

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER 1939

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Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. E. J. Hanson, Buranda) took the chair at 10.30 a.m.

QUESTION.

NEW RAILWAY STATION, ROMA STREET; RAIL CONNECTION BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH BRISBANE.

Mr. YEATES (East Toowoomba) asked the Minister for Transport—

“1. Will he give the following particulars of the new railway station buildings at Roma Street:—(a) Number of platforms; (b) dimensions of main buildings; (c) estimated cost of work to date; (d) estimated total cost to completion; and (e) anticipated date of completion?”

“2. Will the new station be the main Brisbane station?”

“3. In this connection has consideration been given to the question of linking up North and South Brisbane by rail?”

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. J. Larcombe, Rockhampton) replied—

“1. (a) There will be three new platforms, making a total of six; (b) the dimensions of the new building have not been definitely determined, but will approximate 220 feet long by 40 feet wide; (c) £59,000; (d) £16,600, exclusive of the new building; (e) end of 1940.

“2. When the work is completed, Roma street will be the principal station for departure and arrival of long-distance trains, but Central Station will continue to be the main Brisbane station for all suburban and short-distance trains.

“3. The proposal to connect North and South Brisbane by rail is considered by the Commissioner to be impracticable at present. Such a link with Roma street would cause great congestion at that station, and would counteract the benefit which, it is expected, will result from the present Roma street rearrangement scheme. The present arrangement whereby traffic to and from the South Coast and Cleveland lines, and also interstate traffic, is decentralised, lessens terminal congestion, and does not cause any great inconvenience to the travelling public. The objective of the Railway Department is to minimise centralisation, avoid congestion, and facilitate traffic operations.”

INCOME (STATE DEVELOPMENT) TAX ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

THIRD READING.

Bill, on motion of Mr. Foley, read a third time.

MINES REGULATION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

COMMITTEE.

(Mr. O'Keefe, Cairns, in the chair.)

Clause 1—Short title and construction— as read, agreed to.

Clause 2—Provisions as to sewers—

Mr. WALKER (Coorooora) (10.36 a.m.):
I move the following amendment:—

“On page 2, line 21, after the word ‘person,’ insert the words—

‘having the qualifications of an inspector.’”

I think this amendment would constitute a safeguard and would be of great benefit to the men who work in sewers in Brisbane or elsewhere, because it would ensure that only a qualified person was appointed as an inspector. The clause enables anybody to be appointed—probably one who has had no mining experience at all—for it reads—

“In addition to any inspector, any person appointed in writing by the Minister to inspect sewers or any particular sewer to which this Act applies shall in and with respect to the inspection of such sewers or sewer have all the powers, authorities, jurisdiction, and protection of an inspector duly appointed under this Act.”

That gives power to appoint a man who has had no practical experience. If such an appointment was made complete efficiency would not be obtained and the chances are that accidents would occur—they must occur. An inspector should have the ability to detect seepage, cracks, or faulty ground, and unless he has the chances are that accidents of a serious nature will occur. In the appointment of inspectors of scaffolding and the men occupying the hundred and one other similar positions created for the protection of the workers, preference is given to those who have practical experience and have been in the industry concerned for a long time. Inspectors of boilers, for instance, must have the qualifications and certificate of engine-drivers of the first-class man. The object of the Minister in charge of the Machinery and Scaffolding Department is to see that only those possessing the highest qualifications, coupled with long practical experience, are appointed to the position of inspector. Under the Bill it is possible that the Minister might engage a man of fine personality, with every appearance of being a good man in every other walk of life, but with no experience of sewers or mines. I think the word “mines” would be a better word to use because in practice it covers sewers.

The dangers associated with mining may be detected only by experienced men who have a knowledge of the country in which mining is being carried out. For instance, the nature of the ground in Charters Towers may be different from that in Gympie; so, sewer workings in Maryborough may be different from those in Brisbane. Therefore, it is important that the inspector should be a man with a thorough practical knowledge of mining and of the nature of the country in which the work is being done, so as to be able to form a competent opinion in the interests of the safety of the men under his supervision. I believe that the man charged with this duty should have had a number of years of practical experience as a miner

and indeed should hold the same qualifications as a mine manager.

In the early days it was extremely difficult to obtain mine managers with the qualifications that they possess to-day, with the result that enormous sums of money were wasted because work was not carried out efficiently. Of course, after a few years of practical experience the men then in charge of mines became highly competent and were able to carry out the work in a very efficient manner, but it should be remembered that some time must elapse before any man is able to equip himself with the knowledge that will enable him to detect threatening dangers underground.

In the face of these facts, the Minister should accept the amendment. The miners would then have complete confidence in their inspector. They have not the time to look for threatening dangers. Very often they are lowered quickly down the pits and they rush along the crosscuts or drives anxious to get to their work. They have not the time to examine the ground for any creeps or seepages that may have developed overnight through the action of air or water. What opportunities have the men to detect these dangers if they have to take up the hammer and drill within a quarter of an hour of going below? On the other hand, an inspector with years of practical experience and adequate time at his disposal is able to detect any dangers that may threaten the men, and if he does his work properly the men have the utmost confidence in him and before beginning work can say: “The inspector was along here this morning and everything is safe so far as it is humanly possible to make it.” But if they have to go to work with the fear that something may happen to them by over-hanging ground, they are not able to give of their best. The amendment is a reasonable one and the Minister should accept it.

Mr. DART (Wynnum) (10.44 a.m.): I support this very necessary amendment. Where life or limb is threatened the greatest care should be taken to see that only qualified inspectors are appointed, but if the amendment is not accepted the Minister will have power to appoint inspectors who are not practical men. Only practical men are qualified to protect men working in dangerous places underground. Qualifications are required for any post. What should we expect if school teachers were appointed who were not qualified to impart the knowledge necessary for the education of the pupil? We should not obtain the results that would be gained under a qualified teacher. Miners for the most part work underground, and if an inexperienced man is appointed to such a responsible position as that of inspector, he will not have the requisite knowledge to say what is required for the safety of the men. An unqualified man may be the means of causing many deaths. Therefore, it is very necessary that a qualified man should be appointed as an inspector. The amendment really serves the purpose of the Minister. Doubtless the Minister will appoint a man

who he thinks is sufficiently qualified, but it may happen that an appointee will turn out to be a dud and not understand his job. All mine managers must pass certain examinations. How much more necessary is it that mine inspectors, charged with the duty of taking measures to ensure the safety of lives of miners, should also be qualified? The inspection of a mine, with the object of detecting the presence of gas, or the safety of the walls and timber, calls for an experienced man and no loop-hole should be left in the clause that might lead to the appointment of an inspector who did not possess the confidence of the miners. Of course, there are many men without the necessary qualifications who would do their best according to their ability in the interests of the miners, but without practical knowledge this would be very little protection to them.

Men engaged in sewerage mining are regarded as following a more dangerous calling than ordinary miners. Miners working many hundreds of feet below the surface have walls of stone and other means of protection that sewerage men working close to the surface do not have, and, consequently, it is necessary that only qualified men should act as inspectors of sewer work.

I support the amendment in the interest of the workers. It is not too much to ask the Minister to accept it, because it would give greater safety to the workers. No matter on what side of the Committee we sit, we are all interested in the welfare and safety of the workers and desire to see them protected. The hon. member for Toowoomba smiles, but we should all be fair to the working man and admit that the first step in that direction is to see that qualified men are appointed to see that the working conditions for those engaged in sewer mining are safe.

Mr. POWER (Baroona) (10.50 a.m.): Personally, I see no necessity for the amendment.

The Bill itself is introduced to give effect to the principle of having competent inspectors of sewers throughout the State. It is necessary that the protection enjoyed by miners engaged on sewerage work in Brisbane should be extended to men engaged on similar work in other parts of Queensland.

Under the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Acts, in addition to the foreman on every job in the metropolitan area, there is an inspector in charge of the whole section. The Bill simply extends that protection of the miners to the whole State where required.

Nobody can reasonably suggest that a man would be appointed to the position of inspector if he did not have qualifications to carry out the work. We know how essential it is in the interests of the safety of the miners to have proper inspection. It would be useless to send a clerk out of an office to inspect methods of using explosives, to supervise the timbering of sewers in both soft and hard ground, or to see that the proper ventilation was provided. In the Brisbane area inspectors

were selected by a ballot of the representatives of the organisation that covered the industry in which the men were engaged. A qualified man was selected for the metropolitan area and he has done excellent work, but the area is too large to enable him to carry out his duty as efficiently as he would like.

I do not think there is any need for the amendment. I am confident the Minister, who has an intimate knowledge of mining work, will see that a suitable man with the necessary qualifications is selected. I cannot, however, over-emphasise the importance of having a qualified man to do the work.

Mr. Brand: That is what we are asking.

Mr. POWER: There is no doubt the Minister will see that is done. I cannot see any merit in the amendment. Does the hon. member who interjected suggest that the Minister would appoint a banana-grower or a sugar-farmer.

Mr. Brand: You do not know.

Mr. POWER: I do know. I have every confidence in the Minister, who has had a long practical experience in mining. Having worked underground himself, he is familiar with the conditions under which the men work and he knows what is required.

We know there have been many accidents in sewerage work. During the time the Brisbane City Council has been doing the sewerage work in the metropolitan area the accidents have been much less than when the work was carried out by contractors. However, we know that accidents will happen. Many accidents have happened because charges have not exploded, for instance, and there is provision in the Bill to protect the men engaged in that work. There is no doubt that many contractors who did sewerage work had more interest in getting as much profit as they could than in the welfare of the men they employed. We know that often proper timbering or no timber at all was provided. We know that on numerous occasions—I stressed this matter on a previous occasion—accidents occurred as a result of sending untrained men to do mining work.

I have no doubt the hon. member for Cooroora is quite honest and sincere in moving the amendment, but I contend that there is no necessity for it. I am confident that the Minister will see that no-one but a competent man is appointed. I am also confident, however, that if there was a change of Government, we might have the same spectacle as we had under the regime of the Moore Government, when many inspectors were transferred from one place to another because they were doing their job properly, and many industrial inspectors were thrown out of employment altogether because they had carried out their work conscientiously. The Minister already has all the necessary powers to see that proper supervision is carried out. At the same time, I feel quite sure that any man appointed to do this class of work will have the necessary qualifications.

A man without the necessary electrical qualifications, for instance, would not be sent out to do an electrical job, and as the Minister in charge of the Department of Mines is a capable man with mining experience and knows the requirements, I feel sure that the necessary protection will be afforded to workers and that only persons with the necessary qualifications will be appointed.

Mr. BRAND (Isis) (10.56 a.m.): Evidently while the Minister has been trying to make up his mind as to the amendment, the hon. member for Baroona, who holds the Minister in very high regard from the practical point of view, felt it incumbent on him to explain the clause and in doing so has indicated to the hon. gentleman how very essential it is that he should accept the amendment. He argued that all necessary precautions should be taken to have only men with the proper qualifications appointed to protect the lives of those who work underground. That is exactly what the hon. member for Cooroora is endeavouring to have provided in the Bill, so that the public will be assured that those who are appointed will be properly qualified. It is an accepted canon of our parliamentary practice that legislation shall at all times ensure that qualified men control the various instrumentalities of State. This Bill permits the Minister to appoint as an inspector whose duty it will be to protect the life of people working underground, a man without the qualifications recognised as necessary by the department.

The Secretary for Mines: You would not have that happen, would you?

Mr. BRAND: The hon. gentleman can rest assured that the motive actuating the mover of the amendment is only to ensure that properly qualified men shall do this work. We have the knowledge as a political party of actions of a Government in appointing as men inspectors because they wore a tie of a certain colour; the qualifications they possessed were not in accord with the accepted canons of the administration of the department.

It is remarkable that before the Minister in charge of the Bill has spoken to this amendment, an hon. member sitting behind him, one who claims to have had some experience in mining and sewerage workings, should speak in terms that support the hon. member for Cooroora and say honestly that the reason why he cannot support the amendment is that he knows the Minister will appoint a man with all the necessary qualifications. Does the Minister not recognise that that is a remarkable attitude to take up?

I feel sure that the hon. member for Baroona is actuated by a keen desire to help the Minister out of his present difficult position.

We are now at that stage of the Bill at which we may make amendments that will render this legislation more effective. We should not do anything that would perhaps permit this or any future Minister to appoint as an inspector a person who has not the

necessary qualifications. After all, the Minister cannot be expected to have personal knowledge of all the men who come under his control; he will have to accept the advice of officers of his department, and, if a fatal accident should happen, the responsibility for that accident must fall upon the shoulders of the Minister, because the Bill merely proposes that the Minister may appoint in writing any person to the position of inspector. Why should we not say, as the hon. member for Baroona has said, that every man should have full qualifications? That is all we are asking.

Mr. Power: You have got that already.

Mr. BRAND: We have not. If the hon. member cares to read the Bill he will see that the Minister is given power to appoint in writing "any person," and that no mention whatever is made of qualifications. The Bill says—

"... any person appointed in writing by the Minister to inspect sewers or any particular sewer in which this Act applies shall in and with respect to the inspection of such sewers or sewer have all the powers, authorities, jurisdiction, and protection of an inspector duly appointed under this Act."

All we ask is that the person who is appointed shall have the qualifications of an inspector. These qualifications are widely known. The Minister should accept the amendment. He must have gathered from the speech just delivered by the hon. member for Baroona that both sides of this Committee believe that this protection is essential in the interests of the underground workers.

Mr. CLARK (Fitzroy) (11.3 a.m.): Like the hon. member for Baroona, I do not think that the amendment is warranted. We have throughout Queensland to-day men who are known as check inspectors. They carry out their duties in the interests of both the Department of Mines and the men they represent. This Bill gives the Minister power to appoint inspectors for the purpose of inspecting sewerage works. I am of the opinion that men, such as the check inspectors, whose only qualifications are those that they have gained from practical experience in mining, are eminently suited to carry out the inspection of sewers.

Let us take Rockhampton, Bundaberg, and Maryborough as instances. I venture to say that in each area one will find entirely different geological formations. It is true that some surface works are more dangerous than the deeper workings—I know that from my own experience as a miner—and I say that this Bill does all that is necessary. There is no need for the amendment.

I remind the Opposition, too, that it is not the Minister's intention to appoint inspectors in every part of the State where sewerage works may be going on; but to see that men engaged in sewerage works in all areas outside of Brisbane shall be protected in the same way as those who follow this occupation within the city of Brisbane, and it is only

right that he should want to do that. All the sewerage workers of Queensland are entitled to the same protection as is given to other miners.

Mr. Walker: That is my opinion.

Mr. CLARK: Reference has been made to inspectors who possess certain qualifications, and it has been said that they would point out dangerous ground, for instance. I do not know of any such inspector in Queensland who tells the men underground that certain ground is dangerous. An inspector visiting a mine is told that certain ground is dangerous by the management of the mine, or by the miners themselves. The same principle applies to sewerage works.

Check inspectors are appointed for certain work. I know of an instance in my own electorate where a check inspector was asked to go to various centres and inspect the sewerage work there. He had not the power to do it under the Act. I take it that the present Bill will supply that power and it will not be necessary to appoint a large number of inspectors. The Minister might appoint a man to Maryborough if the sewerage workers in that district wanted an inspection made.

