

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 14 MARCH 1952

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Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. J. H. Mann, Brisbane) took the chair at 11 a.m.

QUESTIONS.

LONG-SERVICE LEAVE UNDER EXISTING AWARDS.

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) asked the Secretary for Labour and Industry—

“What existing awards of the State Industrial Court include provision for long-service leave?”

Hon. A. JONES (Charters Towers) replied—

“Awards (inserted by agreement between employers and employees): Ambulance Employees' Award—Brisbane; Fire Brigade Officers' Award—Brisbane; Fire Brigade Employees' Award—Gladstone; Fire Brigade Employees' Award—Rockhampton; Fire Brigade Employees' Award—Townsville. Industrial Agreements: Clerks—North Queensland Tobacco Growers' Co-operative Association Limited; Clerical Employees—Australian Workers' Union of Employees, Queensland; Fire Brigade Employees—Maryborough; Fire Brigade Employees—Bundaberg. In no case has the Court awarded long-service leave. In all of the above awards, the provision for long-service leave has been inserted by agreement between the parties.”

COST OF PREFABRICATED HOMES.

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) asked the Secretary for Public Works, Housing and Local Government—

“What is the average cost per square of prefabricated houses, including all appurtenances, completed since 30 June, 1951, stating in each case the country of origin?”

Hon. P. J. R. HILTON (Carnarvon) replied—

“French Houses: Approximately £244 per square, less Commonwealth subsidy of approximately £30 per square, net £214 per square average, including electric stoves, wash boilers, and bath heaters. Swedish Houses: Approximately £226 per square, less Commonwealth subsidy of approximately £30 per square, net £196 per square average, including electric stoves, wash boilers, and bath heaters.”

ELECTRICITY FOR NEW HOUSES, TOWNSVILLE.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) asked the Secretary for Mines and Immigration—

“1. Is he aware that the Townsville Regional Electricity Board is declining to supply electric light and power to new homes being erected in the city area, giving as its reason that no funds (presumably loan) are available for this purpose?”

“2. Will he endeavour to have the board make these necessary connections out of revenue until such time as loan funds or other means of finance are available?”

Hon. E. J. RIORDAN (Flinders) replied—

“1. and 2. I am assured by the State Electricity Commission that the Townsville Regional Electricity Board is doing all it can to provide electricity to people requiring it, as rapidly as possible with the funds and materials available to it from all sources.”

MAIN ROADS WORK, SOUTHERN SUGAR AREAS.

Mr. PIZZEY (Isis) asked the Treasurer—

“In view of the severe unemployment in the Bundaberg, Gin Gin, and Isis districts, due to adverse seasonal conditions and a probable very short crushing season this year, will he kindly augment as much as possible main roads work in the Kolan, Gooburrum, Woongarra, Isis, Burrum, Woocoo, and Perry Shires, where manpower and machinery are available for such work?”

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Bundaberg) replied—

“In November last when the adverse seasonal conditions first affected employment, special directions were issued by the Commissioner of Main Roads, at the request of the Government, to increase the works and the number of men employed in

the districts referred to and other districts throughout the State. Information regarding the works to be undertaken in the Bundaberg area was published in the “News-Mail,” Bundaberg, some time ago.”

DROUGHT RELIEF, SOUTHERN SUGAR AREAS.

Mr. PIZZEY (Isis) asked the Treasurer—

“As many sugar growers in the Bundaberg, Isis, Gin Gin, and Bauple districts are now in straitened financial circumstances as a result of the prolonged drought, will he kindly advise what provision, if any, is made for drought relief in such cases?”

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Bundaberg) replied—

“The Government have already decided that drought relief shall be extended to cane growers, and the Secretary to the Cane Growers' Council has been advised to this effect.”

STANDARDISATION OF DIESEL-ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVES.

Mr. CHALK (Lockyer) asked the Minister for Transport—

“In connection with orders placed by the Queensland Government for ten diesel-electric locomotives to be delivered by the General Electric Company, America, and a similar number to be delivered by the English Electric Company,—

“1. Are there any generally recognised similarities between these locomotives produced in different countries?”

“2. Are working parts of one interchangeable with the other?”

“3. Do tolerances and other vital engineering factors differ?”

Hon. J. E. DUGGAN (Toowoomba) replied—

“1. The prime motive power of diesel-electric traction follows the same general basic principles in all countries, as does also the means of transmitting power from the prime mover to the wheels. In the remaining major parts of English Electric Company's and General Electric Company's locomotives, each follows in design sound engineering practice.

“2. No.

“3. All tolerances related to each type are satisfactorily in keeping with sound engineering, and there is no departure from sound practice in any other vital engineering factor in either of the types.”

TEST OF RAIL MOTOR 49.

Mr. CHALK (Lockyer) asked the Minister for Transport—

“1. Was a ‘hush hush’ speed test carried out by rail motor No. 49 between Brisbane and Toowoomba on a recent Sunday?”

“2. What time was taken on the up journey and also on the return?”

"3. Is it a fact that shortly after the motor left Brisbane it was behind the speed schedule, and so the trailer and certain loading were left behind at Ipswich?"

"4. Did two windows fall out of the motor because of the speed and roughness of the journey?"

"5. Is it a fact that when the motor arrived back it had mechanical defects including a burnt-out clutch?"

"6. What useful purpose was served by the test?"

Hon. J. E. DUGGAN (Toowoomba) replied—

"1 to 6. A speed and load test of a rail motor was carried out between Brisbane and Toowoomba recently. The object of the test run was to determine what speeds could be run around curves and on heavy 'up' grades with rail motor trains having a bigger ratio of power to weight than those now in service, with a view to determining what timetables would be possible for such trains. Contrary to the hon. member's allegations that a 'hush hush' policy was followed in connection with the trial run, a notice giving the timetable 'up' and 'down' was issued from the General Manager's Office, Brisbane, on 29 February to members of the staff. Furthermore, 22 high-ranking officials—including the Commissioner, Secretary, General Managers, Chief Engineer, and Chief Mechanical Engineer and Workshops Superintendent—made the trip. The only matter associated with the trial run that could justifiably be described as being 'hush hush' was the surreptitious and unethical means employed by the hon. member in seeking, and in some degree succeeding in securing, information of a confidential nature which he uses for propaganda purposes. For a long time both the Commissioner and I have held the view that suitably designed and powered rail motor trains can, on many sections of our line, reduce materially the existing time schedules and provide greater riding comfort. The test in question confirmed this view, and the lessons learned will, as in the past, be reflected in decisions of a progressive nature being made at the appropriate time. My enquiries also revealed that the hon. member's allegations about the cause of a broken window and mechanical defects in the motor were, like the report of Mark Twain's death, 'greatly exaggerated.'"

TIMBER ROYALTIES, BLOOMFIELD RIVER MILL.

Mr. WORDSWORTH (Cook) asked the Secretary for Public Lands and Irrigation—

"1. Is it a fact that for Crown logs of plywood quality a sawmill at the Bloomfield River on Cape York Peninsula is charged higher than the ordinary rate of royalty, and, if so, what is the additional charge?"

"2. If so, as this isolated mill does not manufacture plywood and its operations are almost solely confined to supplying

timber for housing, will he, in order to keep down as much as possible the price of housing timber, direct that in this case the plywood rate shall not be charged?"

Hon. T. A. FOLEY (Belyando) replied—

"1. Throughout the State, logs for plywood manufacture, which are of the highest quality, are priced higher in forest service price lists than logs of milling quality. In North Queensland the additional prices for ply-quality logs are:—North Queensland Kauri Pine, 11s. per 100 superficial feet extra; other species, 8s. 6d. per 100 superficial feet extra.

"2. Bloomfield Mill is not unique in utilising ply-quality logs for milling purposes. Many sawmills throughout North Queensland accept ply logs at ply-log rates and utilise the logs for production of sawn timber and sell the product at fixed rates. The high quality of the logs is an offset to their additional price. A special exception cannot be made in the case of the Bloomfield Mill. The high-quality sawn timber produced from ply logs of Kauri would not normally be used to any great extent in housing."

FINANCIAL CONDITIONS, LAND BALLOTS.

Mr. EWAN (Roma) asked the Secretary for Public Lands and Irrigation—

"In view of recent published statements that experienced persons, such as station hands, jackeroos, sons of small landholders, and others with wide experience of western conditions, are unable to take part in ballots for grazing selections, will he give favourable consideration to the waiver in the case of such persons of the financial conditions which now apply?"

Hon. T. A. FOLEY (Belyando) replied—

"As yet the department has no evidence that experienced persons, as enumerated by the hon. member, are unable to take part in ballots for grazing selections. The result of the Thurrulgoonia ballot on the 18th instant is expected to give some indication of the extent to which the restriction of credit and/or rising costs of establishment may have affected the financing of applicants. At present applicants with pastoral or land experience are required to prove that they can command finance to an amount totalling the first year's rent and the provisional valuation of improvements on the block applied for. The matter of finance for stocking, &c., is left to the applicant. All the department asks for itself is the first year's rent. The improvement money is necessary in order that the successful applicant may comply with the provisions of the Land Acts requiring that he pay the provisional valuation of improvements or settle with the owner thereof before he obtains his licence to occupy. This is regarded as the minimum financial requirement and applies also to lands made available under any other tenure. It is not proposed at this stage to alter these financial conditions."

REPAIRS TO FENCING DAMAGED BY BUSH FIRES.

Mr. EWAN (Roma) asked the Premier—

“In reference to his answer to my question on 21 November last, relative to fencing damaged by bushfires, in which he stated that the question of subsidising imported materials by the Commonwealth and/or State Government would be given consideration, in view of the fact that the survey of such damage has been completed, what action (if any) has he taken towards providing the subsidy in question?”

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane) replied—

“Upon completion of the survey of damage which had been caused by bush fires, I communicated with the Prime Minister, advising him that the survey in question had been completed, and informing him that this survey indicated that the damage which had been caused by the bush fires included losses in respect of housing, other personal property, fencing and stock. I informed the Prime Minister I had observed from press reports that his Government is co-operating with the Governments of other States in regard to the rendering of certain financial assistance in respect of losses and damage caused by bush fires, and thereupon requested the Prime Minister to furnish me with the conditions under which the Commonwealth Government is rendering such financial assistance and also requested to be advised whether the Commonwealth is prepared to render similar assistance in regard to Queensland. Further consideration will be given to the matter on receipt of advice from the Prime Minister.”

TRAFFIC DENSITIES AND MAINTENANCE, NORTH AND SOUTH COAST ROADS.

Mr. NICHOLSON (Murrumbidgee) asked the Treasurer—

“1. In reference to the survey towards the end of last year of motor traffic on North and South Coast roads, will he kindly supply the details of the count for each road?”

“2. In respect of each such road for a distance equal to the distance from Brisbane to Coolangatta, what was the expenditure in the past three years on (a) maintenance, (b) special maintenance, and (c) permanent work?”

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Bundaberg) replied—

“1. The information regarding traffic counts will be found in the map attached to the report of the Commissioner of Main Roads for year ended 30 June, 1951.

“2. Appendix II. of the annual reports of the Commissioner of Main Roads for the years ending on 30 June, 1949, 1950, and 1951 gives the information in regard to each local authority area.”

SCHOOL TRANSPORT SUBSIDIES.

