)*

Notice etc. under the Act may be delivered personally or left at the last known place of business or residence of the person or sent by post addressed to that person's last known address.

Evidence that a particular method of service has been adopted in respect of a notice directed to any person is to be conclusive evidence of service in absence of evidence to the contrary.

2. *Offences*

(a) *Obstruction etc. of an authorised revenue officer (Clause 7)*

It is an offence to obstruct an investigator acting in the exercise of his powers or to fail to comply with a request duly made by him.

Penalty: 40 penalty units or 3 months imprisonment or both.

(b) *False or Misleading Statements (Clause 20)*

Providing false or misleading information to an authorised revenue officer or making false or misleading statements or representations when complying with a requirement of the Act is an offence.

Penalty: 100 penalty units or 12 months imprisonment or both.

It is a defence that the person believed on reasonable grounds that the information, statement or representation was neither false or misleading.

(c) *Offence not to comply with a requirement of a notice under Clause 8 or 9 (Clause 10)*

Penalty: 40 penalty units.

It is a defence where the court is satisfied that a person could not by the exercise of reasonable diligence have complied with such requirement.

The offence is a continuing offence with a penalty of 2 penalty units per day while the offence is continued until conviction.

A person is not excused from complying with a requirement of clause 8 or 9 on the grounds that to do so might incriminate him or make him liable for a penalty, provided that information so provided will not be admissible in proceedings in the State or Territory where the recognised revenue law was made, except in so far as the offence is under the recognised revenue law.

It is also not to be admissible in a Queensland court in these circumstances, except for an offence against clause 20 or against a Queensland revenue law or in connexion with an offence for a false oath or affirmation.

(d) *Court order on defendant to comply (Clause 11)*

Where a court convicts a person of an offence for failure to comply with a clause 8 or 9 notice, the court may order the defendant to comply with that requirement in that notice and if he does not comply with that order, he is liable for a penalty not exceeding 100 penalty units or 12 months imprisonment or both.

(e) *Successive prosecutions for continuing offences (Clause 12)*

It is a continuing offence to fail to comply with a notice under clause 8 or 9 after initial conviction but not after the court has made an order for the defendant to comply with the notice.

3. *Other*

(a) Authorised communication of information creates no liability (Clause 18)

No liability is incurred by the Crown or by a Queensland revenue officer by reason of information communicated or the publication of a record under authority conferred by clause 13 or 14.

(b) *Use of information obtained from other sources not prejudiced (Clause 23)*

Where a Commonwealth or State or Territory officer obtains in Queensland, otherwise than in accordance with this Act, information relevant to the administration of a recognised revenue law, nothing in this Act prevents such information being used for the purposes of that law.

(c) *Regulations (Clause 24)*

This clause provides for the making of any necessary regulations.

Mr AUSTIN: I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr De Lacy, adjourned.

MT. GRAVATT SHOWGROUNDS BILL

Hon. P. J. CLAUSON (Redlands—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (11.29 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill to provide in respect of the use of certain land in Mt. Gravatt Brisbane held by Brisbane City Council."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. P. J. CLAUSON (Redlands—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (11.30 p.m.): I move—

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

The Mount Gravatt showgrounds site has been the subject of a long-running dispute between the Mount Gravatt Show Society and the Brisbane City Council.

The history of this dispute, which led to a much-publicised appeal to the Privy Council in the 1970s, is well-known and it is not necessary to chronicle the complex sequence of events preceding the judicial committee's decision.

Put simply, the Privy Council found that a parcel of land which had been transferred by the society to the council in 1938 and which formed part of the showgrounds was

subject to a trust that it be held for showgrounds, park and recreation purposes. This prevented the council from selling any of the showgrounds land as it intended to do because the area held to be subject to the trust included parts of lots which had, since 1938, been either subdivided or dedicated to road use.

Detailed and protracted negotiations between the council, the society and local community groups ensued and it was eventually decided that the whole of the lands comprising the showground site should become the subject of a community-based trust.

The purpose of the Bill is to implement that decision by establishing a permanent trust for the administration of all the Mount Gravatt showgrounds lands, thus ensuring that those lands are used only for showgrounds, park and recreation purposes.

The showgrounds lands are to be vested in a trust which will be a body corporate called the Mt. Gravatt Showgrounds Trust, whose membership is to be the following persons—

(a) the person elected for the time being as Alderman of Brisbane City Council who represents the electoral ward in which the showgrounds are situated, who shall be a member of the trust ex officio;

(b) one person nominated by Brisbane City Council;

(c) three persons nominated by the society; and

(d) two persons selected by the Minister as representatives of the community that in his opinion is advantaged by the showgrounds.

Those members, who represent the interests of the organisations principally interested in the showgrounds site, will administer the trust in accordance with the prescribed objects and powers in the Bill, thereby ensuring that the showgrounds continue to be used and enjoyed by the Mount Gravatt community.

The formulation of this legislation has been an exercise in community co-operation, and the Government is pleased to be able to assist the interested parties in the establishment of a permanent trust capable of managing the showgrounds for the benefit of the community.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Braddy, adjourned.

PUBLIC TRUSTEE ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. P. J. CLAUSON (Redlands—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (11.32 p.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That leave be granted to bring in a Bill to amend the Public Trustee Act 1978-1985 in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. P. J. CLAUSON (Redlands—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (11.33 p.m.): I move—

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

The Public Trustee Act, which was enacted in 1978, contains numerous provisions setting certain monetary limits in relation to the exercise of certain powers and functions by the Public Trustee. Owing to the changes in money values as a result of inflation,

those monetary limits have been reviewed, and the Bill is intended to alter those amounts wherever appropriate to reflect current values. A few of the examples are—

- Under section 30, where there is no grant of administration of an estate in force in Queensland and the property in this State does not exceed $20,000, the Public Trustee may file an election to administer. This amount is being increased to $25,000.
- Under section 35, which enables the Public Trustee to administer small estates under $5,000 without the necessity of filing an election to administer and having to advertise for creditors to prove their debts, it is proposed to increase this amount to $10,000.
- Under section 51, where a person is mentally incapable of giving a discharge and the value of the property does not exceed $5,000, then the Public Trustee may, subject to any order of court, retain the property on trust for that person and apply it for his maintenance, education and advancement. The effects of inflation necessitate an increase of this amount to $10,000.
- Section 59 deals with the compromise of actions by or on behalf of persons under a legal disability. The sanction of a judge of the Supreme Court is required or, in an appropriate case, a judge of a District Court or the Public Trustee.

  In such cases where the money or damages recovered or awarded does not exceed $6,000 in the case of a District Court, and $750 in the case of any other court, that money can be paid to the next friend of the plaintiff or to the plaintiff's solicitors if the court so directs. It is proposed to increase these amounts to $10,000 and $1,250 respectively.

These few examples reflect generally the increases in the amounts that are mentioned in the respective sections. In addition, there is an amendment to section 88 to remedy the defective paragraphing of the section.

Clause 6 of the Bill amends section 117 to dispense with the requirement for my consent to payments made by the Public Trustee from the Unclaimed Moneys Fund. The Public Trustee is an accountable officer in the context of the Financial Administration and Audit Act and does not need my supervision in this regard.

Section 142 is also amended to include power to make regulations whereby the Public Trustee may remit all or part of any fees or other charges provided for under the Act.

Paragraph (g) of section 48 and Part G of the First Schedule of the Act are repealed because they no longer have any effect.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Braddy, adjourned.

The House adjourned at 11.35 p.m.