It is not the duty of a qualified inspector of mines to go through a mine and find where the ground is dangerous. He is always informed of that by the underground manager or the superintendent. If dangerous ground exists, he may be asked to inspect it. A check inspector walking through a mine can see the nature of the ground for himself, because he has had practical knowledge of mining, and if a stope or a winze is dangerous he points it out to the manager.

I really do not see any necessity for the amendment suggested. The Minister in charge of the Bill has common sense, and knows the qualifications required for the job. He will see that the best man to be got is appointed.

Mr. DUNSTAN (Gympie) (11.8 a.m.): The fabric of the argument erected by hon. members opposite in support of the amendment does not need the certificate of an inspector to reveal its weaknesses. They are buttressing their case with words. The hon. member for Cooroora, himself a miner, knows and has said—I think he said it in this House—that the old mine managers of Gympie were equal to any in Australia.

Mr. Walker: Hear, hear!

Mr. DUNSTAN: And they had no certificates.

Mr. Maher: They are not going to be the inspectors.

Mr. DUNSTAN: He also knows that the inspection of a mine is not ordinarily done by a Government inspector, but by the shift captains and the underground bosses, day after day in consultation with the men. Very seldom is it that the inspection of a mine is done by the manager.

The clause of this Bill in question seeks to provide for the appointment of men with experience.

Mr. Maher: No, it does not.

Mr. DUNSTAN: Yes, it does. The hon. member is only talking about certificates. The inspectors appointed will have the confidence of the men themselves. The mere possession of a certificate by a man does not make him better for this class of work. The men to be appointed will have had experience and will go about the job in exactly the same way as the shift captains and underground bosses in mines.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. D. A. Gledson, Ipswich) (11.10 a.m.): The hon. member for Cooroora could have achieved the object of his amendment simply by moving for the omission of this paragraph—

“In addition to any inspector, any person appointed in writing by the Minister to inspect sewers or any particular sewer to which this Act applies shall . . . have all the powers, authorities, jurisdiction, and protection of an inspector duly appointed under this Act.”

The Act of 1911 provides that every inspector shall hold a first-class certificate of a mine manager, but no certificate may be granted under the Act for service. Every person who desires to obtain a mine manager's certificate must pass a theoretical examination of competence, but it is not every practical miner who can pass a theoretical examination. I have had practical experience as a miner, but I have also passed the theoretical examination, and I hold a first-class mine manager's certificate. That would enable me to be appointed as an inspector under the Act.

Mr. Nimmo: But you would be thoroughly qualified.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I venture to say that there are other hon. members in the Chamber with a practical knowledge of mining who would be just as competent as inspectors as I should be although they had not passed the theoretical examination. They have practical knowledge, and that is the real test of whether they would be competent inspectors or not. If the amendment was accepted, a man could not be appointed as an inspector of sewers unless he held a first-class mine manager's certificate and was therefore qualified to be an inspector under the Act.

Mr. Maher: On an earlier stage of the Bill you said that the work in sewers was just as risky as mining.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The work is just as dangerous in some sewers as it is in mines, and it is necessary that a competent man should be appointed in the interests of the safety of the men; but I repeat that, if the amendment is accepted, it will mean that no matter how competent a man may be, he cannot be appointed as an inspector, simply because he does not hold a first-class mine manager's certificate. The constructing authority would not appoint a

man who was not thoroughly competent; and, what is more, the inspector must satisfy the chief inspector of mines, who is an engineer, or the other inspectors appointed under the Act, that he is qualified to say that the law is being observed and the regulations are being carried out in the sewers.

The hon. member for Wynnum was a party to the promulgation of the regulations that are now in operation in sewerage works in Brisbane.

Mr. Dart: There have been a few accidents.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The hon. member was a party to those regulations, and he cannot maintain that they are faulty or that the inspectors have failed in their duty simply because there has been an accident in the sewers. When he was a member of the Brisbane City Council, he was of the opinion that these regulations in the interests of the safety of the men should be adopted, and he was actually a party to them. When the hon. member for Cooroora was a Minister of the Crown between 1929 and 1932, he carried out the very principle to which he objects to-day, thereby saying, in effect, that the regulations were satisfactory when his party were in power; yet now that he is in opposition he thinks he is at liberty to criticise what his Government did when they were in power. The regulations that we propose to extend were promulgated in 1923, and have been in operation in the metropolitan area ever since—that is, while the hon. member for Wynnum was a member of the Brisbane City Council. Under those regulations an inspector is a man appointed under the Mines Regulation Acts, 1910 to 1916, or, “any other person appointed by the Minister in writing for that purpose.” This clause merely provides that these inspectors shall be appointed in other parts of the State as well as the metropolitan area. No departure is intended from what has been done in Brisbane since 1923 on sewerage works undertaken by the Brisbane City Council. That regulation was in force when hon. members opposite controlled the Treasury benches.

As far as possible, inspectors appointed under the Mines Regulation Acts will conduct the inspections of sewers. There is no intention of appointing an army of inspectors to do this work, but the Department of Mines must have control of sewerage operations and must have thoroughly qualified men for inspection purposes. As far as possible, men with first-class certificates and possessing practical knowledge will be appointed. It is necessary to appoint practical men. Nevertheless, the department desires to reserve to itself the power, if it is necessary, to appoint a man who does not hold a first-class theoretical certificate. As the hon. members for Baroona and Fitzroy pointed out, men are now carrying out inspection work who were selected by the men engaged in particular mines. We also have men inspecting sewerage work who have been selected by the men employed on the job. These men would not be eligible as inspectors if the amendment was carried,

despite the fact that they are thoroughly competent men, have proved themselves to be so, and are well able to look after the interests of the men by seeing that the mining laws and regulations are carried out in the proper way.

I cannot accept the amendment, as it would interfere with the proper working of the department and curtail its powers of making appointments of men who, though competent, do not hold first-class mining certificates. As the hon. member for Cooroora pointed out, there are not a great number of such men in Queensland.

Mr. NIMMO (Oxley) (11.19 a.m.): I am surprised that the Minister will not accept the amendment. His action supports the remark I made on the introductory stage of the Bill—that it seems to be the policy of the present Government to appoint an army of inspectors that they may use them for propaganda and other purposes. The fact remains, as I then pointed out, that appointments might be made of men without much qualification.

The Secretary for Mines: That is not true.

Mr. NIMMO: Such appointments have been made in other directions, and this Bill creates another loophole for such appointments. An inspector might be appointed in the electorate of the hon. member for Aubigny and stand in the interests of the Government at the next election.

The Minister, when introducing the Bill, stated very definitely that it was no use appointing men unless they were qualified. He said—

“It has been found, however, that there are dangers in working at a lesser depth. It has also been discovered that where no inspection has been made some sewers have gone to a depth of 70 or 80 feet, and the conditions of working in them are such that had it not been that thoroughly qualified men were working there, life would have been endangered.”

Now we have the Minister coming along and asking for power to appoint inspectors who are not thoroughly qualified. I think that every hon. member of this Committee is satisfied, as the Minister says, that if inspectors are not thoroughly qualified, accidents will happen, yet the Minister now asks for permission to appoint anybody. Even the hon. member for Fortitude Valley could be appointed as an inspector and sent out to some electorate in Queensland to organise for three years while inspecting the sewers. That is wrong in principle.

Even at this eleventh hour the Minister should give favourable consideration to the amendment. I know that the Minister is fair; I know he is anxious to protect the lives of the men working in the sewers; but if a man is not qualified his appointment involves expenditure without return.

The Minister said that there was no need for the amendment, because the clause could be deleted altogether. If that is so, why not

delete the clause? There is really no need for it, and if the clause was left out I should feel perfectly satisfied. The Minister says that inspectors are employed in Brisbane, yet we find that although sewerage work has extended throughout Queensland and there have not been accidents, in Brisbane there have been a number of serious accidents. Apparently, inspectors without qualifications have been sent out and the result is that these accidents have occurred.

Mr. Power: There have been accidents in mines where there were qualified inspectors.

Mr. NIMMO: They will always occur. I think the hon. member for Baroona will admit that there is less chance of accident where the inspector is thoroughly qualified.

How does a man become qualified? I know the Minister burned much midnight oil in order to become qualified. He is the type of man to whom we give credit for making himself qualified. The Minister must realise that there are grave dangers associated with sending a man out who is not qualified. Inspections are either necessary or not necessary; there is either a need for the Bill or no need for it.

I repeat this morning what I said at the introductory stage, that the only objection I have to it is that it looks like a loophole for the appointment of political hacks. The hon. gentleman virtually admits that the only reason why he may appoint unqualified men is that he cannot get inspectors. I venture to say that is not so. There are men working at Ipswich—

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I rise to a point of order. I object to the statement that the Minister admitted he would appoint unqualified men. No such statement was ever made.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member for Oxley to withdraw the statement.

Mr. NIMMO: I did not say the Minister would appoint unqualified men. I said the Minister was asking permission to appoint unqualified men, and he said he could not get qualified men. I know for a fact there are men working in coalmines at Ipswich who are thoroughly qualified.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Minister said that the hon. member made a certain accusation; I ask the hon. member to withdraw it.

Mr. NIMMO: What is the accusation I made? If the Minister will state it I will withdraw it, but I do not think I made any accusation.

The CHAIRMAN: I ask the Minister to repeat it.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The statement made by the hon. member for Oxley was that the Minister admitted that this Bill would give him power to appoint unqualified men. I admitted nothing of the sort. No man other than one who is thoroughly qualified will be appointed.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member for Oxley has heard the Minister deny the statement attributed to him.

Mr. NIMMO: I withdraw it. The whole clause gives power to the Minister to appoint an unqualified man. Why this quibbling? The Bill empowers the Minister to appoint in writing any person to inspect sewerage workings. The hon. gentleman knows as well as I that some excellent fully qualified men are working on the coalfields in the Ipswich district. Such men could, under this Bill, be appointed inspectors. Why, then, leave the loophole for the appointment of unqualified men? We are elected to Parliament as the representatives of the people, and it is our duty to see that the Bills we pass are reasonable, possible of administration, and for the safety of the public. But to-day we are asked to agree to a Bill the principle of which is the protection of life, but which contains a clause giving the Minister power to appoint unqualified men as inspectors. The only excuse given by the hon. gentleman is that no qualified men are available. That is very thin. In Queensland there are men who, after studying for years, have become fully qualified, but who to-day are not occupying the positions of inspectors.

In introducing this Bill, the Minister said that serious accidents would have occurred had qualified men not been working on the jobs—those are his words—nevertheless, he refuses to accept this amendment.

I do not know the reason for the inclusion of the clause. The Minister is smiling, but if the Bill is to be of any use at all, its provisions must be made watertight. The Department of Mines should be told that if it takes control of the sewerage workings in country towns, only qualified men shall be appointed as inspectors. There is no justification for refusing the amendment, and I hope it will be accepted.

Mr. McLEAN (Bundaberg) (11.28 a.m.): The reasons submitted by the hon. member for Cooroola, from the point of view of a practical miner, are very sound.

Opposition Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLEAN: The jubilation of hon. members opposite is premature. The amendment is not necessary. The requisite powers are contained in the regulations. The contentions of hon. members opposite are not based on a desire to give the workers protection; their concern is that a political hack, after being defeated at the elections, may be appointed as inspector. That is too absurd to need refutation. Any person seized of the responsibility of protecting the lives of miners, whether metalliferous, coal, or sewerage workers, would appoint only a person who understood his job. A man who descends a mine has to have a thorough knowledge of gases, timbering, drives, crosscuts, and so on. He has to know the dangers peculiar to certain classes of grounds.

This Bill is necessary. Sewerage works have been in progress in Bundaberg for the

past 12 months, but the Government have had no jurisdiction over the mining work that has so far been done there.

One hon. member said that it is difficult to-day to obtain practical miners. That is true. Miners of the old days worked their way up from using a pick in the stopes to mining with a hammer and drill. To-day, however, unemployed men are offering themselves for sewerage work, and no control has been exercised over the appointment of any of these persons because there has been no authority to appoint inspectors of sewerage works. During the past 12 months sewerage work has been carried on in Bundaberg to depths of from 15 to 30 feet, and I know that there are innumerable instances of carelessness in the carrying out of the work there. The hon. member for Cooroora told us of the practice of attaching the cap to the fuse with the teeth. That is being done to-day. Not so long ago, when it was found desirable to inspect some of the ground through which the sewer would have to pass in Bundaberg, it was necessary to apply to Brisbane for the services of an inspector. We should not have had to do that. Like the hon. member for Fitzroy, I believe that the miner who has been engaged in the district should be appointed to supervise such work. As this Bill will allow that to be done, I cannot see that the amendment is necessary.

Mr. BRASSINGTON (Fortitude Valley) (11.32 a.m.): The hon. member for Oxley has adopted the attitude that he has always taken when dealing with legislation, whether it be in Committee or in Assembly. He will oppose, wherever possible, all forms of progress. His argument is based not on an objection to the appointment of persons to the positions of inspectors, but on adherence to a policy of consistently opposing the appointment of all forms of inspectors for the purpose of investigating the exploitation of employees throughout the State.

The hon. member referred to the fact that at one time I was an industrial inspector. I am pleased to be able to say that I was in a position to clean up the laxity, neglect, and exploitation of many employees throughout the metropolitan area after three years of administration by the Government who were supported by the hon. member for Oxley.

Is not the hon. member aware that the check inspector who inspects all sewer workings in the metropolitan area is one of the best qualified inspectors that it is possible to obtain, and that he came from the ranks of the men engaged in sewerage work in the metropolitan area? That being so, is it not safe to argue that there are other very competent men amongst the sewerage workers who could very well fill the positions that may be created by the passage of this measure?

In my opinion, the moving of this amendment is merely splitting straws. The fact is that the Minister and the Government will not, under any circumstances, do anything that will be unfair to the men who are working on sewerage jobs throughout the State

or to anyone connected with any industry to which this measure may apply.

I invite hon. members to look back over the policy of this Government so far as the appointment of inspectors is concerned. If they do that they will find that almost without exception, when making appointments, consideration has been given, first to suitability, and secondly to the efficient protection of the workers.

It is also interesting to note that the principle hon. members opposite are objecting to has been in the regulations since 1923. If there is any reason for the amendment to-day, why did not hon. members opposite give effect to it when they were in power from 1929 to 1932?

Mr. Brand: Your logic is out of date.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: The hon. member says that my logic is out of date, but if my political opinion did not change as circumstances warranted I should remain as stationary in political opinion as hon. members opposite. It is no wonder they are in opposition to-day. They cannot give a solid reason why this Government should do something they failed as a Government to do when in power in this State.

I merely rose to make that point and emphasise that there can be no argument against inspection of sewerage works outside the metropolitan area. The proposed Bill merely places those jobs outside the metropolitan area under the same control and under the same Act that applies to jobs within the metropolitan area. The hon. member for Oxley need not worry about the men to be appointed as inspectors. Appointments will be made in the public interest, and the men will be of the calibre of the present metropolitan check inspector, and will extend the good work performed by him during the past few years.

Mr. WALKER (Cooroora) (11.37 a.m.): I have listened to the remarks made by the mining section of hon. members opposite. I wonder if the Minister would accept an amendment along these lines—

“After the word ‘person’ insert the words—

‘who has had at least three years’ practical experience in sewerage or mining’.”