Mr. NICHOLSON (Murrumbidgee) asked the Secretary for Public Instruction—

“In view of the recent 50 per cent. increase in registration fees on motor vehicles, will he kindly give consideration to an appropriate increase being made in the present rate allowed for transport of school children?”

Hon. G. H. DEVRIES (Gregory) replied—

“This matter is continually under review.”

COMPULSORY MOTOR-VEHICLE INSURANCE.

Mr. DECKER (Sandgate) asked the Treasurer—

“1. Is he aware that in addition to the 50 per cent. increase imposed by the Government for registration of motor vehicles, an increase of 166⅓ per cent. in compulsory motor-vehicle insurance premiums has been imposed by insurance companies?”

“2. Has this 166⅓ per cent. increase had Government approval?”

“3. What commission does the Main Roads Board receive from insurance companies for the issue of notices and the collection of premiums?”

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Bundaberg) replied—

“1. I have consulted some of the most skilled accountants in the State and they are unable to explain how the hon. member arrived at the percentage rate of 166⅓ per cent. Increases varying from 43 per cent. upwards have been made and the percentage mentioned, 166⅓, is that applying to a car used other than for private purposes. The premium on a car used exclusively for private purposes was advanced 85 per cent. compared with 1945, but only 4 per cent. compared with 1940 when the premium was £1 4s. and insurance cover only £750. The premium is now £1 5s. per annum but for an unlimited cover to the insured.

“2. Yes. The increases were made by regulations under the Motor Vehicle Insurance Acts and were approved only after careful consideration was given to the very substantially increased claims that had to be met by the insurers.

“3. No commission is paid to the Main Roads Department. A fee per transaction, sufficient only to cover the actual costs of the service, is paid by the insurance companies to the department.”

COMMONWEALTH GRANT, HOUSEKEEPING SERVICE.

Mr. H. B. TAYLOR (Clayfield) asked the Premier—

“In view of the stalemate between the Commonwealth Government and Queensland Government in relation to the administration of the grant of £2,200 for emergency housekeeping services, and as the Commonwealth Minister claims his

Government cannot constitutionally make this distribution direct, will he accept my service in an honorary capacity in the distribution of this money so that such worthy organisations as the Red Cross Society and Country Women's Association may be enabled to continue this useful community work?"

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane) replied—

"There is no stalemate in this matter insofar as the Queensland Government is concerned. The latest position in connection with the Commonwealth's emergency house-keeping scheme is that I informed the Prime Minister my Government was prepared to accept the offer of the Commonwealth to make available the sum of £2,200 for this purpose, conditional upon the Commonwealth approving that this sum be paid to the Commonwealth Social Services Department, which department the Commonwealth had stipulated must approve of the receiving organisations for distribution to those organisations. The Prime Minister informed me that the Commonwealth did not propose to establish an organisation within the Department of Social Services for this purpose. I then informed the Prime Minister, in view of the smallness of the grant, I could not understand why it would be necessary to establish an organisation within the Department of Social Services to deal with this matter, should the Commonwealth agree to that department administering the scheme. I stated that, to my mind, the work involved would not necessitate the employment of one officer full time thereon, and certainly did not warrant any over-lapping in work between the Commonwealth and my Government. I thereupon urged that having regard to the conditions laid down by the Commonwealth under which the grant would be made available, my Government still felt the grant could be more economically distributed by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services. The Prime Minister, on 9 January last, stated that he would write to me again on this matter, but since then I have not heard anything more from him. As the Commonwealth Government stipulated that organisations that are to benefit should be approved by the Commonwealth Social Services Department, it is appropriate that the same department should administer the scheme, and in the circumstances the hon. member might offer his services to the Commonwealth Government. In the event of his so doing, I should be happy to furnish him with a reference as to his efficiency and probity."

COMMONWEALTH AND STATES FINANCIAL AGREEMENT ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Bundaberg—Treasurer): I move—

"That the House will, at its present Sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of

the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to authorise the making of arrangements by the State of Queensland, pursuant to the provisions of the Commonwealth and States Financial Agreement Acts, 1927 to 1944, for the raising of a loan by the State, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

COAL MINING ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

Hon. E. J. RIORDAN (Flinders—Secretary for Mines and Immigration): I move—

"That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Coal Mining Acts, 1925 to 1951, in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

COAL INDUSTRY (CONTROL) ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

Hon. E. J. RIORDAN (Flinders—Secretary for Mines and Immigration): I move—

"That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Coal Industry (Control) Act of 1948, in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

STATE ELECTRICITY COMMISSION ACTS AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

Hon. E. J. RIORDAN (Flinders—Secretary for Mines and Immigration): I move—

"That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the State Electricity Commission Acts, 1937 to 1951, and the Regional Electric Authorities Acts, 1945 to 1951, each in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

PAPER.

The following paper was laid on the table and ordered to be printed:—

Fourth Report of the Queensland-British Food Corporation for the Year, 1 October, 1950 to 30 September, 1951.

DAIRY PRODUCE ACTS AMENDMENT
BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Farrell, Maryborough, in the chair.)

Hon. H. H. COLLINS (Tableland—Secretary for Agriculture and Stock) (11.24 a.m.): I move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Dairy Produce Acts, 1920 to 1944, in certain particulars.”

In outlining reasons for the amendment I wish to state in a general way that the original Dairy Produce Act was passed in 1904. It was amended in 1911 and in 1920 a consolidating Act was passed embodying the principles of the 1904 and 1911 statutes. The 1920 Act was amended in 1932, 1934, 1935, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941 and 1944.

The Acts are not in force throughout the whole State but apply only where dairying is a commercial industry. Briefly, they are in force in the Maranoa and Darling Downs districts, all along the coast from the New South Wales border to the Daintree River, the Burnett and the Atherton Tableland.

All dairies and factories have to be registered, and have to be up to certain standards prescribed by regulation. The objects of the Act are to ensure adequate supervision over the way in which dairy produce is produced, treated, and sold.

The present Bill proposes to delete certain definitions which, through previous amendments, are no longer necessary. At present, premises in which milk or cream is held for distribution by wholesale come within the definition of a factory, and it is proposed that such premises be included in the definition of a depot. However, market milk establishments where milk is pasteurised will still be regarded as factories.

The trend throughout the State is towards the pasteurisation of dairy products, and there are 22 milk pasteurisation plants, whilst all the butter factories and the majority of cheese factories practise pasteurisation. Whilst the regulations prescribe a standard for pasteurised milk, there is at present no definition in the Acts to explain what is meant by pasteurisation. The defining of this term, and the amending of the second schedule, will allow for a method or methods of pasteurisation to be laid down according to the specific type of dairy product.

Mr. Nicklin: You do not particularly specify the other methods?

Mr. COLLINS: No. At present an inspector is empowered to take samples of dairy produce, &c., for examination. Such samples are usually required to be analysed, and the amendment makes this clause more definite by providing for both examination and analysis.

To ensure the proper cleansing of milking machines, the Act requires that the owner shall install an approved steam steriliser.

Electric hot-water installations have achieved popularity in many areas, because of their convenience over hand-fired steam sterilisers. The amendment will allow for the prescribing of the use of approved electric hot-water boilers or other approved methods of boiling water.

The Act provides that cream supplied to a factory should be paid for on a basis of butter fat or on the amount of butter obtainable, and that milk should be paid for on the basis of butter fat or on the amount of cheese obtainable. The normal practice of purchasing milk or cream for the market milk trade is on a gallonage basis, and the amendment will allow this to be done. The amendment provides also for payment on weight. The proposed establishment of milk-processing factories in the State makes it necessary to provide also for other bases of payment which will be applicable to the special circumstances.

It will also be necessary for any contemplated milk factory to canvass for supplies. The Acts at present prohibit the canvassing for supplies of milk or cream except for the market milk trade. The amendment will extend this right to milk-processing factories.

In the manufacture of processed milk products, the standardisation of the milk is an integral process, but the Act prohibits the installation of a separator except in a cheese factory. The Bill will enlarge the scope of other forms of milk utilisation and allow such factories the right to install separators, but then only in such a position as the Minister directs.

Provision was inserted in the Acts many years ago, before employees in the dairying industry were covered by awards, for a weekly half-holiday in lieu of Sunday afternoon duty. This section is no longer necessary, and in any case would be overridden by industrial legislation, and so it is being repealed.

I think the amendments will receive the approval of all sections of the trade and as they will do that I feel the Committee will allow the Bill to go through after examining its various clauses. It will be found to be a measure in the interests of the dairying industry.

Mr. PLUNKETT (Darlington) (11.31 a.m.): I think that the industry generally will be pleased to know that there is to be an amendment of the Dairy Produce Act. As stated by the Minister that Act has been altered on several occasions. As we progress, we find that the industry is altering from time to time and different methods have to be adopted. Naturally, milk being the most useful food known to the human race the conditions surrounding it should be made as good as possible. It is a product that under certain conditions quickly absorbs all sorts of bacteria and steps should be taken—and by this measure I hope they will—to provide facilities whereby the people can be supplied with milk in its best form.

If I understand the Minister rightly, there is to be an alteration as to the payment

of milk. At present it is paid for on a gallonage basis and I understand that it is to be paid for in the future on a butter-fat basis.

Mr. Collins: It is still legal to pay for it on a gallonage basis and we are legalising the practice.

Mr. PLUNKETT: The butter-fat standard has been accepted the world over, but it has been proved that too much fat in milk renders it not the best food for human beings. I understand that the Minister does not intend to alter the payment from the gallonage basis to the butter-fat basis. I thought that that was going to be done and I should have been opposed to it. Some States have adopted that method. I have never agreed that it was in the interests of the industry to prohibit the use of separators in dairy factories, except cheese factories. The contemplated alteration is a step in the right direction because it is going to give an opportunity, where there is an overflow of milk, for fluid milk to be made available to the public and for the fat from the milk to be turned into butter or cheese and the skimmed milk into milk powders. The manufacture of these products is developing and it is extraordinary that within the last two or three years no milk-powder factory has been established in the State because there is a growing demand for full-cream powder and a world-wide demand for skimmed milk powder.

I shall be very interested to examine the Bill and to see just how far it goes in dealing not only with the production of milk, but with its treatment and distribution to the consumers. We have just gone through a period when we have been unable to supply enough milk to meet the demand, and everybody must realise that a shortage of milk, particularly in a household where there are children, is one of the greatest disabilities that any family can suffer. It is necessary, therefore, that something should be done to build up milk supplies and to ensure the provision of efficient handling facilities.

We have a Milk Board in Queensland, but in reality it is only half a milk board in that it deals only with cold milk; it has no jurisdiction over hot milk. It is time that the Act was amended to give greater opportunities for the organising of both milk production and milk distribution. Milk is a seasonal product and in the summer-time when the season is good, we have more than enough milk to meet the demand, but in the winter-time, when feed is scarce and when cows are not in full production, there is always more or less a scarcity of milk. That means that artificial feeding has to be resorted to, which under present circumstances is very costly. Notwithstanding the fact that we have been producing milk in this State for such a long time, nobody can say that we shall not face a milk shortage during the coming winter. Climatic conditions have a very big effect on the production of milk; they have a greater and a quicker effect on the production of milk than anything else. As an example, only a few weeks ago we were searching South Queensland, and even

the northern part of New South Wales, for milk for the Brisbane market, but within a short period of about 10 days the Brisbane market was flooded with milk, merely because some of the country areas received fairly good falls of rain. As I say, the increase in the production of milk came about so quickly that within a period of only a couple of weeks the position changed from a shortage to one of over-supply.

Milk is a very valuable article of food, and its production should be regulated in some way. If we do not give somebody power to arrive at a balance in its production, we shall strike trouble. The present Milk Board has hardly any power to deal directly with anybody or anything connected with the supply of milk, and it is nearly time, especially when the population and consequently the demand for milk are increasing, that something was done about it. The wholesalers in Brisbane are doing as good a job as those in any other part of the world in keeping milk under the best conditions and in distributing it as efficiently as possible. Further steps could be taken along the lines I have suggested, and I shall be interested to see whether greater power will be given to some authority to do what I have suggested. I would suggest that the Milk Board be that authority, so that it may be able to regulate supplies to the consumers and cope with all the other difficulties that are encountered in this industry.

Unfortunately not only the drought has upset the balance of the industry in regard to production but also the manufacture of dairy products. For example, representations have had to be made to the cheese factories that they send supplies of milk to the city, and as soon as they cease making cheese and sending supplies of milk to the city, our cheese requirements have to be obtained from outside the State. It is only a few months since a big processing cheese factory was established in this country, and it is now found that it cannot get supplies of milk. If sufficient cheese is not manufactured in Queensland, we shall have to import our cheese. That will come mainly from South Australia or Victoria and transport charges from those States would alone run into £30,000 a year. If we cease making cheese here and import our requirements, we upset the whole balance of the industry, the balance that has existed for many years. We had cheese factories on the Downs and butter factories all along the coast, both processing milk products.

A complete survey of the position is required, and this is an opportune time to do it. The drought brought forcibly to us the urgency of some action in regard to the production and distribution of milk. Much more would be done by the co-operative factories if they knew what they could expect, and their position would be clear if the Government would lay down a definite policy for this industry. Until that is done the directors of those factories are diffident about expending large sums of money on the installation of processing plants and other things.

We welcome this Bill, because we realise the difficulties under which the Milk Board has laboured in its efforts to encourage the production of milk and the supplying of milk instead of cream. The board has had great difficulty in obtaining supplies, and I think that it has done a very good job under present conditions and with the powers conferred on it. I hope that power will be given to the right authority to deal with the situation, and in that way we shall be able to ensure ample supplies to all consumers at a reasonable price.

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) (11.44 a.m.): I support the remarks of the hon. member for Darlington, in which he urged the Minister to take further steps beyond those proposed by this Bill in order to overcome the present chaotic conditions that exist in the milk industry in this State.

The Minister proposes to include several new provisions in the Act, particularly in regard to the standardisation of milk, but I strongly urge him to adopt the suggestion of the hon. member for Darlington to give the Milk Board power to do the job it was set up to do. At the present time it has very limited powers and cannot do its job adequately. For many years we have stressed the importance of amending the Act to give the board these further powers and I trust that the Minister has that legislation under consideration in addition to these amendments to the Dairy Produce Act.

The position in regard to the supply of milk, particularly whole milk for human consumption, is chaotic. The Minister knows that as a result of a drought every endeavour was made to obtain the necessary milk supplies and that it was necessary for the Milk Board and other milk-supplying authorities to go farther and farther afield to get milk for the metropolitan trade, and that to meet the urgent demand for whole milk for the metropolitan area many factories disrupted their ordinary working routine. And what did they get for it? Immediately milk supplies were available in nearer districts they were told that their milk supplies were no further required or that the morning milk would be needed and that the afternoon milk was not necessary, or something like that. What encouragement does this give to any of the factories to go into the milk business—and when I refer to the milk business I mean whole milk for human consumption, dried milk, milk products, and butter and cheese?

Until we can establish a system whereby country factories can collect the milk and dispose of it according to the requirements of the various sections of the market we shall never have stability in the milk-supply trade. The factories in the country should be in a position to set aside a certain quantity for whole-milk consumption, a certain quantity for dried milk, a certain quantity for milk products and a certain quantity for cheese and butter. Under present conditions, because of a shortage on account of the drought or winter conditions, cheese and

butter factories have to drop their ordinary methods of manufacture and divert a quantity of milk to the whole-milk trade.

Do not forget, too, that it costs the factories something to do this because they have to disrupt their ordinary manufacturing processes. In order to meet the whole-milk trade, expenditure is needed in the installation of new equipment, because the factory has to change over from the manufacture of butter or cheese to the supply of whole milk. It is not fair to those factories or their suppliers that they should be unceremoniously thrown to one side immediately the milk supplies jump in the nearer areas. The conditions that have obtained in the past on account of drought are going to occur again. The conditions that occur in winter will occur again but what hope have you now of getting the co-operation of any of these country factories in the winter-time, seeing that they have just been thrown aside in recent weeks simply because there has been a build-up in milk supplies in the nearer country districts?

So I would say that although some of the provisions the Minister proposes to insert in the Act will be helpful in stabilising conditions in the handling of milk, they do not go far enough. We shall have to organise supplies to the various markets for the various products that are required. If we are not going to tackle the problem in the very near future we shall find in two or three months, when the winter cuts down the supply of milk—and supplies will fall very sharply and rapidly this year with the approach of winter on account of the effects of the very serious drought through which we have just passed—chaos is going to come about again in the city areas, and we shall no doubt find representations being made to the Minister to do something about it. I suggest that the best thing he can do about it is to immediately examine the Act under which the Milk Board operates and revise and strengthen the powers of the board so that it can do something worth while about the milk position.

The Minister has written into this proposed legislation one principle that needs a little examination, that is, permitting the proprietary companies to canvass for milk and cream supplies. Canvassing by co-operative associations against each other has always been discouraged, by legislative and other means. After all, co-operative factories should show a little spirit of co-operation one with the other, and not endeavour to take one another's supplies.

There has been a new development in the dairying industry in recent months. We now have proprietary concerns entering into the dairying industry and they are going to go out after supplies. Where are they going to get those supplies? They must take them from the co-operative societies; and if we deny the co-operative factories the right to canvass for supplies, you can see what they will be up against. It is right that we should give to these factories the right to canvass so that they can meet the competition of the proprietary concerns that are to be

established. Do not forget that this competition is going to be severe. In the South proprietary milk-processing factories have virtually closed up some of the co-operative factories.

Mr. Aikens: Why were they able to do that?

Mr. NICKLIN: They were able to do it by various means, the nature of which the hon. member can guess. One method has been to offer what is seemingly a better price for the product. The co-operative factories, as the hon. member knows, return to their suppliers everything in the way of profit, and sometimes that means that the initial payment is not as high as that offered by the proprietary concern that is making profits to give to somebody else other than the suppliers.

Very often suppliers are misled by the higher initial payment they may receive. They forget that the total payments by the co-operative society equal those of the proprietary concern and in many instances they are greater. In Victoria undoubtedly the competition that has been brought about by the proprietary concerns in the milk-processing business is a very serious challenge to the co-operatives. They have suffered as a result. Now we have those proprietary concerns coming into business in Queensland. The only way in which they can get supplies is to take them away from the co-operative factories, and we are going to have some very keen competition between co-operative and private companies in the handling of milk in those areas where the private companies are to be established. We must give co-operative companies the right to canvass so that they can get, protect and hold supplies against the very keen competition they undoubtedly will receive from the proprietary concerns. It is possible that some of the proprietary concerns will, at the outset, offer an uneconomic price in order to get supplies. After all, price counts for a great deal when it comes to the sale of a product and if co-operative concerns are handicapped by being prevented from putting their case before the suppliers they will be at a distinct disadvantage.

Another matter referred to was the method of selling or buying milk. The Minister mentioned that it is sold on a gallonage or weight basis and I understood him to say he was including in the Bill a provision under which milk may be paid for on some basis other than that of gallonage or weight. Naturally, my thoughts jumped to buying on a butter-fat basis. The Minister told us that was not his intention, and possibly that is rather a wise decision, although whole milk is bought in other parts of the world and, I believe, in other States of the Commonwealth on a butter-fat as well as a gallonage basis.

Mr. Collins: We can make it on any basis.

Mr. NICKLIN: I thought that was the intention of the amendment, but I was not sure. That means that if it is found necessary to buy or sell milk on some basis other than that of gallonage or weight, it will be possible to do so under the amendment.

The Minister then mentioned that he was going to take from the Act the provision that prevented the installation of a separator in factories handling butter. He knows quite well that that provision in the Dairy Produce Act has not been observed.

Mr. Collins: Can you give me a list of those who do not observe it?

Mr. NICKLIN: I suggest that the Minister send his officers round any of the milk-handling depots of this city, for I know they will find separators there. He will also find that the people concerned have standardised the milk, and I do not blame them for that because the standardising of milk is a recognised practice throughout the world. I want to make it clear that I do not suggest for a moment that the standard of milk in Brisbane is below that laid down by the Act. It is not, as his departmental tests will show. Very seldom indeed does any test show that the pasteurised and bottled milk in particular is not above the standard laid down, which shows that the separators that are in these concerns are not being used to the detriment of the consumers of milk. The hon. member for Darlington said that milk could contain too much butter fat, but the standard laid down by the department provides for the best quality of milk for human consumption.

Mr. Collins: It is laid down by the Health Act.

Mr. NICKLIN: Yes, kept under control by that Act.

The Minister knows the standards adopted in the milk industry, and he knows that the prohibition under the Dairy Produce Act of the use of milk separators has not been observed to the full extent. He is now removing that provision and of course it does not matter now whether they are there or not.

In conclusion, I again urge the Minister, now that he is reviewing legislation connected particularly with the handling of whole milk in this city, to give attention to the Milk Act and tighten up some of the operations of the Milk Board to ensure a more orderly marketing of supplies of whole milk so that the people of the city will have milk to drink during the coming winter.

Mr. HEADING (Marodian) (12.2 p.m.): I am glad that the Minister has considered the dairying industry, as it is an important one and warrants a good deal of official attention, especially at the present moment when it is going through a very difficult period. I do not suppose that in the whole of its history the industry has faced such a difficult time. Coming from a highly productive dairying district, I claim to know some of the problems facing the industry. I am chairman of directors of a factory making butter and cheese as well as pasteurising milk, and so I have had some experience of the three avenues of production and know something of the problems associated with that production.

I made a few notes while the Minister was speaking, and I find that separators will be allowed in factories. I do not know whether the Minister knows it or not but most of us

have had separators for a long time. Time has proved that standardised milk for cheese-making is the right course to adopt. It is necessary, if you have a lot of Jersey cows giving a high test, not to allow all the butter fat to go into the manufacture of cheese. I saw an article a few days ago pointing out that a high butter-fat test was not desirable in milk for cheese. Standardised milk gives to the public a standard cheese all the time, and it is known exactly what amount of butter fat is in the cheese. I am pleased that the Minister is legalising the use of separators in factories, and that he is going to define pasteurised milk. I did not know before that it was not defined. It is a wonderful process in any district. As my town is only a small one, many people thought that the pasteurisation of milk was beyond our capacity. We were allowed to put in an experimental plant; the project developed, and today we are supplying milk to six towns on the South Burnett run, and making pasteurised milk available to office workers, families and children to whom it was not previously available. As a matter of fact, as there is no pasteurising plant in Gympie, we have been able to supply that city with pasteurised milk from Murgon.