That would give effect to my intention. I do not think that the qualifications of an inspector can be too high. A certain amount of experience is necessary. Before a policeman, for example, is appointed, he is submitted to an examination and has to undergo certain practical tests. I know that the miner detects danger quicker than anybody else. I also know that shift captains put in nearly all their spare time looking for something that no inspector could ever see, because he would not have the time. Just imagine a shift captain or miner reporting to a man with no qualifications that something was likely to take place! The latter would simply o.k. the opinion the practical miner expressed; it would be foolish for him to do anything

else. I know that in the appointment of inspectors the Minister will not be foolish. He was only appointed to that office a few days ago. I have seen many Ministers for Mines during my 30-odd years in Parliament. Some never went down a mine. A Minister might be able to appoint his brother-in-law or some relative to such a position. I only want to see that a practical man—a man with practical experience and qualifications—inspects sewers and reports upon them. I want to see a practical man appointed to report on recommendations made to him by miners or shift bosses. I do not want a man to be told to do certain things by miners, not knowing whether what he has been told to do is right or not. I am seeking additional protection for sewerage workers and I think every hon. member opposite supports my contention. If the Minister will signify his willingness to accept my suggested amendment, I shall immediately substitute it for the one that I have already moved.

It is our duty to do all that we can to protect the men who work underground. Some hon. members have mentioned the work of timbering in mines and sewers—and that is a very important part of it—but I venture the opinion that very few men with less than three years' practical experience know anything about timbering. It is almost a specialised job in underground working. Of course, a practical man may become efficient with a little reading about how the various pieces of timber should be placed in position.

Mr. T. L. WILLIAMS (Port Curtis) (11.42 a.m.): I naturally expected that the Opposition would be satisfied with the assurance of the Minister that the right thing would be done in making these appointments. I am satisfied that the motive of the hon. member for Cooroora is to see that the men are fully protected, but I cannot see how the amendment or the suggested amendment can do more than is already provided in the Bill itself. We are all aware that there has been a good deal of haphazard conduct and carelessness in mines and sewers in the past, and that in some cases the miners themselves were to blame. It is admitted that even mine managers have been guilty of carelessness in taking too much for granted or relying too much on the men under them. I speak on this subject as a member of a family that has been connected with coalmining, both in this country and at Home, for upwards of probably 300 years. Probably the family of no hon. member in this Chamber has suffered more from death by accident through carelessness in mines at Home than my family has. Fortunately, none of my relatives has been lost in that way in this country.

We are all agreed that the very best care and attention should be given to the men who work in the bowels of the earth or even in sewers, which are of shallower depth than mines. Recently, a royal commission was appointed in England to investigate the incidence of accidents in mines arising from carelessness. I am sorry that I have not the full report with me, but I have a newspaper report of part of it which was sent to me

by a relative who is interested in mining at Home. It says—

“A detailed scheme for the reorganisation and expansion of the inspectorate on the lines recommended by the royal commission has been worked out and approved. Twenty-three district inspectors, with suitable office and subordinate staffs, would be substituted for the present eight divisional inspectors. The work of the district inspectors would be co-ordinated by six superintending inspectors, each in charge of a group of districts, and each with the necessary specialist technical staff at his immediate disposal. The total strength of the mines inspectorate, including quarry inspectors, under this scheme would be increased from 127 to 165.”

I am satisfied that the additional men who will be appointed under the co-ordinating scheme recommended by the royal commission in England will be men, not with a theoretical knowledge of mining only, but men with practical experience. Of course, we need men with both theoretical and practical knowledge, too. Practical men often have local knowledge that is invaluable in providing against accidents.

I repeat that the Minister is quite within his rights. I have faith that he will do the correct thing and appoint only qualified men capable of pronouncing sound judgment and generally protecting the health and lives of men employed in sewerage work. I cannot see how the amendment would improve the Bill, although I believe the hon. member is actuated by a desire to do the best he can for the men.

Mr. FARRELL (Maryborough) (11.46 a.m.): After listening to hon. members opposite, I have concluded that they are merely trying out the new Secretary for Mines with a little sob-stuff in order to see how he will react, but, knowing that he is thoroughly qualified by practical experience, I have complete faith that he will administer this measure in the best interests of the men concerned. The Opposition cannot successfully contend that any appointments of inspectors have been made by the department because of political friendship.

Mr. Nimmo: How do we know that will not operate?

Mr. FARRELL: I am convinced from my knowledge of the Minister, who has had practical experience in mining, that he will appoint the right person. The Opposition are arguing on the assumption that incompetent men will be appointed. I cannot agree, as previous appointments show that we can rest assured that only competent men will be appointed. It is only in districts that our present inspectors cannot cover that additional appointments will be considered by the Minister.

It cannot be successfully argued that any appointment of inspectors made by the department has been detrimental to the interests of the miners? It has not; it has been to their interests. Take the coalmining industry. A

manager is appointed to a coalmine and a deputy is chosen to look after air conditions in the mine. In addition, the miners' organisation is given power to appoint two qualified check inspectors whose duty is to inspect the mine. Again, we give the miners' organisation power to appoint two further check inspectors for the purpose of checking up on all these officials. Is it not right an inspector should be appointed to supervise the conditions prevailing in sewerage work? It cannot be successfully argued that a contractor will look after the interests of the sewerage worker. It is obviously necessary for us to appoint inspectors so that the lives of men in that industry will be protected.

Mr. Maher: Then you agree with the amendment?

Mr. FARRELL: I agree that the Minister should be the person to decide who shall be the inspector.

Mr. Brand: What is wrong with making the Bill watertight so that none but a competent man is appointed?

Mr. FARRELL: There is nothing wrong in making the Bill watertight but we contend that it is already watertight and its administration is in competent hands. I have not seen any appointment made to the mining industry unless the appointee possesses the necessary qualifications. The mere passing of an examination does not qualify a person for appointment as an inspector. I know of men holding first-class certificates whom you would not employ to look after a dog kennel, let alone a mine. It does not follow that because a person qualifies by examination that he is a competent inspector. I know men employed in mines who because of their practical experience are far more competent to look after the safety of the miners than others with theoretical certificates. That has been proved time and again.

Mr. Muller: Does that apply to the present inspectors?

Mr. FARRELL: The inspectors of the Department of Mines at the present time are a very competent body of men. One could travel the whole of the Commonwealth and not find a better inspector of mines than Mr. Taylor, the district inspector in my electorate.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to the clause before the Committee.

Mr. FARRELL: I hope the Minister will refuse to accept the amendment, because I believe that no-one is more competent to make recommendations as to the appointment of an efficient inspector than the sewerage workers. I am confident that any man appointed by the Minister will be highly qualified to carry out the duties of inspector of mines.

Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (11.53 a.m.): I should like to know from the Minister whether he proposes to accept the offer of the hon. member for Cooroora—if

the amendment was withdrawn in its present form, would the Minister accept a substitute that would ensure that any person appointed would be a man with practical experience in either mining or sewerage work?

I listened carefully to the arguments advanced by hon. members representing mining districts, and I was very interested in the comments of the hon. member for Fitzroy, who emphasised that what was necessary was practical experience. He was prepared to forego the theoretical qualifications of an inspector, and felt that the persons appointed should have at least practical experience and were competent in mining and sewerage work.

Mr. Dunstan: The amendment insists on a certificate.

Mr. MAHER: The hon. member for Cooroora has offered to withdraw the amendment and substitute another one providing for the appointment of a man with practical experience in mining or sewerage work. That would satisfy the Opposition. We want the point cleared up. We object to the looseness of the phraseology of the Bill. "Any person who is appointed by the Minister" is as wide as the continent of Australia. "Any person" may mean the political hack referred to in rather contemptuous terms by the hon. member for Bundaberg. I know political hacks who have been appointed to inspectorial positions whose qualifications for the job could be described at least as doubtful. With precedents of that kind, there is no saying what might happen.

The hon. member for Maryborough said that the Minister would appoint the right person. It all depends on who interprets the words "right person"—whether he is a camp follower of the present Government or on friendly terms with the Minister or some of his supporters. Such factors have been taken into account in making appointments to other inspectorial position before to-day. There is no certainty that the same thing will not happen again, and apart from any suspicion that we might entertain, the Opposition is clearly entitled to insist that when the Legislature empowers a Minister to appoint an inspector, the person appointed shall possess the degree of competence necessary for the job.

In the course of this debate it has been said that sewerage work is risky, just as risky as work in mines. That statement has often been used as justification for applying to the Industrial Court for increased wages for sewerage workers. It is also put forward as the reason why inspection of all sewerage work should be undertaken, whether situated in the city of Brisbane or in rural centres. If, then, there is anything in the reasoning of the Minister and his supporters that in many parts of the State sewerage work contains the same element of risk as mining, the necessity to have fully qualified inspectors is imperative.

The Opposition have no desire to be unreasonable, and if the Minister says that it may be necessary, because of a shortage of fully-qualified inspectors, to appoint some person without the qualification stated in the amendment, we are willing to alter it to read that no person shall be appointed who has not had at least three years' practical experience in sewerage or mining work. That suggestion has been made to the Minister as a graceful way out of the difficulty. I do not want the clause put to the Committee before the hon. gentleman gives an expression of opinion on it.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. D. A. Gledson, Ipswich) (11.58 a.m.): It is rather refreshing to hear the Leader of the Opposition saying that they "insist" that something shall be done. That would be all right if the Opposition had a sufficient majority to enable them to back up their insistence, but as things are such threats do not carry very much weight.

Mr. Maher: It is not a threat at all. It is our right to insist so far as it lies in our power.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The Leader of the Opposition has no right to throw across the Chamber certain threats of the action he will take.

The Bill is a simple one enabling the provisions that apply to Brisbane to be extended to other centres. This provision has operated in Brisbane for 16 years, and never yet has anything been found wrong with it. It has not been shown that a person appointed as inspector has not been competent to do the work. As a matter of fact, in Brisbane the men who do that work hold first-class mine manager's certificates and certificates as inspectors of mines. No man has been appointed an inspector without such a qualification.

As it stands, the clause is sufficient safeguard. It provides that in addition to inspectors of mines, the Minister may appoint a person with the ability to inspect a particular working.

Mr. Nimmo: Tell us the reason why you want that power.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: If the hon. member for Oxley does not know the reason, after it has been explained to him time and again, we cannot be blamed. If people are not capable of understanding plain English, we cannot make them understand it. The Bill is quite simple. It gives us power to apply the Mines Regulation Acts to any sewerage works throughout the State. Under its regulations similar to those that have been in operation in Brisbane will be issued. The provision contained in this Bill has been in operation in Brisbane for 16 years. It is wide enough to cover every possibility that has been suggested by the Opposition. Hon. members on the Government side have always been the ones who have insisted upon the taking of proper safeguards.

Mr. Nimmo: Yet they are going to leave a loop-hole like this.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No matter how much hon. members opposite may twist up the string they will find no loop in it. The Bill provides that in addition to the inspectors already appointed, the Minister shall have power to appoint in writing any number of inspectors that he may think desirable. After all, if, as hon. members opposite would seem to suggest, a Minister who is appointed to take charge of a department cannot be trusted, then we should not have Ministers.

Mr. Nimmo: You were in Agriculture last year and you may be in Railways next year.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That makes no difference. This is not a question of the individual. I am not taking powers to myself. A provision similar to this has been in operation in Brisbane for 16 years. All we provide is that whoever the Minister may be he shall have power to make such additional appointments as he deems necessary. The clause is wide enough as it is.

Mr. Nimmo: We contend it is too wide.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It is also narrow enough to enable us to carry on the work efficiently. There is no need to alter the clause as suggested by the proposed amendment.

Mr. BRAND (Isis) (12.3 p.m.): After listening to the Minister, the only conclusion that we can come to is that there are really no safeguards in the Bill; the appointment depends upon the good offices of the Minister in charge of the Department of Mines.

The Secretary for Mines: That is not correct.

Mr. BRAND: All hon. members on the Government side who have spoken have said, in effect: "There is no need for the amendment. We can trust father." I challenge the hon. member for Gympie to name one hon. member on the Government side who has not agreed that he is supporting the Bill because he knows that the Minister will not do the things that we have suggested might be done.

Mr. Dunstan: A similar provision has been in operation for 16 years.

Mr. BRAND: The hon. member for Gympie knows perfectly well that we are now passing legislation. The hon. member for Cooroora has suggested that no appointments to inspectorial positions shall be made unless the appointees have had three years' experience in mines.

Mr. Dunstan: You insist that he have a certificate?

Mr. BRAND: The hon. member can make his own speech. If the Minister is going to carry out the regulations in the way that hon. members on the Government side believe he will, then it is obvious that he will

not appoint a man unless he has had three years' experience in a mine or sewer.

Mr. Walsh: What would be the use of three years' experience in the Mount Isa mines?

Mr. BRAND: We are asking that he have at least three years.

Mr. Clark: Or at Cracow or Mount Morgan?

Mr. BRAND: The hon. member fails to understand that we are dealing with sewers now. We ask that the legislation contain some protection against the recurrence of things that have happened in the past.

Mr. Clark: It is all there.

Mr. BRAND: Evidently the hon. member does not understand English, because hon. members on the Government side all say that adequate safeguard is given in the powers that are taken to the Minister. Stated simply, these are merely that the Minister must appoint some person "in writing." Surely, we should move that the Bill be amended to provide for some safeguard against the appointment of an incompetent person. We must put it on record that, in our opinion, legislation is about to go through in which no provision is made to have a thoroughly qualified man appointed as an inspector of sewers, where the lives of miners are at stake.

Mr. POWER (Baroona) (12.6 p.m.): I accuse hon. members opposite of insincerity. During the time the Moore Government were in control of the affairs of Queensland—

Mr. Muller: Forget about the Moore Government.

Mr. POWER: It is something I shall not forget. At that time check inspectors had been appointed to police the working conditions and protect the lives of men engaged in the sewerage works in the metropolitan area. Those men occupied their positions for some time and performed excellent work on behalf of the men whom the Opposition say they are at all times prepared to protect—those engaged in the mining industry. The Opposition altered the conditions of employment of those two check inspectors; their wages were reduced, and the men themselves were put on part-time work by the then Secretary for Mines, Mr. Atherton, who knew nothing about mining, and who had previously been a butcher or a sugar-grower. He was in charge of the department that put these men on £15 a year and so took away from them the work they were doing. If hon. members of the Opposition are sincere in their desire to protect those engaged in the mining industry—I am not referring to every hon. member opposite, because there are one or two with humane feelings—I ask why they took up the attitude they did on that occasion and virtually abolished the position of check inspector.

Mr. Moore: There were no sewerage works in progress at that time.

Mr. POWER: There were. For the information of the Deputy Leader of the

Opposition let me say that the men engaged on this work at the time were being paid £3 a week, and he was the Leader of the Government who did what I have described. Hon. members opposite are not sincere when they say that they are prepared to give favourable consideration to the men engaged in the mining industry in this State.

As pointed out by the Minister, the amendment would mean that the men appointed would have to pass certain examinations. What better qualifications are required for the supervision of sewerage work than the actual practical knowledge acquired by those engaged in the work? The hon. member for Portitude Valley ably pointed out the excellent work being carried out in the metropolitan area to-day by check inspector British. When we have men of that calibre, is it necessary to appoint men with the qualifications of a mine manager or men who have passed certain theoretical examinations? Theory is all right in its place, but when it comes to doing something it is practical experience that counts.