One thing about which I am not very happy is the fact that factories will again be allowed to canvass for supplies of milk. There has never been more co-operation between the factories than there has since canvassing for supplies has been discontinued. In years gone by, when canvassing was allowed, every factory was fighting the others to get supplies, but today each factory has a licence to run its cream vans along certain routes and they all co-operate and help one another in every way possible.

Mr. Aikens: Very shortly there might be milk assignments, in the same way as there are cane assignments in the sugar industry.

Mr. HEADING: That will never be necessary, because rather than having too much milk we shall never have enough.

Mr. Collins: You virtually have milk assignments now in the case of fresh-milk supplies.

Mr. HEADING: It will never be necessary to limit the production of milk. I take it that assignments were first introduced in the sugar industry to limit production, but it will not be very long before the Minister and his staff will be battling to get people to stay in the dairying industry. As it is a seven-day-a-week job, nobody is attracted to it.

Mr. Collins: Driving trains is a seven-day-a-week job, too.

Mr. HEADING: I am surprised that the Minister should come in with a story like that.

Mr. Collins: It is not a story, it is a fact.

Mr. HEADING: The Minister knows that railway employees work only 40 hours a week. They might work this Sunday, but they have the next Sunday off.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. HEADING: Until I see the Bill I do not know what it contains, and I am now comparing the conditions of people working in the dairying industry with those of others, particularly as the Minister drew my attention to certain matters.

As I say, the dairying industry is a seven-day-a-week industry, whereas people in most other industries work only 40 hours and usually five days a week.

Mr. Aikens: Conditions in the dairying industry should be made so good that it will be able to afford to have a 40-hour week.

Mr. HEADING: I find myself in agreement with the hon. member for Mundingburra. It is always the cry of hon. members on the Government benches that people on the land should produce more food, irrespective of how it can be done. We have to work long hours—

Mr. Collins: It is necessary to have a bit of land in order to produce food. You cannot get it anywhere else.

Mr. HEADING: We might make this question a matter of levity, but I am sure that the smile will disappear from the faces of a lot of people in a very short time if conditions are not improved. Unless conditions are improved in the primary industries, many people will be howling at the Government for something to eat—and that is not an exaggeration. This year and last year we were trying to import butter, a thing we thought would never come to pass in this country. If we improve conditions in the industry we can produce all that we require, with a surplus to export, and that surplus will help the sterling countries greatly.

Mr. Collins: Of course we can.

Mr. HEADING: I am pleased that the Minister agrees with that statement. I may disagree with the Minister on some occasions, but I know he has the welfare of the industry at heart. At the present time the Queensland industry is running under a great load. It is going to break unless something is done about it. I mention this, because it is of vital interest to every factory in Queensland. We are allowed 3.95d. a lb for manufacturing butter and it is costing anything from 6d. to 7d., and in some cases 1s. a lb. to manufacture at the present time. That is because of the drought. Every factory is drawing on its bank account to pay the price laid down for the producer. Unless something is done about it, the only result I can see is the end of the butter factories. Of course, that is unthinkable, and I am quite sure that something will be done about it before that happens. That position exists throughout Queensland today. It exists in my own factory. Our costs are between 7d. and 8d. a lb., and under the fixed price we are allowed 3.95d. a lb.

Mr. Aikens: What does it cost to manufacture under normal conditions?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope the hon. member is not going to get onto the question of the price of butter.

Mr. HEADING: I am only mentioning finance for the purpose of pointing out how it affects the position in Queensland today. That issue has to be faced. If it is not faced, we shall suffer a calamity. I commend that aspect of this problem to the Minister. It is a very vital question today.

Mr. Collins: This Bill does not refer to it.

Mr. HEADING: I accept that statement from the Minister and I will not pursue the question further. I look forward to seeing this Bill, in the hope that it will confer benefit on the industry. If it does not deal with finance, I hope that the Minister will see fit to deal with that matter very shortly.

Motion (Mr. Collins) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING.

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

AGRICULTURAL STANDARDS BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Farrell, Maryborough, in the chair.)

Hon. H. COLLINS (Tablelands—Secretary for Agriculture and Stock) (12.17 p.m.): I move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to consolidate and amend the law relating to the sale of seeds, fertilisers, growth-regulating materials, lime, pest destroyers, veterinary medicines, and stock foods, and to regulate the sale of marking preparations and testing reagents, and for other purposes.”

There is nothing alarmingly new in the measure. It is one to consolidate several Acts of Parliament. With the alteration of conditions and the introduction of many new veterinary medicines, pesticides and so on, the consolidation of the Seeds Acts, 1937 to 1941, the Fertilisers Act of 1935, the Pest Destroyers Act of 1939 the Veterinary Medicines Acts, 1933 to 1938, and the Stock Foods Acts, 1919 to 1935, becomes very desirable. It is something that has been asked for both by the people who are handling and dealing in these commodities and also by the officers of the various departments who are administering the Acts. These Acts control the quality of the various commodities designated by their names. Since they came into operation, experience and changing conditions have resulted in the use of new chemicals and different approaches to the objectives aimed at by the Acts, and so certain amendments and consolidation are now necessary. Consolidation will make for uniformity of registration and eliminate difficulties when preparations serve a dual

purpose, such as fertilisers containing pest-destroying substances, stock foods joined with veterinary medicines, and pest destroyers with medicinal virtues. Differences in the approaches of inspectors to the various preparations can now be eliminated. Whereas at present procedure varies from Act to Act.

It is proposed that seizure and forfeiture to the Crown be based on a uniform 90 days' grace in place of a difference of 30 or 90 days in the present Acts. Averment clauses are brought up to date, removing objectionable features. Warranty clauses are embodied in the Act instead of specific warranties appearing on invoices, which were more honoured in the breach than in the observance. This will save a considerable amount of time and vexatious action. Registration fees are simplified and made uniform for all preparations—at present fertilisers and stock foods do not attract registration fees. Pest-destroyer and veterinary-medicine registration fees vary at present. Licence fees to sell fertilisers and veterinary medicines are eliminated; revenue will not be lost, as an increase in registration fees payable by the primary dealer will cover this. Elimination of licences will permit of the time saved in policing them to be devoted to much more important work.

The number of forms will be reduced from 19 to 3. The appointment of a single board will facilitate matters relating to registration of certain agricultural requirements. At present there are two boards. New materials coming on the market and new usages will be embraced. Provision is made for the recognition of seeds certified by reliable authorities outside the State. Certification of mother seed will be possible. Stock foods for which claims of efficacy are made will be brought under the board's jurisdiction. Preparations found not to be efficacious after registration, due to more recent preparations coming on the market, may be deregistered when necessary. Topping will be an offence, and prohibited material refused entry to the State. This will be liable to destruction when found in agricultural requirements within the State. Advertising of formulae not considered efficacious, will be controlled.

Further, preparations for the marking of sheep, repellants—insect or animal—dip and other testing re-agents and growth regulating substances, will be controlled.

Provision is made for the registration and renewal of registration every three years of any agricultural requirement, i.e.,—

- Growth-regulating substances (hormones) (not in previous Acts),
- Pest-destroyers,
- Veterinary medicines,
- Testing re-agents (not in previous Acts),
- Stock foods prepared—mashes, meals, &c.,
- Fertilisers,
- Lime,
- Marking preparations (not in previous Act); except any prescribed agricultural requirements.

Application for registration consists of submitting in the form of a statutory declaration full particulars as to the composition of the preparation, also claims of efficacy, and directions for use when these are made. The application must be accompanied by specimens of labels that will be used for all sizes of containers, directions for use, and the prescribed registration fee.

A board consisting of seven officers of the department, the Agricultural Chemist, an entomologist (plants), parasitologist (veterinary), pathologist (plant), two veterinary surgeons, and the Standards Officer, will review the claims of efficacy for pest-destroyers, veterinary medicines, growth-regulating substances (hormones), testing re-agents (such as dip-testing chemicals), stock foods, only where claims of efficacy are made, and other prescribed agricultural requirements, before registration is granted.

The information as to the composition of any agricultural requirement for which registration is applied must be kept strictly confidential. Claims made in advertising matter must be confined to the claims approved of by the board.

For the information of the board the Standards Officer may ask for proof of the validity of any claims that are made; if this is not forthcoming within the time limit set out in the requisition, they shall be deemed not to exist.

The proposed board may recommend the cancellation of the registration of any preparation if it is considered that it is not efficacious.

As to the investigation of efficacy, application may be made by any person who manufactures, mixes, or prepares for sale, or intends so to do, or a primary dealer or prescribed person, for an investigation as to the efficacy of any agricultural requirement. The application shall be in the form of a statutory declaration setting out full details as to composition, claims as to efficacy, and directions for use, and shall be accompanied by a covenant and a sum of money not exceeding £500. The covenant provides an undertaking by the applicant to do all in his power to help in the investigation and not to publish information as to results of the investigation without the written consent of the Minister.

The applicant is required to comply with any conditions laid down with respect to the trial. The Minister or officers of the department are not bound to carry out any investigation if the Minister decides no useful purpose will be served by so doing, and the Minister may, in his absolute discretion, publish or refuse to publish any results of the investigation.

An amendment in 1941 to the Seeds Act of 1937 provided for the certification of seed. The certification of seeds is in general practice in nearly every country and provides a means whereby the purchaser can obtain supplies of seeds grown, harvested and cleaned under the supervision of the certification authorities, and certified as to their quality on some desirable feature such as quality of

hybridism, variety, strain, and/or freedom from specified diseases, resistance to disease, or other features peculiar to the plant that will be produced from the seed in question. Certified seed is sold in containers that have been sealed and labelled under the supervision of the certifying authority.

The Bill provides for a committee of not more than seven officers of the Department of Agriculture and Stock to be appointed by the Minister, which will formulate schemes for certifying seeds and put them into operation. The committee is to be assisted by a series of sub-committees, each consisting of four members appointed by the Minister. The personnel of the sub-committees may consist of members of the Department of Agriculture and Stock and/or the Department of Public Instruction, one of whom shall be selected from the committee and one other, who shall be the Standards Officer.

Provision is made for the registration of suitable areas for the production of certified seeds, these areas being subject to inspection prior to planting and during the period of growth. A register of registered areas is to be kept. The committee will have power to register or refuse to register any area and to certify or refuse to certify any seeds.

Provision is made for the Department of Agriculture and Stock and the Department of Public Instruction to grow certified seed when necessary, as in the production of mother seed.

No seed for the production of certified seed may be sown, grown or harvested from any area that is infested with any prescribed prohibited seeds, plants, or diseases. The degree of isolation from other crops of a similar kind, in order to prevent cross-fertilisation, may be prescribed.

The harvesting, threshing, cleaning, machine-dressing, or otherwise treating of certified seed must be done under the supervision of an inspector or seed certification officer.

Every package of certified seed shall have affixed thereto the prescribed seal and label by an inspector or seed certification officer, who shall not affix such seals and labels unless he is satisfied as to the origin and identity of the seed. Unauthorised persons affixing seals or labels will be committing an offence.

The labelling and sealing will be the means of indicating to the purchaser the quality of the seed. Naturally, the only seed that may be sold as certified seed will be that which is sold in sealed packages bearing the correct labels. Provision to enforce this requirement will be made. When certified seed ceases to germinate up to the prescribed standard through any cause whatsoever, the seal and label may be removed by an inspector.

An inspector or seed certification officer may supervise the cultivation of any registered area, the planting, sowing, growing, and harvesting of the crop, and the packing, cleaning, and machine-dressing of any certified seeds.

Entry and inspection are provided for, also the removal for analysis or examination of any samples of seeds or plants. Provision is made for roguing the crop, and for the removal and destruction of any plants to control disease.

The use of the word "certified" or derivatives thereof in relation to seeds other than certified seeds will be an offence. Provision is made for the recognition in Queensland of seed duly certified by competent authorities outside Queensland.

Any person who issues or publishes any document relating to seeds for sale that by implication contradicts, qualifies, or modifies any particulars authorised by the Bill will be committing an offence.

A list of growers of certified seeds who have certified seed for sale may be published, the list to set out the name and address of each grower, the hybrid, kind, variety, strain, or freedom from disease of the certified seed, and any comments considered necessary.

To date the following seeds have been certified—Hybrid maize, grain sorghum, sweet sorghum, Sudan grass, french beans, and tomatoes. The certification of papaw and cowpea seed may be expected in the future.

As for seeds for sowing, the Bill does not provide for the licensing of seed vendors. This has often been suggested, and although on the surface it is ideal, one must realise the full meaning of such a suggestion. Assuming the exclusion from licensing of vendors of 3d., 6d., and 1s. packets of seeds was granted, we should still be faced with the fact that the following persons sell seeds:—

Seedsman,
Country auctioneers and agents,
Country storekeepers,
Farmers' co-operative associations, and
Farmers.

In short, there are nearly as many sellers as buyers of seeds for sowing. Experience in licensing indicates that farmers like to buy where they fancy, and for a licence scheme to be really effective it would require a substantial annual fee, with the result that the trade would be limited to a few, and thus the small buyer would be prevented from obtaining his supplies on the spot from the local storekeeper.

Labelling of seeds is divided into two parts. When sold in quantities for use by a farmer or market gardener, the container shall be marked with the seller's or packer's name and address, kind, variety or strain of seed, net weight when packed, and such other matters as may be prescribed. This provision will be brought into operation gradually, starting with vegetable seeds and followed by farm seeds.

The second part of the section deals with the labelling of packeted seeds, pictorial or plain, made up ready for sale in small quantities for use by home gardeners. These are required to be marked with the name and address of the seller or packer, the kind,

variety or strain of the seeds, the date after which the contents should not be used, and such other matters as may be prescribed.

As to inspection and power of seizure, Inspectors will have the power to enter premises where it is suspected that any agricultural requirement or prohibited material is, inspect it, open packages, select and take samples, seize and detain, and weigh and count any such material. They may ask for the production of any necessary documents relative to the sale of any agricultural requirement or prohibited matter. The power of seizure extends to any agricultural requirement, prohibited material or advertising matter that conflicts with the Bill.

In the case of agricultural requirements that have been seized, the seller will have 90 days in which to treat them in such a way as to remove the objectionable feature. If this is not done, the goods are forfeited to the Crown.

Prohibited material would be material such as noxious-weed seeds that might be found in seeds; poisonous seeds, plants, or material deleterious to life or health found in stock foods; rice hulls in stock foods, objectionable on account of the irritation caused in animal digestive organs; or any material that might be undesirable in any agricultural requirement. While in the past such material could be prohibited and removed where possible, it was not always possible to ensure it was rendered in such a condition that it could not be used again. That is now provided for. Only too frequently have instances of the very undesirable practice of topping been resorted to; therefore opportunity has been taken to make it an offence to pack, stack, or arrange any agricultural requirement so that it could mislead a buyer. Due provision has been made for liquids and pastes that are not homogeneous.

Every buyer of any agricultural requirement has the right to refuse delivery if he suspects the goods do not comply with the requirements of the Act. He may submit a sample for analysis.

Any primary dealer has the right of appeal to the Minister if he feels he has a grievance against the action of the Standards Officer in refusing to register or in the cancellation of any registration. The Minister's decision shall be final.

Standards of quality may be prescribed, or in the absence of standards, may be guaranteed by the primary dealer as that set out in the application for registration or on the label.

That is a fairly long description of the Bill, but the Bill itself is a very long one. Although there is little in it that is entirely new in principle, it aims generally at protecting the primary producer, who is the main user of the commodities I have mentioned, from an avaricious and corrupt seller; in some cases of course the seller may be quite innocent. The Bill deals quite fairly as between the seller and the buyer, and generally is a protective measure. I think it will be welcomed by hon. members generally

because it will assist tremendously in the very important and far-reaching business of primary production. It will add greatly to the protection of the primary producer and will facilitate the inspection and control of the various seeds, pesticides, stock-licks, and the other things that have been mentioned. In that way it will improve the legislation of this State.

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) (12.39 p.m.): I should like to take this opportunity of congratulating the Minister and his officers on introducing this legislation, which I think will be of very great advantage to the officers controlling the Standards Branch. It will also be of great advantage to the primary producers of this State who buy the various commodities covered by it. Agricultural standards covering the various things set down in the Act is something that has been needed in this State for some time, rather than a consolidated measure.

It is pleasing to note that the Bill has a reasonable title, the Agricultural Standards Bill of 1952. When I saw the notice on the sheet, I thought we were going to have one of those long titles for which our legislature is becoming far too noted. It is good to note that it has the simple and descriptive title I have mentioned, instead of a Bill to regulate seeds, fertilisers, pest destroyers, veterinary medicines, marking preparations, and so on.

I should like to pay a compliment to Mr. Coleman, the officer in charge of the Standards Branch of the Department of Agriculture and Stock. He does a very good job in handling the important work that comes to him, and in addition to that is exceedingly co-operative.

Mr. Collins: And very efficient.

Mr. NICKLIN: That is so. No doubt Mr. Coleman is responsible to a great extent for this Bill.

The setting of standards for the products which are covered is very important when one realises that a man's livelihood may depend upon the quality of the seed he gets, the quality of fertiliser he uses and the quality of veterinary medicines he obtains. It is essential in regard to these commodities to have very rigid and stringent control for quality and standard, and that is particularly important with the prevailing high prices. For example, seeds that not so many years ago were a few shillings a lb. now cost pounds for every lb. Fertilisers that were comparatively cheap are now so dear that if you have to buy a ton of fertiliser you need to obtain an overdraft to pay for it. With the high prices that obtain now, the farmer needs some reasonable assurance that he is buying a commodity of a standard that he desires and that he is getting value for his money.

In seeds, quality is of first importance. There are crops that have to be sown within a very short period. If the seed that is sown proves to be faulty and you get 15 per

cent., 20 per cent. or 25 per cent. germination, you have to forego that crop for that season, because there is not sufficient time to obtain further seeds and replant. The average grower, who buys seeds from a reputable agent, of course expects that the seeds will be up to standard.

While dealing with seeds, I mention particularly French bean seeds. At the present time they cost about £30 a sack. It is not so many years since you could get half a ton of those seeds for the same money. During recent times there has been a considerable amount of trouble in regard to the quality of French bean seeds. Growers have encountered bad germination and virus diseases. Under the direction of Mr. Coleman, the officers of the department have done a very good job in supervising the quality of these seeds. The percentage of germination has been improved and attention has been given to virus diseases and similar troubles. Their efforts in that direction have saved the growers a considerable amount of money. After a sample of seed has been passed by the department, the growers can be reasonably sure that they will get what should be expected when they sow these seeds, a germination of about 90 per cent. The same can be said of many other seeds.

During war-time the control of seeds was taken over by one of these wonderful Commonwealth boards. It had been the practice of co-operative companies that dealt in seeds to import carrot and bean seed from New Zealand and they were always able to get seed of splendid quality, a high-testing seed, but all these seeds were grabbed by this board. I remember an occasion when the board sent us a sack of carrot seed. Hon. members know the size of a carrot seed and they can appreciate how many seeds there would be in a sack. The seed was tested by the department and it gave a 5 per cent. germination. The price charged for it was a pretty fantastic one too. That shows the need for having an efficient department to deal with these things.

In recent years fertilisers have been sold more or less through limited channels and their standards have been high and I do not think the department has had any trouble with the samples it has taken. I well remember a time when I bought various alleged fertilisers at a very high price, or it was a high price to me because at that time I had very little money to spend. They were of no value whatever. It was claimed for one of them that it came from Mt. Etna or some such place, whereas in fact I think it was just taken off the side of the road. It was said in the case of another that it came from Toowoomba and that it was a fertiliser of great value, whereas it had no fertiliser value at all.

Mr. Collins: It could vary very much according to the soils to which it is applied.

Mr. NICKLIN: Certainly, but this had no fertiliser value at all. However, the department, backed by this legislation, can deal adequately with these things and bring

about an efficient standard. It is important from the economic point of view, from the point of view of the growers that the standard should be high, especially today when sulphate of ammonia costs over £30 a ton. Every day the prices of almost all fertiliser mixtures are going up and up.

Mr. Collins: It will be over £40 a ton if the subsidy is withdrawn.

Mr. NICKLIN: Yes, it is only the subsidy that keeps the price somewhere round its present figure. However, the very efficient system of checking on the part of the Standards Branch has in recent years eliminated many of the evils I have mentioned in regard to seeds, fertilisers and other things. There is still a necessity for very keen supervision and that is being carried out, as we know from the various reports from the different branches in the department. For instance, in the report for 1951 we were told that the department destroyed 12,000 lb. of vegetable seed that was not up to standard. Just imagine the disappointment and the loss to the growers if the seeds had been sold to them!

Mr. Aikens: It is a wonder that they were not put into packets and sold in the chain stores.

Mr. NICKLIN: The chain stores are very closely checked today and it is virtually impossible to sell dud seeds at the present time and get away with it. There are reputable seed merchants who retail large quantities of seeds in packets, and they are jealous of the reputation of their seeds and take great care to see that no seeds that are not good are sold in their packets. They send representatives around regularly to inspect the packets of seeds held by agents and they take out and destroy any seeds that are out of date or that they suspect may not be up to the standard they wish to maintain. Numbers of these firms are just as jealous of their reputation as the department is keen to see that the best of seeds are sold to the public.

In regard to the composition of the board that will control the operations of the consolidated measure, it seems to have been wisely selected and consists of seven officers of the department who are conversant with the needs and the quality and standard of the various products covered by the Act. Mr. Coleman, the present Standards Officer, is a member of the board. I do not think we could have a more efficient board, and I am sure it will administer the Act wisely and well to the advantage of the seed-buyers.

I am glad the Minister has simplified the procedure in respect of license fees. He is going to register the primary dealers. We know that sometimes the cost of collecting the license fees was more than the amount received from them. It is a good thing that the Minister is not thinking of licensing all who sell seeds because, as he rather facetiously said, he would find a multitude of seed vendors to be licensed.

I shall be interested to read the alteration made in the averment clause, which should be examined very carefully. The principle of the averment clause is not altogether desirable, but in many instances it is unavoidable in certain legislation.

I congratulate the Minister on eliminating a few forms. A reduction from 19 to 3 is not bad; possibly in the near future we might get it down to a single unit form.

As I said at the beginning, I think this legislation will be very useful because it consolidates four Acts that are being administered by one officer. We shall examine the Bill with interest.