I rose to expose the insincerity of hon. members opposite in maintaining to-day that only qualified men should be appointed to these positions, although when they were in power and qualified men were doing the work they removed the measure of protection that had been given to sewer workers in Brisbane. There is no need for the amendment. The Minister should have the power to appoint whom he believes to be qualified to do the work, and he is not likely to appoint anyone who is not competent. The hon. member for Oxley may know something about the work of measuring men for trousers, but he is not qualified to express an opinion as to who should be appointed as inspectors under the Bill. The Minister has already assured us that the men to be appointed will have the qualifications to carry out the work in a satisfactory manner and that should have been enough for hon. members.

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted (Mr. Walker's amendment) be so inserted—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 17.

Mr. Brand	Mr. Nimmo
" Clayton	" Plunkett
" Daniel	" Russell
" Dart	" Walker
" Deacon	" Yeates
" Edwards	
" Macdonald	<i>Tellers:</i>
" Maher	" Massey
" Moore	" Nicklin
" Muller	

NOES, 34.

Mr. Brassington	Mr. Hislop
" Bruce	" Jesson
" Bulcock	" Jones
" Clark	" Keogh
" Collins	" Keyatta
" Conroy	" King
" Copley	" Larcombe
" Dash	" Marriott
" Duggan	" Mullan
" Dunstan	" Pease
" Farrell	" Power
" Foley	" Riordan
" Gair	" Walsh
" Gledson	" Williams, T. L.
" Hanlon	
" Hayes	<i>Tellers:</i>
" Healy	" Brown, J. I.
" Hilton	" McLean

PAIRS.

AYES.

Dr. Watson Brown
Mr. Morris

NOES.

Mr. Smith
" Cooper

Resolved in the negative.

Clause 2, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

MINING ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

COMMITTEE.

(Mr. O'Keefe, Cairns, in the chair.)

Clauses 1 to 6, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

ABORIGINALS PRESERVATION AND PROTECTION BILL.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS (Hon. E. M. Hanlon, Ithaca) (12.23 p.m.): I move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

As I pointed out on the introduction, the Bill is designed to set the administration of the affairs of the native population of Queensland in a completely new direction—instead of merely acting as protectors of a subject race, to endeavour to direct the remnants of that race along right lines with the object of preserving it.

It must be understood that the slaughtering of the native races of Australia—the callous manner in which the natives were destroyed by the white settlers, or invaders, as they could be termed, is one of the blackest pages in our history—was actually due to misunderstanding. We often hear of the atrocities that were perpetrated by the natives, but in actual fact the natives of Australia were a very kindly people who were not by nature inclined to be cruel to anybody or hostile to the strange white invaders. As a matter of fact, in almost every incident in Australian history where white men have become lost in the bush or cast on her shores we hear nothing from the survivors but stories of the kindness of the natives to them, their care of them while they were sick or weak, and their help until they reached white civilisation again.

A good deal of the trouble, I say, was caused through lack of understanding. The aboriginals lived entirely by hunting and gathering native foods. The white people settled in Australia for the purpose of raising stock. That was the first industry that interfered with the natives. In order to raise stock they had to destroy what they regarded as the vermin that infested the pastures of Australia. That vermin of the white race was the livelihood of the native race. As the white settler destroyed the native animals that to him were vermin and ate the feed he deemed necessary for his sheep and cattle,

the aboriginal was deprived of his natural form of livelihood. Knowing only one means of living, i.e. by the spear, hunting was a necessity to him, but settlers who had their sheep or cattle speared accused him of destroying their property. In that way ill-feeling arose between the white settlers and the aboriginals. The aboriginal was regarded as a nuisance and a destroyer of property and consequently was very badly treated by the white population. He was so ill-regarded that we have authentic instances in which parties were organised to shoot aboriginals as a pastime. There are also other authentic instances in which aboriginals were fed on flour in which arsenic had been mixed. These are isolated instances of brutality, but they give some idea to us of how the aboriginal was regarded in those very bad early days.

The greatest evil imposed on the aboriginal was the introduction to them of the diseases and evil habits of the whites. Alcohol, tobacco, and drugs played havoc with the native population, as did the diseases that in general the whites manage to survive because of a very strong resistance acquired through the centuries but which nevertheless take their toll of even them. Tuberculosis is a disease that takes toll of the white races despite the fact that they have attained a certain resistance and immunity to this disease. Then there is venereal disease. The white races have greater resistance to these diseases than the native races and consequently they have played havoc with the black population. Then there is leprosy and granuloma and other repulsive Asiatic diseases that have also taken their toll. As an illustration of the lack of resistance in the native races to disease, let me tell hon. members that an epidemic of measles—which is regarded as a minor childish ailment among whites—causes heavy mortality among the natives.

Over the centuries the white races have acquired this resistance to diseases that take heavy toll of the aboriginal. The gradual destruction of his food supplies, the driving of him from his native habitat and the restricting of his migratory instincts, together with the diseases that the whites have so kindly passed on, have all played their part in reducing the native population. The aboriginal has almost disappeared from the Southern States. The last Tasmanian native died many years ago. There are very few full-blooded aboriginals in Victoria and New South Wales. The majority of the people who are there regarded as aboriginals have white blood in varying proportions.

The mainland aboriginals in Queensland—those on the islands are dealt with in a complementary Bill—number some 10,000 full-blooded aboriginals and approximately 4,500 half-castes.

Hon. members must understand it is impossible to get an accurate census of the aboriginal population of the State. It may be noticed that at times the census figures of the Commonwealth and the report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals, henceforth to

be known as the Director of Native Affairs, disagree. Particularly in the case of the full-blooded aboriginals the figure is only an estimate. It cannot be taken as accurate. The Chief Protector gives in round figures the estimate for the mainland of Queensland as—

Full-blooded aboriginals ..	10,000
Half-castes	4,500

Of the 4,500 half-castes, some 1,500 will not be under the control of the department. The bulk of them are already free on exemption certificates issued from my office. The 3,000 half-castes who will be left under the control of the department are those who are living on native settlements and with aboriginal tribes.

I mentioned on the introductory stage of the Bill, when comment was made on the fact that white children live with aboriginals, that when those very light-coloured children were born, and if we wanted to be ruthless and show no consideration for the natural affection of these people for their families—and we know that the aboriginal woman is just as devoted to her child and the child just as devoted to its mother as white people are—we could, undoubtedly, take those light-coloured half-castes away from aboriginal surroundings altogether. I do not think that any hon. member of this House will agree that in order to accelerate somewhat the settlement of the half-caste problem we should completely disregard the feelings of these people. Those who are living on native settlements and native missions—quite a number are employed at native missions—and those who are living or travelling with aboriginals will remain under the control of the department. That would leave a total of full-bloods and half-castes of 13,000 in round figures who will be under the control of the Director of Native Affairs, of which number about 3,200 will be living on the Government settlements of Cherbourg, Woorabinda, and Palm Island.

Reference was also made at an early stage of the Bill to the need for reserving areas for these people to live on. It might interest hon. members to know that in Queensland our aboriginal reserves total 6,000,000 acres. I do not want hon. members to think that they are 6,000,000 acres of choice farm land. In keeping with the attitude of the whites towards the aboriginals, there has always been an urge to take the best land from them. I have had to resist agitations for the removal of the aboriginal settlement from Barambah Creek, simply because there is excellent farm land—which the white people desire to exploit—in the Barambah Creek settlement. I do not subscribe to the belief that we should be kind enough to the aboriginal to segregate him in the desert where he must simply die out for want of food.

One hon. member said yesterday that the aboriginal should be given land that is no good to anybody else. When we consider that the white man is skilled in dealing with the problems of agriculture, such as soil treatment, that he has become so skilled from centuries of contest with nature in order to produce from the soil, we must realise that to

suggest that those people who know nothing at all about agriculture should be given land that the white man, who is skilled in agriculture, does not want because he cannot produce from it, simply means sending the aboriginals out to certain death by starvation. We cannot solve this problem by giving these people some acres of desert on which to die. It would be far better to take the quicker and apparently more brutal method that our predecessors took—of shooting and poisoning.

Mr. Maher: What hon. member on this side said that the aboriginal should be removed to inferior country?

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: One hon. member said that they should be given land that was not suitable for white settlement.

Mr. Maher: It was not on this side.

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: I am very sorry if I misunderstood him.

Mr. Brand: Are you sure someone said that?

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: I had the impression that that was said. At any rate, it does not alter the argument. If I misunderstood the hon. member, I am very sorry, indeed.

Mr. Maher: We repudiate that assertion.

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: In that case, I am sorry. I understood from his remarks that it had been the attitude of all people in the Commonwealth in the past that anything not good enough for white people was good enough for the aboriginals. I remember a very fine old missionary from Cape Bedford coming to see me some six or seven years ago. He asked for more land. It was pointed out to him that he already had a tremendous acreage. I was told that only a few years before he had been given some 20,000 or 30,000 acres more land to look after. When we got down to particulars it was found that he had been given a few hundred thousand acres of sandy country in addition to the large area he already occupied. If these people are to be encouraged to make provision for their own maintenance we should give them land that it is possible for them to use to their advantage. We cannot encourage them to do any good for themselves unless we give them land on which we white people could make a living. It was the attitude in the past that they should be given land that was not useful to whites.

In recent years, aboriginals have become fashionable. All sorts of people have sprung up with ideas as to what should be done with them. A new race of anthropologists has come upon us demanding appointment in the department controlling aboriginals. By taking a short, crammed course in anthropology in the wild outback of Sydney, they say that they became the only people who are qualified to handle native affairs, and that the people in the department here, who

have been associated with the natives over a long period of years, should make room for these experts. A little common sense is the thing that is required in the treatment of aboriginals. At Cherbourg, where there are oddments of all races, I do not think one would find many of any one tribe. Quite a number of tribes would be represented by 40 per cent. of pure blood in any one person. Yet one expert told me that he had studied the languages of all of the tribes represented at Cherbourg in a few weeks.

Then there are anthropologists who tell us that we should not interfere with the native customs of the aboriginals. I remember an occasion when an aboriginal was sent to Palm Island for stealing the gin of another native. He took the gin away, and, of course, the husband was very annoyed and picked up a spear and went after the pair. The police got the sinner first, and sent him to Palm Island. The anthropologist I met in North Queensland kicked up a fuss about it, and said that we had no right to punish a man for doing what his native custom allowed him to do. It appears that, according to the tribal law, he was entitled to take the woman, and that we were punishing him by a law he did not understand and owed no allegiance to—a white man's law. Since the native law allowed the first man to take the gin, it was said that we were doing a serious wrong in punishing him for the act he did. What the anthropologist cannot understand is that by native law, too, the gin-stealer was liable to the punishment prescribed by native law—if a man loses his gin he is entitled to spear the fellow who steals her. Of course, we cannot admit that one native has the right to spear another, even for taking his wife away; nobody with any common sense can suggest that there is room for the survival of the aboriginal in Queensland to-day with his own laws and customs. We have broken their tribes; we have removed many of them from their native territory; we have fenced them off, and if there is a bad season in their own territory they cannot migrate to where there are good crops or hunting. We have to realise that they cannot survive unless they alter their standards to comply with those of the white population. In the last analysis the whites are competing with them for bread; we have to recognise that and make arrangements to provide them with bread under the conditions that exist to-day.

Another group of anthropologists told us that we should fence off a part of Central Australia or the Northern Territory, and allow these people to live their own lives without any interference or help from the white people at all. Obviously, that cannot be done. The aboriginals are in the habit of migrating from one part of the continent to another, as seasons dictate. Surely hon. members would not agree that a tribe should die out in one part of Australia simply because there was a drought there; yet that is what would happen if they were not allowed to migrate from one part of the continent to another, according to seasons. It is suggested that we should allow them to live their own lives, but their own lives do

not offer anything very attractive to them, and to fence them in would be merely condemning them to death.

Even if an area was reserved for them, great difficulty would be experienced in retaining it for them. Say, for instance, that gold was discovered on one of the aboriginal reserves. The white man's greed for gold would impose a very heavy task on the Government in retaining for the aboriginals the area where gold was discovered. Quite recently an aboriginal who was putting up a fence on one of the missions discovered gold in one of the post holes and brought it into the mission. We immediately reserved a portion of that area for the benefit of the natives. We declared the area as one for the benefit of the mission, and that any gold that was discovered was to go to the credit of the aboriginal missions in the northern area. However, the find did not turn out to be of much value.

Mr. Dart: Are they good prospectors?

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: They are not bad. They will go and look for gold once they know what gold means. This aboriginal found gold, but the find did not turn out to be very rich, and he did not get much out of it.

There are not a great number of aboriginals who are still free, but it is the aim of the department to reserve some areas for them. Quite a lot of the areas in the Cape York Peninsula are still under the control of white people, a lot of them having been snapped up by graziers. However, we have a reserve on the west coast of the Peninsula from the top down to the Mitchell River and about 30 miles inland. That is a fairly large area of reasonably good country. We propose to retain this area for the aboriginals, and give them an opportunity of producing cattle. The aboriginal is very good at handling cattle. He likes cattle because he takes an interest in anything that is alive. He has proved himself an excellent stockman and a reliable horseman. He takes far more interest in animal husbandry than he does in agriculture, because he has a far greater interest in anything that lives than in the mere tilling of the soil.

We are helping the aboriginals in every way to establish their herds. The Mitchell River herd is a very good one, and we have been able to transfer a number of breeders from the Mitchell River station to other stations. At the mouth of the rivers, where there is a fair area of good soil, native villages are being established, and in time they will become the permanent homes of the aboriginal populations in those areas. The wives and children will live there, even when their menfolk are out on contract. There is a good supply of fish in the rivers, and in several instances we have given them boats and nets so that they may have fish.

We have to help them to build decent houses to live in. One of the tasks of the department is to get the aboriginal to live indoors. We had a very good illustration at Woorabinda some years ago of the difficulty

of housing the aboriginal and inducing him to adopt the cleanly habits that are associated with living in a house. When staff quarters were being erected, one old native who had been at work all his life on a station, and had got a few hundred pounds to his credit in the bank, came to Woorabinda to live; he was too old to do any more station work. Seeing the good quality of the houses being built for the white people he demanded a similar house for himself. After having attempted to reason with him, the department authorised the superintendent to build a nice little four-roomed cottage containing a stove for him. The cottage was constructed by native labour on the settlement. When the construction was completed, the old native entered into possession of the cottage with all the glory that it was possible for him to assume. Not long afterwards I was up at Woorabinda. The house was shut up, and the old fellow was sitting out in the yard alongside a fire about as big as a saucer, and camping beneath a few sheets of bark leaning against a tree. Association with other aboriginals on the settlement had brought back to him the desire to live in the way he once had lived. The old fellow's house was shut up and the stove rusty. That illustrates how aboriginals will slip back into their old habits. We must not, however, think they are hopeless. In providing for them to-day, we have to bridge a gap of many, many centuries.

Mr. Clayton: The old fellows like to camp in the yard under a bark lean-to against a tree while the young people like to live by the fireside in a house.

The SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS: That is because the old people have been living with nomadic tribes early in their lives, and it is very difficult for them to break the habit. That is why the mission stations are concentrating on young people.

All the mission stations in the North, particularly in the Gulf area, are established on areas on which there is a reasonable chance of success. The Anglican Church has four mission stations—namely, Yarrabah, Mitchell River, Edward River, and Lockhart River. They are all established on areas giving them a reasonable prospect of success. The natives are engaged principally in cattle grazing, but do a limited amount of agriculture.