Mr. MORRIS (Mt. Coot-tha) (12.55 p.m.): I support the Leader of the Opposition. It is certainly excellent to see a number of Acts being consolidated and brought up to date, as is being done in this Bill.

I do not believe any State department of Queensland is doing greater service than the Department of Agriculture and Stock. I say that not only from my own very limited experience but from what I have gathered from the many people who are engaged in primary industry. It has been my experience, as well as that of other people, that one only needs to call on the services of an officer in this department, whether in the veterinary, horticultural or any other section, and advice and help are given freely and willingly. I venture to say that the advice given is worth many hundreds of pounds to primary producers, the smaller men of the State in particular.

A factor has been operating in connection with the sale of seeds in Queensland that I believe was very unsatisfactory and I am pleased to see that the Minister is tidying that up. It relates chiefly to the sale of bulk seed. I know it is possible to buy certified seed. As a matter of fact, I paid 15s. an ounce for some a little while ago and it was one of the best investments I could have made and I believe that people who do buy certified seed know they are getting something worth while. My complaint deals more with the sale of bulk seed. A little while ago I wanted to buy some maize seed. I went to about half a dozen seed merchants in the city and finally obtained the last bushel one man had. I asked what brand it was and he said, "I cannot tell you anything about it."

Mr. Aikens: What type of maize was it?

Mr. MORRIS: He could not tell me what type it was. All he could tell me was that it was maize seed. That is being tightened up by this Bill and I am pleased to see that it is being done.

Mr. Aikens: Did you get a good crop from the maize seed you bought?

Mr. MORRIS: As a matter of fact, there has not been time yet but I hope it will be a good crop. But that was not an isolated

instance. I had a second somewhat similar experience within 10 days. I wanted some pumpkin seed and sent somebody else in to buy it. I asked him to get Queensland Blue, not that I know whether that is a particularly good seed but I asked for the Queensland Blue. This friend came back and gave me the seed. I asked whether it was Queensland Blue and he said, "The cove who sold it to me did not know whether it was Queensland Blue, Queensland Green, or what it was. All he said was that it was pumpkin seed."

I want to make it clear that to me as a mere amateur it does not matter perhaps whether the seeds I bought were in fact the type I wanted. My real reason for making these comments is: there are many people whose whole livelihood depends on the production of the very best commodities they can produce on their farms. They buy infinitely greater quantities of seed than we amateurs and therefore it is not only desirable but absolutely essential that those people deriving their income from such a source, should know that when they go to a seed merchant and ask for a particular brand of bulk seed they will get that brand. It may be they want that seed because it is suitable to their locality or to the time of the year in which they are planting. With every package, whether it is a matter of a few pounds, a bushel or a few bushels, the purchaser should receive a sales docket or invoice on which is recorded the brand of his purchase. Quite possibly that matter is being tidied up in this amending Bill—I think it is. It is only a fair thing from the seller's point of view and the buyer also should be protected.

We know that there is protection in sealed packets of seed. I made passing reference to the purchase of an ounce of certified tomato seed at 15s. and might say that one could get seed of fair quality for half the price of certified seed. I think the principle of providing, as the Minister explained, sealed packets wherein certified seed is contained is a good one because the purchaser knows that he is getting something really worth while. I do not know to what extent the Minister intends to go in the control of growth-regulating materials. He has told us that this matter is covered by the Bill and I am glad to hear that, because it is a development in relation to agriculture. It was in the experimental stages a year or two ago but today many farmers are using this material in an experimental way. I think the practice will make rapid progress in this country and that being so it should be controlled to the utmost.

For those reasons I commend the Bill.

I conclude with this comment, and I make it again: I believe that the Department of Agriculture and Stock is helping very extensively indeed the small farmer to make a success of his work. As this country is passing through perhaps the gravest crisis in its history this department is fulfilling a great need and I congratulate the department on its work.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah) (2.20 p.m.): I wish to join with my Leader and the previous speaker in complimenting the Minister on the legislation that he has brought before the Committee. There are of course occasions when we do not agree with the Minister, but on the whole I believe he seeks earnestly to do what he can in the best interests of the portfolio that he holds.

Particularly do I wish to compliment, too, the officers and staff of this department, who richly deserve all the help and encouragement it is possible to give them. This department contributes perhaps more than any other department of the Government towards the well-being of our country, and the members of its staff are doing a very important and worthy work. I have in mind particularly the officers of the department at Kingaroy. I cannot speak too highly of what they are doing and its value to the country, and the way in which they apply themselves to their tasks is very commendable. I refer particularly to Mr. Kerr, who is a trusted and valued officer of the department at Kingaroy. No doubt there are many such men throughout the State. A good deal more could be done in encouraging the production of essential commodities if the department placed more of those men in the country areas. I have in mind the Guluguba-Wandoan area, where my brother-in-law grows seeds of various kinds. The nearest officer of this department is stationed in Toowoomba, and on every occasion when my brother-in-law requires his services, he has to travel all that distance. Again I stress the need for more men so that this work can be more adequately covered.

I wish also to compliment those men on the land who give up a good deal of their time to co-operating with the officers of this department. I admit that they eventually derive some benefit in the increased prices they receive for their products, but on the other hand they have to sacrifice quite a lot.

Everyone realises that to get the best results in production, the procedure laid down in this Bill will have to be followed. I have in mind that some years ago I bought some Rhodes grass seed only to find eventually that a very big percentage of it was wild Rhodes grass. The result was that it had to be ploughed out, but only after the property had become infested with it. I am very conscious, therefore, of the importance of the provision contained in this Bill for the certifying of all seed.

In conclusion, I again compliment the Minister and his staff on the very important and valuable work they are doing. They should be encouraged to go further, and I again stress that more officers should be made available in country areas.

Motion (Mr. Collins) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING.

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

FAUNA CONSERVATION BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(Chairman of Committees, Mr. Farrell,
Maryborough, in the Chair.)

Hon. H. H. COLLINS (Tablelands—
Secretary for Agriculture and Stock) (2.27
p.m.): I move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to consolidate and amend the law relating to the conservation, propagation, and the care and protection in Queensland, and the introduction into and the removal from Queensland of fauna, and for other purposes.”

It is proposed in this Bill to give further protection to the fauna of this State, particularly our native fauna. We have some very rare species, such as the platypus, the native bear, and the echidna. It is proposed that the Fauna Protection Act of 1937 be amended to meet various shortcomings in the machinery and scope of the legislation.

The draft Bill is divided into parts so that interlocking provisions are combined under suitable part headings. This will clarify the meaning of the Act and facilitate administration.

The Bill proposes to restrict the taking of pests, such as wild pigs, dingoes, flying foxes, crows and starlings, on a sanctuary to landholders, lessees, their agents and authorised persons. The present Act permits any person to enter a sanctuary and kill pests, which nullifies the restrictive sanctuary requirements inasmuch as it provides a person found shooting on a sanctuary with a legal excuse for being there. The amendment is necessary because if a person is caught in a sanctuary shooting game out of season his usual excuse is that he has gone there for the purpose of shooting wild pigs. Any authorised person will be able to go to a sanctuary to shoot wild pigs, or any other pests.

The Bill proposes also to emphasise the degree of protection more clearly and provides special protection for fauna such as the koala, platypus, and echidna. They are fauna that are permanently protected and will not be removed from permanent protection at any time except by alteration of the Act.

The Bill proposes to declare certain fauna pests, and this automatically includes pests or vermin declared under the Local Government Act, the Sugar Experiment Stations Act, and the Stock Routes and Rural Land Protection Acts, except marsupials, which will be specifically declared. The group of animals for which improved conservation in this State is most desirable for commercial and other reasons are the marsupials. The Bill will also provide protection for all fauna except pests and open-season fauna. At present the Act protects only specified fauna. An open season may be declared for all except a limited number of permanently protected fauna.

Actually, there is nothing very new in the measure except that it will give more complete instructions to the protectors of fauna

than formerly. It gives certain inspectoral powers for the protection of fauna and enacts that that power shall reside in the hands of responsible officers.

I commend the Bill to the Chamber. It will help in protecting some very valuable fauna, it will allow us to do all those things that are reasonable, and it will be of benefit to the State.

Mr. NICHOLSON (Murrumbidgee) (2.33 p.m.): I am pleased to have the honour of discussing the Bill on behalf of the Opposition at its introductory stage. As most people are aware, I am a native of New Zealand and in the last 12 months I was able to revisit my native country after an absence of 25 years, and there I saw the results of the ravages that have occurred amongst the native fauna and the bird life of that country. The country has been almost denuded of bird life and I should like to impress upon the Minister and the Government the need for taking care in the framing of legislation like this to see that in giving protection to one form of native life they do not destroy another such as bird life. The Minister has already told us that there are open seasons for certain species of fauna in Queensland and amongst them is the opossum, which has been responsible for wiping out almost all the bird life in New Zealand. It has become such a pest in that country that it is a greater menace than the rabbit.

Mr. Collins: That is the Liberal Party.

Mr. NICHOLSON: I thank the Minister for giving me an opportunity to explain. It is only since the advent of the Holland Government in New Zealand, who took over from the Labour Government and had to clean up the mess, that an open season has been declared. They have made it so open that motorists are going out of their way to run over the opossums on the roads at night. More opossums are killed on the roads than rabbits.

In protecting one species of native fauna you may be sounding the death-knell of another species.

I commend the Minister for his special mention of our favourite native fauna, the platypus and the native bear. I live close to a sanctuary, and the illicit shooting that goes on during week-ends as well as week days has become a menace to the people living on Bribie and the mainland. I believe the clause that provides that only authorised persons shall be allowed to shoot game pests in a sanctuary, is a wise one, and it will give greater powers to the inspectors whether they are honorary or in receipt of payment. The amendment of the Bill is worth while from that point of view alone. We know that Australia has become known throughout the civilised world for the platypus and the native bear. The platypus is to be found round Bribie Island and they exist in creeks in the Maleny, Kilcoy and Wamuran districts.

Mr. Decker: We have a species of platypus round Dayboro.

Mr. NICHOLSON: As the hon. member for Sandgate interjected, we have a species of the platypus in tributaries of the Pine River in the Dayboro' and Petrie districts. It is an indication that owing to the protection afforded these species have increased greatly in numbers.

One of my main reasons for getting to my feet was to impress upon the Minister and the Government the need for being careful when protecting one type of game that they do not hasten the extinction of another type. I commend the Bill and feel sure hon. members of the Opposition in general will support it.

Mr. DECKER (Sandgate) (2.41 p.m.): I support the Bill. We all know that with the spread of settlement we are pushing our native fauna farther and farther out and have now reached the stage at which we can look only to our reserves to protect them. I know that the Government declare sanctuaries from time to time, that the department erects notices in prominent places to the effect that the area is a sanctuary and that the killing of fauna is prohibited and I know that we have both paid and honorary rangers, but it is hard to police these areas. Many youngsters and others enter the sanctuaries purporting to shoot pests but actually with the purpose of destroying wallabies and other fauna.