The Presbyterian Church has some excellent ground in its mission stations established at Weipa, Aurukun, Mapoon, and the Kendall River. They are situated on big tidal rivers, and the big river flats contain some excellent soil. The only drawback is that the rain falls at only one period of the year, and unless they learn the art of sinking wells, in order to irrigate during the dry period of the year, the possibility of their producing crops is very limited indeed.

The Lutheran Mission is established at Cape Bedford. It is the worst situated mission of all. It contains, as I have already pointed out, a very large area—it has the largest area of any mission station—but 95

per cent. of it is sandhills and beach. Nevertheless, they are doing quite good work there.

The Seventh Day Adventists have a mission at Monamona. It has struck real trouble, because the inmates are infected with leprosy. The mission has been closed to whites altogether, and put into quarantine. The Government are carrying out a good deal of intense medical research work there. Already 13 cases have been removed to the leprosarium, and 20 other cases under suspicion will probably be removed to the same place.

The Plymouth Brethren have established a mission station on the Gulf towards the Northern Territory. The State has two very fine settlements at Cherbourg and Woorabinda. They are well situated. They have good herds of cattle and are doing well there. Palm Island is a different settlement altogether. The natives who are difficult to deal with are sent to Palm Island. It is not a very fertile spot, but, bit by bit, they have been getting the land under crops. The nature of the soil does not make it encouraging, but its situation makes it suitable as a place to send natives who are difficult to deal with.

The Salvation Army and the Roman Catholic Church only deal with half-castes. The Salvation Army has a half-caste settlement at Purga, handy to the metropolis, where it has done excellent work; that work could be greatly improved with assistance, and, as time goes on, that assistance will be given. The Roman Catholic Church has a half-caste station at Hammond Island in Torres Strait, to which it has been systematically transferring the half-caste people of Thursday Island. The half-castes of Thursday Island are the bottom strata of society on that island, and by transferring them to Hammond Island, and giving them cottages and gardens, they move to the upper strata of society, and have every opportunity of improving themselves. They have their own store, and a convent school, which is conducted by the Sisters of Mercy. They also have their own farm with cattle on it, and their own boat. The men accept work where they can get it. This mission deals with the half-caste problem only.

There is one place owned by Queensland where the natives have not been in contact by white people, and that is Bentinek Island, in the Gulf, not far from Mornington Island. The natives there are very shy, and it is only occasionally that the white people have been able to see them. During one of my tours I landed there, and we saw a few of them; we sent some Mornington Island natives over to the camp on the beach with the object of encouraging them to come out. Bentinek is a large, swampy island, with a ring of solid earth around the edge. The land is poor and the trees so stunted that the native spears are made of several short pieces of wood bound together with string made of grass fibre. They live mainly on basking sharks that they catch at low tide in the lagoons. We saw the bones of these sharks at each camping place we visited. These primitive people have not yet been

reached, although recently we put the island under the control of the Presbyterian Mission at Mornington Island. They are very difficult to get near, and that timidity is in a large degree due to the attention of white men in days gone by. Evidence of the nature of the attention given to those people by white people in the past was found by the Mornington Island natives in the nature of skulls with holes in them that were obviously made by bullets, and a number of Martini-Henry cartridge cases. It is no wonder that these primitive people are not anxious to renew acquaintance with civilisation. As time goes on, it is hoped that contact can be made with them, and the mission will be given an opportunity of profiting by the errors made when dealing with other natives in the past.

There is nothing more I can usefully add. I only wish to say that we do owe something to these people. I think that any nation or race that talks about the rights of small nations and the rights of weaker peoples, and presumes to criticise other nations for the way they treat smaller nations, should first of all look to the conduct of things at home.

We have no reason at all to be proud of the manner in which we have dealt with our own natives, and I trust that the alterations that will take place will give them a better opportunity than they had in the past to provide for themselves.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba) (12.55 p.m.): It would appear that the Bill contains all the principal features of past legislation dealing with aboriginals in an improved form, an improvement that will be to the advantage of the aboriginals of Queensland. So far as one can ascertain, every possible contingency has been provided for, and I am sure every hon. member nurtures the hope that the Bill will do what it sets out to do, preserve and protect the aboriginals of Queensland.

As the Minister has said, to-day sentiment as regards the aboriginal is altogether different from that of many years ago—those days in which parties were organised to go out and shoot aboriginals. It must be admitted that whoever is responsible for the various provisions of the Bill has thoroughly studied the aboriginal problems, and it may be truly said that the aboriginals will now have a charter that will help in raising their standard of life, and enable them to take their rightful place in the community. There is no doubt that in the past the department has dealt with the aboriginal problems that confronted it in a common-sense way, and, after all, that is the proper way to deal with them.

In his speeches on this Bill, the Minister referred to the problem of the half-caste and the intention, as far as possible—in his own interests, to enable him to become a good citizen—to segregate him from not only the full-blooded aboriginals but those whites who might cause him harm. The hon. gentleman mentioned the settlements at Purga and Hammond Island, but, nevertheless, a number

of half-castes will come under the provisions of this Bill, and it would be wise to continue the good work of segregation. Thus, we give to the half-caste the opportunity of becoming a good citizen and in time of being absorbed in the white population. How to deal properly with the half-caste is certainly a big problem. Young half-caste children cannot be torn from their mothers' arms—no-one would suggest that that be done—but as these infants mature the best method of dealing with them would be to transfer them to a settlement such as Purga or Hammond Island where they will intermingle with others of their caste, and later go out into the world and take their rightful place in the community. The administration of this Bill will give them such an opportunity, and I am sure the department will continue along the line it has taken in the past.

Although we are taking care to look after the half-castes, something should be done in the way of segregating the full-bloods in areas that will be theirs exclusively. In this way the problem that might be caused by half-castes in the future would be overcome to some extent. In his introductory remarks the Minister spoke of the various mission areas in the north of Queensland, and the settlements in the south that are exclusively aboriginal territory. If we can gather together the whole of the remnants of the aboriginals in Queensland and place them in reserves so that they will be removed from contact with irresponsible whites the half-caste problem will be overcome to a great extent.

Like the Minister, I am not one to suggest that areas of little value should be given to the aboriginal. The aboriginal reserves in North Queensland contain a considerable amount of good land as well as bad land. The Minister has told us that the majority of the land is good and that it will be of value in improving the living conditions of the aboriginals.

In various parts of the State in past years—I do not know whether it is so to-day—there were isolated camps of aboriginals close to white habitations. This Bill makes provision for transferring the occupants of such camps to reserves where they will be properly cared for and removed from the evils of civilisation. If there are still any such isolated bodies of aboriginals we should endeavour to transfer them to reserves where they will be among their own kind and where they will come in contact with the new and improved methods of living.

One good feature of the Bill is the stringent clause providing for the imposition of penalties upon any person who trespasses upon an aboriginal reserve. The Minister has stated that if there happened to be a gold rush in the vicinity of such a reserve it would be difficult to keep trespassers away, but I think that the clause dealing with trespass on aboriginal reserves is both wide enough and stringent enough to prevent anyone from endeavouring to encroach upon these reserves and contaminate the native population.

Judging by the reports of the Chief Protector, it would seem that the experiments that have taken place in the development of the village life of the aboriginal have been very satisfactory indeed. It is reasonable to believe, therefore, that when the older aboriginal dies out, and if the younger generation is brought up to enjoy this new village life and understand its advantages, the task of keeping the aboriginals in villages and of inducing them to adopt a new standard of living will be much easier.

I think it is a very worthy objective, and one that would tend to bring about a spirit of independence and give them the opportunity to grow their own food and learn some useful trade or other occupation.

I notice from the departmental reports that opportunity is being taken to start vocational training classes for the benefit of the younger aboriginals. Judging by the exhibitions of work held from time to time, one can readily appreciate the value of these classes and understand how adaptable the aboriginals are if given the opportunity to learn a useful trade or occupation. In their natural life they are clever in weaving bags out of fibres and grasses. It does not take a great deal of training to teach them useful work, such as carpentry and things of that nature, which are of value to them in constructing the buildings required in their village life.

It must be admitted that the missions in charge of reserves are doing a great deal of excellent work. In the past it may have been the policy of missions to concentrate too much on the younger aboriginals, who, when they reached man's estate, forgot all they had learnt and did not follow up the training they received when they were young. It would be of advantage if the training was continued after they got away from the direct care of the mission stations. All the good work done may be undone if this training is not followed up when the aboriginal comes to manhood's estate.

It is admitted that much good work has been done at the aboriginal settlements, particularly at Cherbourg, where there is a great variety of tribes. The work carried out there could be described as very good work. Incidentally, it illustrates the adaptability of the aboriginal to changed conditions. As the younger aboriginals grow up they adapt themselves to the life of the settlement and become quite useful citizens. Aboriginals at Cherbourg work at the sawmill and also on the farms. Opportunity has been given to them by the provision of an irrigation plant to extend their farming operations. That is a very useful addition to the station because very often, particularly at this time of the year, the station is subject to a dry time. By the use of irrigation on the farm lands of the station much fodder that previously had to be bought can now be grown for the cattle.

Another example of the adaptability of aboriginals is seen in the way in which they have taken to various sports. The Cherbourg cricket team and the Cherbourg football team are well known on the North

Coast and other places where they have had the opportunity to play.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: They play very well.

Mr. NICKLIN: They do. Recently, when they played in Gympie against a team from another settlement, the gate yielded over £100.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: Hear, hear!

Mr. NICKLIN: I have had the privilege of playing against them—not when Eddie Gilbert was bowling—(laughter)—and I must confess that I have played against worse sportsmen who were very much whiter than they were. They have certainly shown their adaptability by taking enthusiastically to sport and becoming very good cricketers and footballers.

In the statistics concerning aboriginals in Queensland it is noticeable that there are more full-blooded males than females. Perhaps that will be a problem for the department to solve in the future.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: I hope that I have not got to solve it. (Laughter.)

Mr. NICKLIN: Perhaps I can now understand why the male Torres Strait islanders were opposed to their females' having a vote under their proposed new constitution—they objected to minority rule. I should like to know why there are considerably more full-blooded males than females.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: Perhaps the problem can be overcome by allowing the males to have several wives.

Mr. NICKLIN: That may be one way out of the difficulty, but that may not appeal to the females, because it may lead to quarrelling about the husband. I cannot suggest any way out of the difficulty, but the problem may solve itself and a better balancing of the sexes occur in the future.

The provisions relating to the proper conduct of aboriginal reserves have been particularly well thought out. The Bill provides that a visiting justice shall visit the reserves from time to time to see that they are being conducted in a satisfactory manner, and this will be in the interests, not only of the aboriginals themselves, but also the people who are in charge of the reserves.

The provisions relating to the protection of aboriginals in employment are very necessary. Many of the male aboriginals are reliable stockmen, and many of the females are dependable house workers, but as they are scattered over wide areas of the State, every care should be taken to see that they are employed under reasonable conditions and that unscrupulous persons are not allowed to take advantage of them. I am satisfied that if the provisions of the Bill are carried out, as I am sure they will be, the aboriginals in employment will be adequately protected.

The same may be said of the aboriginals working on the fishing luggers along the coast. Every care will be taken to see that they are properly enlisted for service, and that when a boat is laid up or a contract of service on a fishing ground is finished the master in charge pays the men the money owing to them and returns them to their home port.

There is no doubt that in the past owners of beche-de-mer and pearl-shelling boats engaged aboriginals on their reserves and on the completion of the trip dumped them in any old place, leaving them to take care of themselves and get back to their original haunt in the best way they could. Very wise provision has been made to protect these boys, who not only work on the land but on the sea also.

The provision for the care of aboriginal property and the protection of aboriginals from certain offences have the impress of mature consideration. They are all-embracing in character and should cope with any difficulty that may occur.

There is, however, one omission I notice in the Bill. That is, it repeals the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897, dealing with the possession and sale of opium to aboriginals. I was surprised to find that a provision dealing with the possession and sale of opium to aboriginals is not included in this Bill. It may be that this offence is adequately covered by some other statute. It is a well-known fact that these offences arose mainly from the contact of aboriginals with Chinamen. The use of opium by the black races was at one time a very great problem. I do not think for one moment that the Minister has overlooked an important point like this, and he might be able to enlighten us later as to whether adequate protection exists respecting the possession or sale of opium to aboriginals.

The Minister stressed the great danger to black races caused by the introduction of various diseases by contact with whites. Tuberculosis is a disease that has played a great deal of havoc among aboriginals. True, it may have been induced by the use of clothing to which the aboriginal is not accustomed in his native haunts. I observed from the report of a superintendent of one of the mission stations that he had prohibited the wearing of clothing above the waist among the blacks under his control. This official discovered that the wearing of shorts, trousers, coats, and other clothing of the civilised race contributed largely to the incidence of this disease. The aboriginals were not particular about changing their clothes, particularly when they went bush and the clothing got wet. The result of the prohibition will doubtless overcome a great deal of this trouble.

The Bill, on the whole, is one that, if wisely administered, will achieve the great objective it seeks—namely, to protect and preserve the native inhabitants of this country. I trust that as a result the Minister and his officers

will be able to give great service to the aboriginals and help them to a better and fuller life than has been their lot in the past.

Mr. CLAYTON (Wide Bay) (2.35 p.m.): All parties will agree that it is our duty to do everything in our power to preserve and protect the aboriginal life of Australia, particularly in Queensland.

The invasion of the country by our ancestors many years ago undoubtedly caused very great hardship to the aboriginal population. Closer settlement drove them from the fertile areas and forced them to live in areas where the natural food supply was scanty.

In introducing this Bill the Minister is following in the footsteps of his predecessors. The former Home Secretary, the late Hon. George Appel, did much for the protection and preservation of aboriginals. He was followed by the late Hon. James Stopford, who also took a very keen interest in the welfare of the aboriginals. The Chief Protector of Aboriginals, Mr. Bleakley, who has occupied that position for a considerable time, has given careful study to the customs of the aboriginals, and is doing excellent and humane work.

The provision in the Bill to allow half-castes to earn their own living is a wise one. The distinction between the half-castes and the aboriginals is very evident to anyone who visits one of the settlements. The half-caste is "quicker on the uptake." The educational facilities provided on these settlements—I refer principally to Cherbourg—are equal to those at any ordinary State school. These young half-castes are inherently keen, and when that keenness is supplemented by a good education they are very anxious to be released from these settlements. I have approached the Chief Protector of Aboriginals on behalf of half-castes, and he always had a thorough investigation—all his investigations are thorough—into the behaviour of the applicant and his general character before he decided whether he was fit to take employment. Some time ago an inmate of the Cherbourg settlement made application to be allowed to leave the settlement to become head stockman on a station, and to take his family with him.

At present he and his wife are living the life of respectable citizens in another locality in which their children are finding employment. Thanks are due to the Government, to the Chief Protector, and to the superintendent of the settlement for having allowed this family to take its place among the white population.

The men hired out to squatters and graziers are of an excellent type. They excel in work among cattle and give every satisfaction as ringbarkers. There is no reason why they should not be permitted to establish themselves in what might be termed their own country, and this measure will assist very materially in that direction.

The report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals gives the population of aboriginals and

half-castes as 18,024 at 30 June, 1937. It is rather a large undertaking to keep in touch with the various aboriginal settlements, but I am pleased to hear from the Minister that he has visited them and that a close contact is maintained with them in the interests of the protection of these people.