The hon. member for Murrumba mentioned Bribie Island. It is not known to many people in Brisbane that on that island we have a considerable number of native fauna. There we have the wallaby, the kangaroo, the opossum, the dingo and fox pests, the emu in great numbers and hundreds of migratory birds. In the channel itself we have the black swan. It is a shame to hear the indiscriminate shooting that is allowed to go on in the area without any respect at all for our animals. It is not uncommon to see boats carrying people with firearms who are shooting not only cormorants but also these black swans. These swans have become so tame from the protection they have enjoyed that shooting them has become as easy as would be the shooting of the swans in our Botanical Gardens. It is questionable whether by making these birds and animals so tame in our sanctuaries we are doing them a good turn. Actually when we have wallabies so tame that they come to the huts for food we subject them to the danger of being shot by young people who believe they are performing great feats of woodcraft and marksmanship in doing so.

I think that we shall have to go a little further in the matter of notices and the appointment of honorary rangers on our sanctuaries. We have to take action to show that above all things the department is prepared to back up its acts by action. In an area such as Bribie Island, which is very close to Brisbane, we could at periods of the year, delegate to various people—the police or paid inspectors—the authority to go there and catch some of these vandals who are constantly operating and making the island a playground of destruction. The

Government have every member of the committee behind them in any move to give extra protection to our native fauna. There is room for the extension of the notices in sanctuaries. We could look at the map of Queensland and see what areas have been set aside as sanctuaries and if we think that the number is not sufficient to maintain our native fauna it is about time we created new sanctuaries. As a member of Parliament I should hate to have the job of honorary inspector, but—

Mr. Collins: We do have quite a number of prosecutions.

Mr. DECKER: I feel that if I had the power I would take drastic action to prevent this wanton destruction of our animal and bird life. It is time we put our support behind the Minister in bringing in the most stringent of measures possible for the protection of the animals we desire to maintain. We have a duty to protect the animal, bird and plant life of the State and should introduce very stringent measures to achieve that object. If the Minister takes that action for the preservation of our native fauna he will have the whole-hearted co-operation of this side of the Chamber.

Motion (Mr. Collins) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING.

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

STATE CHILDREN ACTS AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Farrell, Maryborough, in the chair.)

Hon. W. M. MOORE (Merthyr—Secretary for Health and Home Affairs) (2.51 p.m.): I move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the State Children Acts, 1911 to 1943, and the Adoption of Children Acts, 1935 to 1941, in certain particulars.”

In support of this motion I intend briefly to tell hon. members of the work that is being carried on at the headquarters of this department in Brisbane in a rather unpretentious building and in a very quiet atmosphere, work that is very humane and very important, as it affects the future of a number of future citizens of this State. I refer to the work of the administration of the State Children Act, which affects vitally the lives of a section of the young of our community. I will give the Committee some information about that work and then refer briefly to what the amending Bill proposes to do.

This Bill seeks to amend two Acts, the State Children Acts and the Adoption of Children Acts, and with all sincerity I say that they are perhaps two of the most important Acts we have. The department that administers them makes a very sincere

attempt at ensuring a happy and healthy life for many of our unfortunate children. Thanks to the experience, the sincerity, the industry, and the untiring efforts of Mr. Smith and his staff, a very high degree of success has been achieved, and I trust will continue to be achieved. The amending Bill will simplify and modernise the methods under which this work is carried on.

I propose briefly to give the categories of children dealt with by the department and the reasons for our intervention. They can be divided into two fairly wide categories. We have first of all the children who are bereft of normal home life and the care and guidance of parents. The department endeavours to give these children a life as near as possible to the life they would live normally with their parents. The next group of children are delinquent children, and the work of the department in regard to this more unfortunate category is that of rehabilitation and training to help them to become better members of the community.

It is interesting to review some of the reasons why these children become State wards, and to outline the methods by which each group is handled. Children come under the care of the department because of the loss of both parents, and to a lesser degree because of the loss of one parent. Another cause is the inability of either parent to care for them in the way in which we think they should be cared for. We may have a widow with a young child or a number of young children, who has to go out to work and finds that she has to place the child or children in the care of the State, in order to be free to earn her living, to help in their upbringing, and to provide for herself. Then we have the widowers whose children are placed in the care of the State. A widower may find that he cannot attend to his work and home duties too and cannot get anybody to look after his children. Then we have the more unfortunate children who are deserted by their parents. To a lesser degree we have children who for certain domestic reasons are neglected by their parents and are not getting a fair chance in life. We take over the upbringing of those children and put them under the care of others.

Then there is the second group, delinquent children or uncontrollable children, who hon. members know, come under the care of the State by reason of court orders.

The first group I referred to would be children who can be kept in their own homes. It is the aim of the department, naturally, to provide as far as possible, a normal life for those children, and the best way of doing that, of course, is to give the necessary financial assistance to the mother and/or other relative, so that the children may be kept in their own homes. It is in this aspect of State assistance that our endeavours meet with most success. The parent or relative receives financial aid to keep the children in their own homes or the homes of relatives, so that the children may get the advantage of a normal rearing.

At times there would appear to be on the part of mothers a certain misunderstanding of our work. All members of this Parliament in the course of their parliamentary duties have had to attend to a duty such as this, but we find that some mothers are reluctant to seek the aid of the State Children Department. Such a mother may fear that her child will be taken from her or that there might be some undue interference in the child's family life. It has been my experience as Minister in charge of the department that there has been that misunderstanding and I think most hon. members will agree with me on that score.

Dr. Noble: How much do you pay for each child?

Mr. MOORE: It is £1 at the moment. The Bill contains full information on that point.

I come now to the second phase of the work, which relates to legal adoption. Many children are legally adopted and that process, if I may so term it, has been very successful. Many children have got as good a rearing as they would have got had they remained with their own mothers and fathers. That process is also carried out where the parents are dead. Then we have to deal with the adoption of illegitimate children, mainly infants, and the administration is confidential. Everything is gone into very carefully and the practice has been highly successful.

Mr. Kerr: Is any payment involved in straightout adoption?

Mr. MOORE: That phase will be mentioned during the consideration of a clause in the Bill. These children, to all intents and purposes, become the real children of the adoptive parents.

Dr. Noble: They become their legal children.

Mr. MOORE: Yes, and they get the same rearing and develop the same outlook as the other members of the family. Strange to say, we have had cases where parents who have a number of children have increased the size of their families by the adoption of others.

Mr. Luckins: And they adopt more than one.

Mr. MOORE: Yes. It is an excellent idea and if parents can afford it they are to be congratulated on doing this very admirable work. I know of a number of cases where diffusion with their own children has been highly successful.

Mr. Morris: You have a number of people waiting to adopt children?

Mr. MOORE: Yes, there is a big waiting list. If the department is satisfied that everything is in order the children are freely allowed to be adopted. The adoptive parents are very carefully screened, all circumstances are taken into consideration. There are consultations with doctors and hospital authorities in an endeavour to place the child,

according to its forebears or relatives or antecedents, in families where it will fit into a suitable family.

Mr. Morris: Is there any period of probation before final adoption?

Mr. MOORE: No. The hon. member's interjection has opened up an important phase of the matter. Sometimes parents find that for the time being they cannot look after their children and would like to place them under the control of the department. They allow them to be taken over for a period by somebody else. It is not legal adoption. These children are sent to foster parents and sometimes to institutions and officers of the department keep a close check on them.

Mr. Morris: What action can you take after a child has been adopted if the foster parents prove unsatisfactory?

Mr. MOORE: I do not think that any legal action has been taken but there are always negotiations in these matters.

Mr. Keyatta: The court has power to act and take the child away.

Mr. MOORE: That is so. That is a very drastic action and it would not be taken unless the circumstances were very serious.

Now we come to the children who are placed in institutions mainly conducted by religious bodies and the State. First of all there are the delinquent children who for some reason or other cannot be controlled. While on that subject I wish to state that with my knowledge of the department I think the relatives of the children and the children themselves are particularly fortunate in the high standard of these institutions. I have had personal experience of children in my own electorate. In one case, owing to unhappy family conditions, the children were sent to the Salvation Army Home at River-view. I had to go there one day to open a building, and prior to my visit the parents of these children had made a request to me to have the children returned to their home. I discussed the matter with Mr. Smith, the director of State Children, and he advised me against it. I also obtained information about the parents and the state of their home and I decided it would be unwise at that stage to allow those children to return home. I do not think the children had been actually convicted. I went up to the home and a group of children formed a guard of honour when the official party came along. I was particularly impressed by the happy outlook of the children and the way they were dressed. I was also impressed by the general appearance of the place. Mr. Smith said to me, "See that couple up there?" I said, "Yes." He said, "They are your mates." They were two of the healthiest children and it occurred to me then that it would be a tragedy to allow those children to go back to their home, where they would probably get into trouble again.

I have visited various institutions in connection with Christmas trees and prize-giving days and I have always been impressed by the general demeanour and good health of the children. I think we are particularly

fortunate in having such excellent homes in our midst where these unfortunate children are being looked after. I have no hesitation in saying that I think an immense amount of good is being done by all the institutions that are doing this very humane work.

Then we have our industrial schools and farm homes to which delinquent lads are sent. Westbrook is one of them. There they are looked after properly and taught to do certain things. If parents feel on occasions that the children might be allowed to go to relatives or other people in the State, Mr. Smith has agreed and allowed them to be assimilated into the community under the supervision of our inspectors. The instruction these children get at these farm homes makes them very useful citizens.

The State children in industrial schools and farm homes are wards of the State until they are 18 years of age and their property is under the control of the State until they are 21. From time to time we have had the experience of allowing these young people to go from the farms to work in the country where they have had the benefit of a good home life and after having served their respective periods they take their places in the world as useful citizens.

I have endeavoured to give a brief resume of the categories in which the children who come under our care are placed. Our treatment of the children and the administration of the Act have been kept modern over the years. We believe that these wards of the State should be treated in such a way as will allow them to take their places in the community and keep abreast of the times. With that end in view, we have done certain things and it has become necessary now to amend the Act in certain particulars more or less to ratify some of the departures we have made.

The main matter that arises in the amending Bill concerns increased payments to State children. The Government make payments to foster parents and institutions who care for State children. At present the Act provides for payment to mothers and other relatives who have children living with them. These payments are prescribed from time to time under regulations attached to the Act, but the payments to State wards in institutions and in foster homes are specified in the Act, and in order to increase payments to those persons, an amendment of the law is necessary. I freely admit that we have at times exceeded that specified amount and I am now taking the opportunity of introducing amending legislation to ratify what we have done and to give us the right to do it in the future. Humane motives have at all times been the basis of our administration of the Act and our director is extremely well endowed with humane qualities and characteristics.

The amending Bill also abolishes the prohibition against the adoption of children of over five years of age. This will bring the Act into line with the Adoption of Children Act.

Mr. Morris: It will prohibit the adoption of children over five years?

Mr. MOORE: The section of the State Children Act, which says that no child over five can be adopted, will be repealed and it will be brought into conformity with the Adoption of Children Act. The Bill merely takes that section out of the Act.

There is a very important matter in the Bill dealing with the procedure for the recovery of money due to the department under maintenance orders. This matter crops up very often and at the moment it is not operating as successfully as we should like and therefore we propose to alter the Act, bringing the section dealing with the question up to date as regards the amount that can be recovered. Sometimes there are arrears and the amendment will simplify the recovery of this money.

Mr. Luckins: Will it give the department power to go to a court and recover maintenance for a son or daughter where the father has neglected the child?

Mr. MOORE: Yes.

Another amendment makes for the better protection of State wards in their employment. New sections will be put in the Act to bring the law up to date, mostly concerning wages, conditions and the amounts to be deducted from wages for board.