The Commonwealth Government are calling for volunteers to join the militia forces and I am sure many of the half-castes will offer themselves and give of their best in serving their country. The hon. member for Murrumbidgee, who had experience overseas during the Great War, has told us how some of these men fought for their country, and from my knowledge of them I am sure that in either service, sport, or any other sphere they will uphold the traditions of the Australian soldier.

The aboriginal settlement at Cherbourg, in the electorate that I have the honour to represent in this House, is situated on approximately 7,000 acres of very good country. The superintendent, Mr. Porteous Semple, is doing excellent work, so far as he is able to. Those people who advocate the settling of the aboriginals on inferior land in an isolated locality have not given careful consideration to the conditions that will make for their well-being. For instance, how can the settlement on Fraser Island be compared with that at Cherbourg? There is no question that the latter is in a suitable locality, but owing to the expansion of the neighbouring township of Murgon, the settlement is now somewhat too near the white population. I do not intend to give my reasons for this conclusion other than to state that it would be to the advantage of the settlement if it was at a greater distance from a town. If a move is made to remove this settlement, I trust that it will be provided with an area of land of similar size and quality to that which it now occupies.

This is a large settlement, having a population of 945, of which 332 are full-bloods and 613 half-castes. This proportion of half-castes to blacks is alarming, and emphasises the need for doing something to solve this problem. If the half-castes are of good character and conduct themselves in the way in which good citizens should, I believe that it would be a move in the right direction to allow them to leave the settlement to work in other parts of the State.

In order to show just what has been done to help the aboriginals, let me mention that at the Cherbourg settlement they have an excellent school, which is visited by an inspector of the Department of Public Instruction. In addition to the ordinary State school curriculum, the girls are taught domestic science and the boys rural subjects. It will be seen that the education they receive is equal to that of the white population. Their health is safeguarded in that they have an up-to-date hospital conducted by a matron and a nurse, with a visiting doctor. They have a sawmill, too, at which they cut all the timber that is needed for the settlement. I think that in that mill only one white man is employed; all the others are inhabitants of the settlement. Cattle raising is also carried

on there. At present they have 1,409 head of beef cattle and a dairy herd of 43. Unfortunately, however, I am afraid that the settlement does not pay as well as the Minister, perhaps, would like, but excellent work is being done there for this section of Queensland's population.

If hon. members care to see the actual work that is being done in these settlements, I invite them to visit Cherbourg. I am sure that they will be surprised at the layout of the settlement, and I assure them that they will receive every hospitality. If they desire, too, to obtain information about the early life of the aboriginals of Australia, and Queensland, I recommend that they get from our library here a book entitled "The Aborigines of Australia," and another book that is written by Dr. Roth. I am sure that both works would be of great interest to them, in that they will show what the aboriginals had to put up with when the white people invaded their country.

I do not propose to speak at any further length at this stage. We have had a very interesting debate, and I intend to support this measure.

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (2.50 p.m.): I should like to take this opportunity of welcoming this Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Bill. We should give the Minister credit for the interest he has taken in uplifting the standard of life of these people.

Since I have been a member of this House, I have taken a deep interest in the welfare of the aboriginal race. For some reason unknown to me a large number of aboriginals found their way into the township of Beaudesert, in my electorate. There are full-bloods, half-castes, and quarter-castes, and they have made their home there. The present Chief Protector of Aboriginals has given great service to these people, but the fact remains that in the past Parliament has not done its duty in uplifting the standard of the black race. I have felt for a long time that it has been the duty of Parliament to remove the stigma and inferiority complex carried by these people.

During the debate it has been said that the aboriginal race is not likely to be lifted to the standard of the white race. That may be true. The Minister remarked that the white races were at least a thousand years ahead of the aboriginals, but I believe that if aboriginals were given equal education and treatment to white people, in a short space of time they would not be far behind us. The aboriginal, generally speaking, is perhaps lazy through no fault of his own. If white people were allowed to fall into the same groove as the aboriginal has been content to occupy for centuries—merely hunting for food, not planning and developing the brain, but simply living from day to day—they would fall into the same lazy habits. The aboriginal has fallen to his present low state partly because of his neglect by white people. It is the responsibility of Parliament and the white race in Australia to lift the standard of the black people.

It has been found that the children of aboriginal parents are intelligent. Soon after I became member for Fassifern I approached the then Secretary for Public Instruction at the request of some white people in the Beaudesert district, with a view to separating the black children from the whites. After making exhaustive inquiries, I found that the teacher in charge of the local State school had a very high regard for his black pupils. He told me repeatedly that they were intelligent, and quite as capable of learning lessons as well as his white pupils. A number of residents of the district thought it was not wise for their children to mingle with the black kiddies. If the aboriginal race was given the same opportunities as our own people are given, it would hold its place in the world.

Aboriginals have proved themselves capable workers. As the hon. member for Murrumba and the Minister have told us, they have been successful at sport. They are great athletes, because in the past their means of transport was by foot, and so they developed their muscles. There is no doubt that the black people are in their present state because of the neglect received from the white people. We should remove the stigma that lies on them, and I believe we could create a desire in their minds to do something for themselves.

I spoke to the Minister some years ago about the dark population of Beaudesert and suggested that the department should set aside a piece of land for them in order that they might become self-supporting. Such an undertaking might be difficult without some form of control. The aboriginals may not be capable of leadership but if they are given the responsibility of managing a farm or a piece of land I think eventually they will be able to take care of themselves. At any rate, it would give them an opportunity to demonstrate what they can do in carrying their own responsibilities.

Yesterday, the Minister told us of the progress that had taken place at the Purga mission station in the West Moreton electorate, which is not far from where I live. I should like to compliment the Salvation Army on the wonderful improvements that they have carried out at that station. During the last couple of years a large number of girls who have been reared and educated at that station have gone into domestic service, and I know from a number of women in the Boonah district who have recently employed these girls that they are highly pleased with them and even go so far as to say that it would be difficult to find white girls who could do better or in many cases even as well as these coloured girls have done. I believe that there is every opportunity of developing the black population if they are given a chance to do so. We should always remember that it is possible to create the inferiority complex in any people if we keep them down. That applies to human nature generally.

I have read the Bill and if it errs in any respect perhaps it is that it does not go far enough. I am concerned with the harsh treatment meted out to the aboriginals in

some instances by the police. Perhaps they did not exercise the discretion that is expected of them. I know of one aboriginal boy who was actually exiled from the Beaudesert district. I am not going to say that he did not deserve chastisement for his conduct, but after he was arrested and sentenced he was asked to leave the district immediately. After he returned to the town he was arrested and sent away again, although I fully believe that he had every intention of reforming. The mother of the boy approached me about the matter and I can assure hon. members that I have never seen a woman more heartbroken about a boy than she was about this one, although he was a full-blooded aboriginal. He was exiled from his district, and I think that was very callous treatment. Whatever may be done in the future I hope that greater consideration and sympathy will be extended to all aboriginals who may make mistakes. After all, we are all human. I have seen many good Australian boys, members of respectable families, too, who have made mistakes. They were dealt with according to law, and there is no reason why the aboriginal boy should be dealt with in a harsher manner. The aboriginal people in the Beaudesert district felt very keenly about the treatment of this boy. If the young aboriginals offend against the law they should be punished in accordance with the law, but I see no reason why the police should scare the wits out of them or out of their parents by making them feel that they are against them and intend to keep them down.

I understand that one of the objects of the Bill is to remove some of the shackles on the coloured people, and generally we are to start afresh with a new form of control. The Chief Protector, who is now to be called the Director of Native Affairs, is to exercise greater control over them in the future than in the past.

I notice a clause in the Bill dealing with contagious diseases amongst aboriginals. The Minister dealt briefly with the matter, but I think I should stress the point that it is no credit to the white race that the black population have deteriorated as much as they have in the last 40 to 50 years. When I was a youngster there were very large numbers of the race in this State, and I could never understand why they should have diminished as rapidly as they did. After they became affected with diseases common amongst white people, and they spread, the mortality among them was terrific. That was due principally to their ignorance. Being shy in many ways, they were afraid to expose the fact that they were suffering from contagious diseases. The result was that a great many of them died. I am pleased to note the additional protection that the Minister is endeavouring to give them in this respect.

I am also pleased to note that an effort is going to be made to make it more difficult for aboriginals to get opium and alcoholic liquor. For some unknown reason, alcoholic liquor has a very much more degrading effect on aboriginals than on white people. I think

that is very largely due to ignorance. Aboriginals seem to take a special delight in becoming intoxicated, and a great many of them believe, after their first experience, that they remain in that state for the rest of their lives. They think they get a permanent "thrill." The Bill does not state quite clearly how it is intended to make it more difficult for aboriginals to get alcoholic liquor, nevertheless, it is a start, and a move in that direction will do much to preserve our aboriginal race. My remarks also apply to the sale of opium to aboriginals, and indeed to any bad habit. Perhaps it would not be a bad idea if this Bill embraced a number of our white people who are addicts to similar vices.

This Bill proposes harsher penalties against those who offend against the black races, particularly those who have carnal knowledge of aboriginal women. This is a question on which I feel very keenly. We frequently discuss what might be done with persons offending in that way. To me it is so serious that no penalty would be too severe to mete out to those who sink so low. The pity of it is that legislation of this nature was not introduced years ago, and enforced with the utmost vigour. In fact, I would support a provision to imprison white men for long periods for this offence, in order that they would not offend again. As with every social evil, we must get rid of it at the root. Unless we deal rigorously with the men responsible for this degrading problem, we shall never eradicate it. Provision is also made for dealing more stringently and carefully with the marriage law affecting aboriginals.

The Bill has much to commend it, and will have an uplifting effect on the remnants of our black population, but it does not go far enough. I hope that when it is placed on the statute-book, every effort will be made to uplift our aboriginals. As I said at the outset of my remarks, if we can remove the inferiority complex from them and educate their children, we shall do much to improve their social standing. After all, we must remember that the aboriginals are human, just as we whites. This is but a measure of social justice, and anything the Minister or his department can do to raise the standard of the remnants of the aboriginal race will meet with the approbation of every hon. member.

Mr. YEATES (East Toowoomba) (3.5 p.m.): It may be a remarkable coincidence, but the fact is I have never yet had a clash with the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs; I have agreed with everything he has brought forward.

The Bill before the House is one that deserves to be welcomed with both hands. Later on we shall probably make some suggestions to the Minister and I hope that, unlike some of his fellow Ministers, he will adopt them.

Our ancestors took Australia from the native inhabitants, and it is up to us to look after that diminishing race. There is no doubt the Governments of the past—irrespec-

tive of their political colour—neglected their duty to the aboriginals.

In the late 60's my father drove about 1,000 sheep from West Maitland through the central part of Queensland to Bowen in a search for sheep country. During that trip the blacks killed almost all the sheep, and the shepherd. The files of the "Bowen Independent" of 1869 contain a report of this trip. As a result of such acts of the aboriginals, the white people rose up in arms against them. We can hardly blame the blacks for their attitude because, after all, they owned the country and we took it from them. In years gone by in the Cooper's Creek and other western areas of Queensland, the Chinese workers—mostly Chinese cooks on stations—supplied opium to the aboriginals. Owing to the laxity of the laws, this offence was fairly prevalent and the health of the aboriginal suffered. Like the Maoris of New Zealand, too, our aboriginals are susceptible to tuberculosis. As the hon. member for Murrumba said, the reason for that may have been the wearing of clothes.

There is no doubt that the whites introduced most of the diseases the aboriginals are subject to. In fact, the aboriginals were almost annihilated by diseases introduced by the white man until the Government made determined efforts to protect them. From 1819 to 1884 very little was done by the Government to protect the aboriginals, and the efforts made after 1884 were not as great as they should have been. This Bill will be passed, and I ask the Minister to administer every clause in the Bill and, if necessary, make some more stringent.

The aboriginals—at any rate, some of them—should be given control of some good land. It is all very well to say aboriginals cannot do this and cannot do that. At least they are entitled to be given a fair trial. How do the people of Egypt manage? They still plough with the old forked stick. They do not need the latest in agricultural implements.

The Government, irrespective of party—and it may be shortly a Country Party Government—could supply some of the implements and the aboriginals should have a fair trial on good land. Many of them are intelligent.

I wish to refer now to clauses 19, 28, and 29.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not entitled to discuss the Bill clause by clause at this stage. He may now discuss principles and principles only.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: You have to applaud the whole lot! (Laughter.)

Mr. YEATES: There is provision that no aboriginal shall be allowed to have opium. I have not had time to read every line of the Bill but hope that a very severe penalty is to be imposed on any person who offers opium to an aboriginal. As the hon. member for Murrumba has already indicated, I take it that sufficient safeguards are provided by other Acts. At any rate, a very stringent

provision is necessary. No punishment is too great to impose on any person who offers opium to an aboriginal. Opium can be got, even in these days. Liquor is in the same category.

The Secretary for Labour and Industry can bear me out when I say that aboriginals are doing good work as stockmen in the western districts, but they need all the protection we can give them. They get protection as regards wages and facilities for banking. With the co-operation of station-owners and other employers, they should be encouraged to save their money to a certain extent. Of course, I realise that all of us at times feel the urge to spend money, but they should be educated not to become spendthrifts.

Aboriginals are roamers. Many years ago those camped on the banks of the large water-holes in the western districts travelled to the Bunya Mountains once in every three years for the purpose of collecting the bunya nut, but no doubt the experts of the department understand this psychology and will see to it that their movements are not too circumscribed. If it is the intention to grant them a large lump of Queensland I am one who will not object. I am indeed very pleased that such good work is being done in this direction, notwithstanding the work that is not done by the Government in other directions. I welcome the Bill and heartily support it.

Mr. T. L. WILLIAMS (Port Curtis) (3.15 p.m.): There is little that I can add to what I said yesterday; certainly, very little can be added to what the Minister has said about the main objectives of this measure.

It is pleasing to know that both sides of the House agree that the Bill fills a long-felt want. We do owe a duty to the aboriginal race, and also, to some extent, to the half-caste race. This form of legislation is desirable, and I am pleased that it is being accepted in the spirit in which it is.

I have always contended that the aboriginal should be allowed some freedom to work out his own destinies. I am pleased that the Minister has provided that the natives in the Torres Strait area and on the islands off the coast shall be allowed to do that. I believe that giving them certain powers or authority to manage their own affairs will do more good than harm.

I should like to make some reference to the half-caste problem. I use the word "problem" because it has always been a problem to know just how to treat the half-caste, just what to do for him, as well as to frame suitable legislation for the purpose. It is said by some people that the half-caste has the virtues of neither race and the vices of both. When I had the opportunity of studying what is being done for the aboriginals and half-castes, I did not find that to be true. Of course, there were exceptions to the rule, as there are in all things. At Barambah, now known as Cherbourg, I found that every opportunity to do the right thing was given to the half-caste by those in con-

trol. I found, too, when in conversation with them, that many of them regarded themselves as being a little superior to their black relatives, forgetting, of course, that they came from that black stock in the first place.

I desire to repeat what I said yesterday about the desirability of making the settlements self-supporting. Whilst I know that much has been done in this respect and that much is promised under this Bill, I believe that still greater things can be done. It would lower the charge on the taxpayer of the State if the settlements were self-supporting. I think that if some new industry, such as the growing of flax, hemp, or even broom-millet could be conducted on those settlements where the land is suitable, it would be beneficial. Most of the settlement areas have good classes of soil. Most of them are well watered and suitable for irrigation, and, in fact, suited in every way to the raising of high-class crops. If some new industry was established on one aboriginal settlement and gradually extended to the others, good might result, certainly to that settlement, in that it would be more or less self-supporting.

I was pleased to be able to listen to the broadcast address by Archbishop Wand some few weeks ago, in which he said that the Queensland policy of settlement for aboriginals, in which the inhabitants were cared for by the church and by the State in co-operation, was worth while. He said that he preferred this system to the Federal Government's policy of leaving the natives strictly alone, away from white men, in reserves with mission stations on their borders. He further said that it was pleasing to him when in the South recently to hear the chairman of the Board of Missions say that the Queensland Government were the first in the field in the care of aboriginals, and still ahead of the other States in that respect. Coming from such a gentleman, this gives us reason to feel proud of the work of the Government and the Chief Protector of Aborigines.

His Grace further said—

"He felt that in the Federal Government's plan anthropologists had been allowed too much influence. He did not believe that the aborigines were happy in their nomadic state, and thought that the position of the aborigine living his 'normal' life was deplorable.

"In his opinion, the Queensland plan gave them more speedy escape from their misery."

I think we must agree with the Archbishop. People coming here from other parts of the world know that the Australian aboriginal, if we did not take him under our wing and protect him, would be perhaps the most helpless individual in the world. I think the Australian aboriginal is the only race that never got over the difficulty of preserving food for himself. If we had not come to his rescue in years gone by, he would have fast died out.

I am pleased that the Bill has been welcomed by hon. members on both sides of the

House. The work of the department has been freely commented upon. The work of the Chief Protector has received the greatest of encomiums. I feel that by placing a measure such as the present one on the statute-book of the State, we shall be doing something for a fast-dying race, and something which will enable the half-caste to carve out his own living in the future, and enable him to get away from the surroundings and habits of the full-blooded black.

Mr. RUSSELL (Hamilton) (3.23 p.m.): The Government are to be commended on endeavouring to consolidate previous legislation, and to put aboriginals on a better footing than at present. Various speakers have spoken of the injustices that have befallen them in the past. To be fair, we must confess that the history of the colonisation of Australia has been marked by dark deeds of cruelty and repression done to the native inhabitants. Probably the Minister put his finger on the spot when he said that this might have been due to a misunderstanding as to the mode of life of the aboriginal. The trouble originated in the fact that this ancient race—I suppose the oldest race on the globe to-day—were of a nomadic habit, and roved the country, exploiting the hunting and fishing grounds, and, no doubt, experiencing periods of drought and so suffering much privation from time to time.

They had their curious tribal customs. One, in particular, was their method of birth control to prevent over-population. No doubt the food available was always very meagre. It was never their custom to engage in husbandry, and no attempt was ever made by them to grow crops of any sort. They simply lived on what they could hunt and catch. The settlers from abroad have gradually driven these people away from their happy hunting grounds. To-day we are in possession of the choicest spots in Australia, and they have been relegated, probably, to the least productive ones.

We all must be very sad, indeed, when we behold these poor, abject creatures who hang about the towns. At the same time we must be struck with the physique and bearing of some of the aboriginals who come from the northern parts of Australia, and who to a great extent have not been so much afflicted by the evils of the white civilisation. We know that in the early days many dark deeds were perpetrated on the natives, but what has decimated their numbers more than actual violence and assassination has been the spread of the white man's diseases and the adoption by the aboriginal of many of the evil habits of the white man. I think that tuberculosis and syphilis have accounted for more of these people than actual assassination, murders, or killings, and it is the fact throughout history that many races indigenous to the soil have not been able to withstand the impact of the white civilisation. As one hon. member has pointed out, we have rendered ourselves immune to very many of the diseases that have been disastrous to the coloured people in the world. I pointed out on a previous occasion that we have similar

examples in the Red Indians of America and the Maoris of New Zealand. These great races, which at one time existed in very large numbers in their respective countries, are to-day dwindling, and before many years are past will remain only a memory.

The greatest evil of all, I think, has been the curse of the breeding of half-castes. We know very well that a great number of them are the offspring of aboriginals and fairly low-type settlers, whether white or yellow, and that these coloured people, the half-castes and quarter-castes, are looked upon as the pariahs of society. They have no social standing, and are shunned alike by the black man and the white man. That has been so in every country of the world where there is mixed population. Even in India the Eurasians are not treated with any respect, either by the white population or by the Hindus themselves. The half-castes in Queensland are a legacy that has been left to us, and we are endeavouring to eradicate or modify it.

It has been suggested that there should be intermarriage between half-castes and white people, so that eventually the half-caste blood will be absorbed or will be overwhelmed by the blood of the white race. That might be a long process. It seems to me if that course was adopted eventually the half-caste population would disappear. In the meantime, what we have to prevent if we possibly can is the increase of the half-caste population. The full-bloods are going out of existence. They are doomed, no matter what we do, but the half-caste population exists in very large numbers.

At the conference of the Chief Protectors of the Aboriginals' Protection Board and the representatives of State and Commonwealth territories held in April, 1937, certain resolutions were agreed to. Among them were the following:—

"1. The destiny of the race and the absorption of the natives other than full-blood into a white community. . . .

"3. The education of cross-bred children to white standard with a view to their employment and absorption into the white community.

"4. The segregation of the full-blood, and education of the detribalised towards development of the village life and self-dependence. . . .

"10. The establishment of native courts for purely tribal cases"

I need not quote the other resolutions. It is evident that the Minister has framed his measure mainly on the resolutions that were agreed to then. If this Bill will put into effect those resolutions the Minister will, indeed, be doing very good work.

I said just now there was very little hope that the full-bloods, particularly the older members of the tribes, would alter their habits to any extent. In some quarters it is held that these people should be left severely alone, and allowed to roam their hunting grounds, but that some paternal

oversight should be exercised to see that they do not want, and that care should be taken to see they were not subject to outside interference. That is the great trouble to-day, particularly in Northern Australia, where constant interference with the native population is going on. The Government must take very stringent measures wherever these aboriginals are located to see that there is no interference from outside and that they are allowed to carry on their own affairs in their own way, subject to the supervision of the Government. Wherever the white man goes he brings his curses with him, and if we desire to be human and just we must see to it that he is kept away from these black people. I admit that is a difficult task, because, despite our humanitarian motives, no doubt engendered in the blood of these people is the desire of the open spaces, the call of the wild, as it were. It will be impossible to eradicate from their constitution that desire to roam the open spaces.

There may be some hope in looking after the younger generation, but they are a declining factor. I therefore think, as proposed under this Bill, that segregation is the only thing that can be attempted to try to bring into effect some means whereby these people will receive better treatment in the future than in the past. Although our action is belated it is only an act of common justice on the part of those who possess this continent to-day to see that these people do not want. Even if they do not desire to work no compulsion should be applied to them. The very idea of work is foreign to their nature. We may compare their state with the state of the Polynesians, whom I mentioned on the introductory stage of the Bill. They are content to do a few days' work to earn enough money for the immediate future. The actual work of the country is not done by the Polynesians; their very nature prevents them from applying themselves to constant work. I think that streak in their nature is also to be found in the Australian aboriginal, so that whatever we may do I am afraid it would be impossible to inculcate—particularly in the older people—any desire to enter into any useful occupation. We must face facts as they are. It is our duty to see that they do not want, that they live in fairly decent comfort, that their offspring are cared for and that they are not neglected, as in the past, because, after all, they are Australians like ourselves. If we do that we shall in some measure wipe out the injustices of the past. Anyone who reads Australian history must be convinced that we have failed in our duty by this unfortunate race.

Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (3.37 p.m.): I think the ground has been pretty well covered, but there are one or two comments I wish to make before the second reading is disposed of. First, I wish to say that a careful check of all the speeches of the hon. members of the Opposition who spoke on the Bill failed to show that any hon. member alleged that the aboriginals should be maintained on country not suited to the white people. This morning the Minister appeared

to be under the impression that one of the hon. members of the Opposition made that statement.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: That was the impression I had. I made inquiries from hon. members on this side and they told me I must have been mistaken. I am sorry to have mentioned it.

Mr. MAHER: I wanted to clear the point up. I accept the Minister's version.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: It is sometimes difficult to hear what people are saying when somebody comes to ask you something.

Mr. MAHER: The Minister may have gained a wrong impression. The Opposition repudiate any such suggestion. No hon. member on this side made any such declaration, as far as I can gather.

Secondly, I should like the Minister to give us some information on one phase of the Bill. Apparently, it is a consolidation of past legislation dealing with aboriginals. Although my study of it indicated that almost practically every provision contained in the principal Act and the amending Acts has been inserted in this Bill, an important omission is the penalty for anybody who supplies an aboriginal with opium. Early legislation contained very drastic provisions to meet that contingency. The Bill certainly contains the principle that any aboriginal knowingly receiving opium can be punished, but the punishment is confined to the aboriginal; no punishment is provided for the supplier of the opium.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: The punishment for the supplier is provided in another Act altogether. This Bill introduces a new principle by punishing the aboriginal for receiving it or having it.

Mr. MAHER: During past years the aboriginal has been a victim of all sorts of dope peddlers, and it is very important that those who supply the aboriginal with opium should not escape punishment.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: It is to be found in the drugs section of the Health Act. Punishment is prescribed there for supplying aboriginals with opium. This is an additional deterrent to the aboriginal against taking opium.

Mr. MAHER: This is a Bill dealing specifically with the preservation and protection of aboriginals, and as opium is a drug that will cause a severe deterioration in the race, provision to stop it should as far as possible be included in this Bill. The aboriginal is a section of the population of this country who will suffer the greatest amount of damage from suppliers of opium.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: The penalty is provided in the Health Act, and amendments of that Act will be brought down making it somewhat easier to secure a conviction.

Mr. MAHER: I realise that under the Health Act provision is made to cover the supply of opium to any person in the community, but as this is a Bill dealing specifically with the preservation and protection of aboriginals, provision should be included here also in order that there can be no misunderstanding.

The Bill is a consolidation of existing Acts and regulations, and one of the most important features is that taking the half-caste from the scope of existing Acts. So far as my reading goes a half-caste can now be exempted on application.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: Yes.

Mr. MAHER: And, no doubt, from time to time some have exercised that right.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: One thousand five hundred.

Mr. MAHER: Under this Bill the half-caste will be totally exempted.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: Unless he is living with aboriginals.

Mr. MAHER: But if he desires on his own account to go out and adopt the methods of the white, he is entirely exempted from control under this Bill.

The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs: He can get on the roll now.

Mr. MAHER: The half-caste problem was greater in the early days of Australian development. There were then fewer whites about and a large number of blacks who were not under any control. Of course, under the circumstances, there would be a great number of half-castes. Many of these are, no doubt, now in the process of absorption in the national blood stream. Nowadays, the aboriginals are not scattered all over the State as they were then, without Government or mission control. The opportunities for the two races to intermingle are not so great now, and as time goes on there should be a very great decline in the number of half-castes. That is all to the good of this country. I think, therefore, that in our system of controlling the remnant of the aboriginals we have something of which we can feel proud. It was pleasing, too, to hear the testimony that the hon. member for Port Curtis quoted in the Chamber this afternoon in which Dr. Wand paid tribute to the work of the Government, and to the co-operation between the missions and the Government in the control of aboriginals.

The aboriginal is being protected to-day, and honest effort is being made by the people of this generation to preserve the rights of these natives, and, in my opinion, it would be to our everlasting discredit if we had to record the death of the last of the Australian aboriginals, as has happened in Tasmania. I think it would be a blot on our nation if we were to allow that to come about. We have taken their country, and even though we have built up cities, developed the country

and given it a place in the sun, much better than the aboriginal could have done, we have to allow that the aboriginal is one of God's creatures just as we are, and is entitled at least to live in the country he inhabited before we came to take it from him. It would be a blot on our national character if we did not take every possible step to save this race from extermination.

The Bill makes an effort to do that. It gives to the Director of Native Affairs control over the aboriginals, and establishes a new policy whereby aboriginals will be helped to become villagers and settlers in the true sense of the term. They are being encouraged to establish themselves in communal life, to undertake agricultural pursuits, and to embark upon the raising of stock. The aboriginal, in all his relations with stock on the runs of Australia, has been a very useful man indeed. He is a good horseman and a good all-round cattle man. As was stated yesterday, very great difficulty was experienced in developing the big stations in the remote and hotter regions of the State and the Northern Territory. Just what we owe the Australian aboriginal for helping us to develop and increase the wealth production of these tropical areas by running cattle can never be recorded. Whether the Australian aboriginal has received his proper payment for his aid in this direction is open to question, but I do think that to-day the Government are making a genuine and honest effort to help him by giving him every inducement to cultivate racial pride and to develop good will along the lines of happy settlement. In these settlements, the aboriginals can marry, rear families, and cultivate the soil within reasonable limits for such crops as can be grown. They can also experience the pride of possession of cattle, pigs, and other forms of livestock that can be suitably run at the mission settlements and villages where the aboriginal is to be found.

I appreciate the very fine work that is done by religious organisations in co-operation with the Government. They, of course, are not only trying to preserve the aboriginal race intact and provide work and food for the aboriginal, but are also training him as a Christian. Whether the aboriginal will fully assimilate the Christian tenets remains to be seen. If the old generation will not, perhaps the young one may be persuaded to have a proper assessment of spiritual value. Work in this direction is particularly good because it holds out some hope for the aboriginal, both in this world and the next. I have great respect for the missionaries who travel to remote areas of the State where the climate is not congenial and where they are removed from all the refinements of our civilisation, and give their lives to the upbringing, protection, and preservation of the aboriginal, helping him to get a proper understanding of what is expected of him under our social order.

There are many principles in the Bill. It contains provisions already in operation for many years. It is largely a consolidated measure, and perhaps the only really new

thing concerns the half-caste. The half-caste is now to be fully exempted from control, and the Chief Protector of Aborigines has had his title changed to that of Director of Native Affairs, as he has now to deal with him and with the islanders in Torres Strait.

An effort is to be made to train aborigines to be self-reliant and if possible self-supporting. The hon. member for Port Curtis was hopeful that it might be possible to make aboriginal settlements self-supporting. It will not be easy to achieve this; nevertheless, it is a good thing to aim at. In country where they are far removed from the big centres of population where they could find ready markets for their produce, it may be rather difficult to make the aboriginal settlements self-supporting, especially at this stage of Australian development.

All told, the Minister should be complimented upon his efforts to consolidate existing Acts and regulations, and make it easier for us all to understand the system in vogue for the control of aborigines. I think, too, that an honest effort is being made by the Government, through the Chief Protector, to deal with this important problem in a sympathetic and helpful way so as to give the aborigines, or at least their descendants, an opportunity gradually to develop until they are on the same basis of intelligence and industry as their white brothers. I believe that the aboriginal boys and girls of the future will bridge the gap to a very great extent that exists between the whites and the blacks to-day. That is to say, they will be equally intelligent and equally capable of learning useful trades, and that the time will come when they will be able to take a larger place in the social system of Australia than they can to-day.

Motion (Mr. Hanlon) agreed to.

TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS (Hon. E. M. Hanlon, Ithaca) (3.56 p.m.): I move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

This Bill is supplementary to the previous one, and deals with the aborigines who live on the Torres Strait Islands. These people differ from the mainlanders in that they have a good deal of Polynesian blood in them, and are much more capable of working for themselves.

The settlement was really developed by the London Missionary Society. Away back in 1897, “Hansard” shows that the then Home Secretary, Mr. Foxton, in introducing the Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, contended that the islanders of Torres Strait did not need the protection of the Crown, because they were capable of doing their own business. In 1904, Mr. C. D. O’Brien, now police magistrate at Bundaberg, was protector of aborigines at Thursday Island, and Mr. Bleakley, our

present Chief Protector, or Director of Native Affairs, as he will be called in the future, was shipping master there, and they both came to the conclusion that the islanders did need some protection, because they were being robbed by the commercial interests at Thursday Island.

At this time the islanders were mostly engaged as pearlers. A few families had their own boats. Others were engaged on pearling vessels. So much were they exploited that, in one case, the protector discovered that one family working on their own boat had been robbed by the pearler for whom they were pearling of over £500, and the shipping master, the present Chief Protector of Aborigines, in winding up the affairs of one of the pearling companies, found that the crews had been robbed of about £3,000 over a period of a couple of years, by being underpaid wages for their services and being overcharged for the goods that they bought from the employer. All the employers engaged in the pearling industry opened accounts for their crews and the crews bought what they wanted from the ships’ stores and the amount was deducted from their wages at the end of the season. These pearling companies solved the labour problem by always seeing that the aborigines were charged prices that would keep them a little in debt until the end of the season. The abuse was so glaring that the islanders were brought under the protection of the Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act. At the same time the London Missionary Society, which had been doing mission work in the islands, also got very concerned about the manner in which the islanders were being robbed by the white community, and organised the fishing industry for them. It was manned by the natives of the islands in Torres Strait. It was really a kind of industrial extension of the London Missionary Society. The society’s subscribers in London put in their money, on condition that they obtained a maximum interest payment of 5 per cent. on their investment—that is, if they got anything at all. The Government found up to 50 per cent. of the cost of the new boats, with which the islanders began operations. It was the inauguration of an industry for the islanders themselves. At the same time the islanders came under the control of the Government. Of course, there were no profits, all the surplus earnings of the industry being used for furthering the interests of the natives, and, consequently, no interest was paid to the London subscribers. These subscribers had put in their money primarily to improve the conditions of the islanders, not to earn money from their labours.

In 1929, after years of negotiation, the Government acquired the whole of these activities as a trading concern for the islanders themselves, the London Missionary Society going out of the business. The business was then founded under the title of “Aboriginal Industries.” The Government appointed a board to handle these industries, which became a kind of co-operative enterprise. It controlled trochus shell, pearl shell,

beche-de-mer fishing, and trading and general stores as well. To-day, as a result of the activities of Aboriginal Industries—this shows the enterprise and industry of the natives—the head store at Badu Island has nine branches in the adjoining islands. They are well-stocked stores, transacting the whole of the business done by the natives.

At Badu, too, there are boat slips from which a number of boats and 30 dinghies are launched each year—quite a large number of dinghies are lost and smashed in the pearling industry. The clothing used by the women on the island is made at Badu. This industry gives employment to quite a large number of girls. They are equipped with sewing machines and all the necessary equipment, and they now submit tenders for clothing required for the mainland natives. The workshops are fully equipped, and the islanders carry on boat-building, cabinet-making, plumbing, and general building.

There is a store at Thursday Island controlled by Aboriginal Industries for the storing and marketing of the harvest from the seas. At present seven luggers and 20 cutters are employed by this company in deep-sea fishing. Quite a large number of islanders to-day own their own dinghies and fish in the waters round the islands. Over 400 men are employed in the luggers and cutters. Twenty men are employed in the workshop at Badu Island, while about 150 men are employed on "master" or private boats.

The value of the sea harvest is about £25,000 per annum, and the retail stores turn over on an average £27,000 per annum. The turnover of the retail stores rises and falls according to the value of the harvest from the sea. If there is a good harvest and a good return, the islanders have more money to spend. The point is that the industry is conducted for the benefit of these islanders, and it is operated and controlled by themselves. The value of the harvest and the turnover of the retail stores indicates that these people can be self-supporting and self-governing, if they receive a little encouragement and sympathetic guidance.

The villages on the islands have been improved. The islanders now have houses raised off the ground, and although they are made out of palm leaf and thatched, they are developing a very pleasing type of cottage. They also have another enterprise that has shown remarkable success. It is the only part of Australia in which a religious organisation has been able to train successfully its own native preachers. At Moa Island we have an Anglican mission, known as St. Paul's. That mission has trained native clergy, and to-day they have five priests and five deacons appointed to the various islands looking after the religious welfare of the people.

The islanders themselves have built a couple of very fine concrete churches—churches that would be a credit to white towns with bigger populations. The islanders are of a religious turn of mind. They take more interest in their churches, and religious

ceremonies evidently make a deeper appeal to them than they do to the mainland aboriginals.

One of the testimonials we have to the capacity of the islanders who are trained at St. Paul's is the success of the Cowal Creek settlement at the top of Cape York Peninsula. That is a settlement on which splendid development has taken place, although there has never been a white superintendent there. A couple of times when a work of importance was under construction somebody was sent from Thursday Island to supervise it, but the village has been laid out and built and the industries created entirely by the natives themselves under the guidance of the native priest trained at St. Paul's. "Joman," as the native priest is very well and favourably known, has succeeded in organising the settlement on Cowal Creek and bringing into existence a good, law-abiding settlement with clean, well-kept villages. The people patiently build up their own homes. You can find cottages in all stages of construction, some with the roof on and others with the frame up, and others partly timbered, and the families living on the ground waiting to earn money for the timber to complete the house. They are patiently building up a fine type of house and cultivating extensive gardens. These people are very well worth all the liberty we are conferring upon them. They will, of course, for their own protection, still need some assistance and guidance from the Director's office.

One of the requests made to me when I was up there was that their children should be educated to the stage at which they could check over their earnings and the accounts with their employer. Although they are not able to prevent themselves from being robbed, they are conscious of being robbed, because they realised they were not getting value for their money.

The Bill will confer on the islanders the right to elect their own councils for local government. Each island will be entirely distinct from its fellows and have its own council. Every council will be required to police the island, make its domestic rules and regulations, and see that a proper standard of morality is maintained. These islanders are by no means immoral; on the contrary, they observe a strict moral code. The council is also required to keep the village clean and make provision for the comfort of the people.

It is regrettable that all these blessings cannot be conferred upon them without introducing the tax-gatherer. The council will have to impose a tax on the inhabitants for the amount of money necessary to do the work that they propose to do. As the councils will consist of their own people, however, they will be very lenient.

The orders made by the councils will, of course, have to be approved by the Director of Native Affairs, in order to see that the islanders do not do anything foolish or anything that would bring trouble upon themselves. But from what I have seen of them,

and from the experience of officers of the department, they can be trusted to look after their own little villages and the physical and moral welfare of their people very capably.

Mr. RUSSELL (Hamilton) (4.11 p.m.): As the Minister has said, this is a Bill complementary to the measure dealing with the protection and preservation of aboriginals that has already been dealt with by the House. It is, therefore, also complementary to the resolutions agreed to by various protectors of aboriginals, to which I referred on another occasion, dealing with the destiny of the race and the institution of native courts.

As the hon. gentleman has said, the islanders set us a different problem from the mainland aboriginals. They appear to have survived the impact with modern civilisation, evidently owing to their superior intelligence and physique. As I understand it, they remain untouched by the vices that have proved devastating to their brothers on the mainland.

The question naturally arises: Can they survive? From the latest report of the Chief Protector, I learn that there has been an increase in population, although very small. That may be a happy augury. Given the opportunity, the population may expand, and if this measure gives us a contented community, uncontaminated by outside influences, one that can live upon its own resources, we shall have very much to be thankful for. To some extent we shall have eradicated the stain that rests on us for our treatment of the Australian aboriginal in the course of our colonisation of this country. It is certainly our manifest duty to do what we can to preserve the race. According to the Minister's statement, it appears that the measures taken hitherto have proved to be very successful, and the Bill before the House gives legislative effect to the practice now being followed on these islands.

Much praise is due to the London Missionary Society for its great attempt to Christianise the islanders and to bring to them some of the advantages of civilisation. The question is, I repeat, can they survive? They can, provided they are left alone; provided they are not brought into too close contact with the outside world. Can we keep other races from these islands? Can we bring into being a system of local government that will be so conducted that the inhabitants of these islands will not be contaminated by outside injurious influences? If we can do that there is some hope for the survival of the race.

The Bill has three very important objectives—the establishment of island local government, the constitution of an island court, and the preservation and continuance of the industries peculiar to the islands.

The island government, about which we can talk more extensively in Committee, will give these islanders more control over their own affairs. It will create within them a desire to push their own interests, and will tend to create a happy community. According to

the Chief Protector's report, there is virtually no discontent on the islands to-day, although there was some in the past. He says that that discontent has vanished, and all appear to be contented again. He suggests that this has resulted mostly from the adoption of a policy of giving them a measure of self-government whereby their elected council is now allowed to determine their future domestic policy. It is refreshing to know that by granting limited local government to these people we have created in them greater content than existed previously. They will not be subjected to much interference, except, of course, that whatever they do must be approved by the Director of Native Affairs.

The Minister told us the other day that the old chiefs resented being displaced by this elected council. We find that a greater number of younger men are being elected to these local councils. Apparently, the people appreciate the greater qualifications of younger men with education. According to the Chief Protector's report, there are really no illiterate men among the councillors, and he contends that this shows that they recognise that without education progress is impossible. With men of education on the councils, we have ground for hoping that the affairs of the islanders will be conducted faithfully and well. It will be interesting to learn the result of this innovation, because if this experiment succeeds I think we shall all be pleased that the Government and the Director will be relieved of the necessity of controlling purely parochial matters.

The island court may also remove a good deal of the discontent that existed in the past, in that crimes committed against the community will now be punishable by a natives' court, which will be well acquainted with tribal customs and manners. The court will see to it that the punishment fits the crime better than in the past. It is probable that this will remove a good deal of dissatisfaction amongst aboriginals all over the continent with the punishment that has been meted out to them, which in many instances has been cruel in its incidence.

The Minister has explained the magnitude of the island industries. These islanders seem to subsist entirely on the proceeds of marine industries. They have built up a very fine undertaking, the proceeds of which have been very respectable, and which has enabled those engaged in it to support themselves and their families. Unfortunately, prices have been very low for some time. Nevertheless, the Government are relieved of anxiety for the upkeep of these people if they are actively engaged in a useful industry. I dare say expansion is desired and is possible. I mentioned on a previous occasion that the waters of Torres Strait abound in edible fish. There is no reason why these fish should not be disposed of amongst the islanders and those on the mainland of Australia, so that the islanders would have a further source of revenue and be enabled to extend conveniences and improvements on their islands.

Despite the progress that has been made, a good deal of disease still exists. Pneumonia

and tuberculosis have claimed many victims. The diseases prevalent in the islands are the diseases of white people, and their introduction may have been due to contact with the white races. If stern measures are adopted to prevent undue interference by the outside world there is no reason why these diseases should not be stamped out. After all, native races, particularly half-castes and quarter-castes, are prone to affliction by white men's diseases. Only by a strict surveillance and prevention of interference from outside can diseases be stamped out amongst the islanders.

The principle of applying a system of local autonomy to the aboriginal races on the Torres Strait Islands is a fine one, and I am sure will be watched with great interest. The results of our endeavours to preserve these islands for the islanders, to see that the race does not go out of existence as its brother in Australia will go out, and to see that the islanders are happy and content and become a valuable adjunct to the white population of Australia, will be watched with interest all over the world.

Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (4.24 p.m.): This Bill has the cordial support of the Opposition. Its object is to assist the inhabitants of the Torres Strait Islands to look after their own affairs. It is closely related to the Aborigines Preservation and Protection Bill, and most of the provision of that Bill are extended to the islands of Torres Strait.

The most interesting feature of the Torres Strait Islanders Bill is the proposal to establish island councils, each not exceeding five island members elected by the islanders, who will control and regulate the affairs of each island instead of a white superintendent, as in the mainland reserves. That is a very interesting experiment, and there is no reason why the islanders should not make a complete success of their attempt at local government.

The book I quoted yesterday—"The Drums of Mer"—indicated that in the early days Mer Island—which I think is now known as Murray Island—was, in the language of the Torres Strait islanders, the centre of some kind of temple worship. Periodically the islanders from the various islands assembled at the central island of Mer, not only to observe a ritual but generally for the purpose of dealing with matters of local importance to the islands, such as fishing boundaries and conditions to be observed by the islanders generally. The island of Mer was the centre of the group, and to that extent there was a form of local government before there was any white men in control of these regions at all. So that the islanders should take very readily to the idea of local government, and I am certain that it will help to develop new trade when opportunities are given for the more enterprising and ambitious members of the tribes to become councillors and to exercise some sway and influence amongst their fellows. Perhaps some excellent leaders or chiefs will be produced under such a system. In any event, I have no doubt that they will

lay down very good conditions for the control of their local affairs.

There are many things in the Bill that can be usefully carried out by the local council, such as construction of roads, bridges, viaducts, culverts and paths, the improvement of health, sanitation, cleansing, draining, the removal and abatement of nuisances, water conservation, village planning, building, the use and occupation of land, the eradication of noxious weeds and animals, and agricultural work—all matters conducive to good will and sound government on the island. There is a big job ahead of the islanders if they will apply themselves to it properly. Although their resources will be limited, I believe that the abundance of labour and the ready will to carry out many of these works will supply the deficiency, particularly if there is an enterprising white school teacher who is able to direct and guide the deliberations of the local council and give a lead to its members in the useful work that may be carried out.

I think that this is a very interesting experiment indeed. The only adverse comment that I can make is that I regret that the Minister is inculcating into the minds of the islanders the idea of levying taxes. If they follow the precedent that has been laid down by their white advisers in Queensland, if it is going to tax him out of house and home, the poor old inhabitant of the Torres Strait islands will wish that he had never seen the local council. Perhaps the islanders will have more conservative notions of taxation than those of their white mentors.

The Premier: As a matter of fact, if you ever become Treasurer you will increase taxation. There is nothing surer than that.

Mr. MAHER: I am afraid the hon. gentleman is a poor prophet. He should give up forecasting.

The Premier: That forecast is pretty correct.

Mr. MAHER: The provisions regarding the Aborigines Industries Board will be helpful to the natives in developing industry according to their environment and local possibilities. There should be excellent possibilities there for developing the fishing industry in some way. To-day, the islanders are engaged principally in obtaining trochus shell, beche-de-mer, and pearl-shell, but there should be room for the expansion of the fishing industry in those Northern seas with profit to the native inhabitants and to those white enterprising men who may go up there to promote and organise the industry. The day will come when the fish in the Torres Strait and other Northern seas will be more used than they are to-day. As our population expands and the demand for good edible fish becomes greater, there is no doubt that it will be supplied partly from that quarter.

Useful safeguards are provided whereby the Director of Native Affairs may intervene if any transaction of the councils is not sound. The island fund will still be under the control of the Director, who will exercise

a general benevolent control of the councils and the islands.

The Bill is worth while. I hope that the Torres Strait islanders and their representatives on these councils will be able to pull together to see that this measure of self-government, subject to the control of the Director, will be a complete success. I hope it will usher in a new era of development, happiness, and contentment for the inhabitants of the islands of Torres Strait.

Motion (Mr. Hanlon) agreed to.

The House adjourned at 4.34 p.m.