We also propose to amend the Adoption of Children Act but there is only one clause for that purpose. We are endeavouring to strengthen the Act in regard to the prevention of trafficking in children. The present Act is rather restricted. In other States it has been found that trafficking in children has been engaged in and we propose to make the Queensland Act stronger so that it will prevent the possibility of payments being made to any person for the adoption of children. As I have just said, this is happening in other States and it might happen here. Whilst we are amending the Act we propose to strengthen it in that respect. I am sure that every hon. member would be opposed to trafficking in the adoption of children and the payment of money in connection therewith.

Mr. Luckins: Would a single girl have the opportunity of herself arranging the adoption of a child by some relative without the consent of the department? Is she outside the control of the department?

Mr. MOORE: Not if the child is legally adopted; she can make mutual arrangements. This clause deals with money changing hands.

Mr. Luckins: That would come into it?

Mr. MOORE: Yes. I have attempted to give the committee a brief outline of the Bill and the reasons for it.

Mr. MORRIS (Mt. Coot-tha) (3.20 p.m.): The introduction of this Bill is of great interest to me. I think all members of this Chamber, irrespective of the side on which they sit, have been very much interested in the operations of the State Children Department. During the debates on the

Estimates, a great deal of interest has always been shown in this department, because it is felt by us all that its work has a great effect on the development of this country.

Here again, I feel that it is right and just that I should say what I believe to be a fact, that is, that this department is administered with the greatest of sympathy and understanding, and is doing for Queensland a very fine job indeed. It is a very great pleasure to me to be able to say that sincerely. I, and many of my colleagues, have had occasion to get in touch with this department frequently, and always we have met with the greatest of courtesy from Mr. Smith and his assistants, and the greatest co-operation and assistance possible.

The first matter mentioned by the Minister was the increase in the payments to foster parents, and he said that he was introducing legislation to ratify increases that had been granted recently. Such increases, of course, are necessary under the present economic conditions, and I hold the opinion that the Act should be amended so that it will be unnecessary for Parliament to ratify any future alterations in these payments. The Act should be so framed that increases can be granted automatically as circumstances warrant.

In regard to increasing the age of adoption, I understand that the age was five and is now to be 21. That is a very progressive move. I do not think it was wise to limit the age to 5. I should like to tell the Committee the system that operates in England in the adopting of children, one feature of which is worthy of consideration in Queensland. There is in England an organisation called The Anti-Adoption Society and I understand that it is a very strong body indeed. Over the years no Government in England have ever agreed to the adoption of a child until after that society had carried out its investigations. It is non-sectarian and non-political, and takes a very keen interest in the welfare of children. The system in England is that if anyone wants to adopt a child a good deal of investigation is carried out, as in Queensland, as to the suitability of the foster parents. If they prove suitable in every respect, the child is sent to their home for approximately six months. If, after that period of probation, the foster parents have taken a liking to the child and the child has settled down readily in their home, the adoption is made legal. I see a great deal of merit in that principle, because, however eager a married couple may be to adopt a child, a couple not able to have a child of their own, it is quite conceivable that a youngster may come to their home who for some reason or other, some odd angle of character or something else, may not prove to be the ideal child for adoption in that home, despite the fact that for the first day or two the couple may think it is the ideal child. For that reason and that reason alone I believe the principle of deferring the final adoption for six months is a very good one.

Dr. Noble: Does that apply to children of all ages?

Mr. MORRIS: I realise it would not be a suitable provision as far as a very young child was concerned, nor would it be wise to make it mandatory, but I can see much wisdom in the principle of a probationary period before the final adoption takes place.

The Minister mentioned that there has been a strengthening of the hand of the Government in regard to the recovery of maintenance money. Of course, that is only right, sound, and fair.

I move to the next matter mentioned, the protection of State wards in employment. As I understand that that subject will be dealt with more extensively on the second reading, I will not say anything more at the present stage.

The Minister said that this Act will strengthen the hand of the Government in its efforts to prevent trafficking in young children. Of all the aspects of this amending legislation, there could be none with which we would agree more heartily. Of all the miserable and sinful things that people can do, the worst is to treat any young child unfairly by trafficking in it. Any person who does that should attract to himself all the penalties of law. I am very pleased to know that the Government's position in that regard is being strengthened. There is not one of us who would quarrel with the Government on any action it might take in that regard. Trafficking in children is one of the lowest things that one can imagine.

I have been approached by people at different times who desire to adopt children. Some of them have gone to the department direct and have proceeded with the necessary arrangements, but I remember particularly one couple whom I took to the department. I have been in contact with those people ever since they adopted a child and I am happy to say that there has never been a home in which a child has been more welcome and that there has never been a better home for any child.

It is a grave matter. Many people are anxious to adopt a child, but the waiting list is long. I understand that today hundreds of couples who are childless through no fault of their own are anxious to adopt children. Surely the problem could be overcome? There must be in the countries of the world that have been ravaged by war many homeless children and children who are orphans in the real sense of the word, although their parents are living. Can we not get in touch with these homeless motherless and fatherless children in other parts of the world in order to bring them here to fill the empty homes crying out for children here? Surely we can do something in that connection? I feel absolutely certain that there are hundreds of homeless children or orphans in the war-ravaged countries who could be brought here to homes waiting and longing for them here. Perhaps some action can be taken by the State Government or by the Federal Government. Perhaps the State could initiate some action in that respect which would serve not only one good purpose or two but even three. First of all, the

State would be doing a great service to the child itself by giving it a loving home. It would also be doing a great service to the foster parents in gratifying a desire that has actuated them for years and we should be bringing to Australia the greatest and best migrants of all.

Mr. Moore: The British Government have decided that so far as homeless children in that country are concerned the adoption shall be home adoption.

Mr. MORRIS: I did not refer to Great Britain alone. Other countries have been ravaged by war. Nor did I mean that we should interfere in the domestic life of any country. Far be it from me to suggest that we should force them by any means at all, but there must be children longing for a place in a happy home. I should like to know whether there is any information on the subject and whether the State Government can do something in this connection.

I am very happy to support the Bill and I look forward to more detailed information about it on the second reading.

Mr. MUNRO (Toowong) (3.32 p.m.): I commend the Minister on introducing the Bill and on behalf of hon. members on this side. I express our general satisfaction with the very good work that is being done by the State Children Department. However, there are one or two matters in connection with the subject that to some extent cause us concern. I referred briefly to some of these points in November last when the Estimates for the Department of Health and Home Affairs were under discussion and I am glad to say that the Minister then indicated that these and other points were receiving the sympathetic consideration of his department. The fact that the Bill has been brought forward, coupled with the explanation of its terms by the Minister, indicates that these problems are in fact receiving the very sympathetic consideration of his department.

The fear that I felt in my mind arose from the fact that it is well known that in the last year or two there has been a marked increase in cases of child delinquency, and that cases of neglected children are becoming more prominent. In his report of 31 July last year the Director of State Children made two statements. First he said that broken and disrupted homes, drunkenness, and vice were the chief causes of neglect, and later he said that a neglected child can soon become a delinquent one. The actions generally of the State Children Department are directed to remedying the ills that come from these cases of broken and disrupted homes, drunkenness, and vice, which have been classed as the chief causes of delinquency in children.

In view of the substantial increase in the number of problems of this kind I feel that we should apply our minds when suitable opportunity offers to the question whether anything more can be done to prevent these conditions that give rise to so many cases of illegitimate and neglected children. These children first cast an additional burden on the

State and secondly, notwithstanding the best efforts of the State Children Department, are not able to grow up on terms of equality with those in more favourable circumstances.

Mr. Moore: You would not suggest that is another work of the department.

Mr. MUNRO: I would not. I agree that it is a little outside the terms of the Bill. I feel that in all these problems there are some we cannot solve immediately—perhaps not in this generation—but in considering any measure by way of remedy we should always look to the cause to see what we can do to eliminate it. I realise that we cannot make all people equal. I realise it would be wrong to attempt to make all people equal. But I think we must do everything we can to give each baby that comes into Australia an equal chance under the most favourable conditions that we can provide. In relation to that matter I am glad to have the Minister's assurance that in the adoption of young babies hereditary influences are being and will be given proper consideration. In general, I commend the work of the State Children Department and its administration.

Before sitting down I should like to touch on a further point that to some extent arises from the suggestion made by the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha that we should perhaps bring into Australia greater numbers of children, or neglected children, from other parts of the world. My remarks relate to children who are in Australia. I visualise the case of parents from perhaps one-time enemy countries or overseas countries other than Great Britain who may come to Australia with young children who may subsequently become neglected. I visualise the case of young women from similar countries who, after arriving here and before applying for naturalisation, may give birth to illegitimate children who may subsequently require the care and attention of the State Children Department. I mention this because I know that in other social services there are limitations to the extension of these benefits to migrants in certain stages of the process of becoming Australians. At a later stage I should like the Minister to give us some further information as to how the prospective rights of these young children are being protected. The principle that I suggest should be applied is that irrespective of the origin of the parents or the child, once the young child enters or is born in Australia it is our responsibility. Whether we view the matter from the viewpoint of what is humane or what is essential for the development of the Australian nation, I do suggest that in those circumstances the young children should receive the fullest rights and protection enjoyed by our natural-born Australian children.

Mr. F. E. ROBERTS (Nundah) (3.42 p.m.): I think we all realise and appreciate fully the wonderful work that has been done over the years by the Director of State Children, Mr. Smith. He and his deputy, Mr. Harris, might be termed fathers in the true sense of the word to the biggest family in Queensland, and they have done excellent work.

I desire to refer first to the raising of the adoption age to include children over five years old. Down through the ages, probably one of the most tragic sights one could see has always been the forgotten orphan child. In more modern times, not only in Queensland and Australia but in other parts of the world, considerable humanitarian work has been done in coping with that tragedy. In Queensland, through our department, we have endeavoured to do it for our young children.

We know also that there are many youngsters who, in effect, are still babies even though they have attained the age of five years and who, through a tragic circumstance, whether as a result of accident or disease, have lost either both parents or one parent, the surviving parent being unable to make a home for them. In other cases—and this is all too frequent—homes are broken as a result of divorce and separation between husband and wife. Those children, having known the love and affection of a home during their very tender years, are suddenly left without that loving care and find themselves to some extent facing the world alone. Even in these days, a child of six, seven, or even older who faces life knowing that in effect it is not going to have a father or mother for the rest of its days, has a cold outlook indeed. It is most proper and most timely that this Act be amended to include provision for the adoption of such children as those who have, nevertheless, attained the age of five years.

Another provision in the Bill increases the allowance paid to foster parents. I agree with all hon. members who have spoken that in view of the cost of living today some such provision should be made, and that where that provision has already been made without statutory authority, statutory ratification should be given to it.

In addition to the private parents who care for State children, we should on this occasion have some regard also to the various institutions that take the place of individual foster parents. As other hon. members have done, I have had the opportunity from time to time of seeing the wonderful work being done by various churches in regard to these children. In my own electorate and adjacent to it I have Church of England and Roman Catholic homes for State children; in other parts of the metropolitan area I have seen similar work being carried out by the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational Churches, as well as the Salvation Army. I do not want to try to make the list exhaustive because it is possible I could overlook some denomination doing similar work. I have seen the work being done by these particular churches on behalf of those children, and it certainly gladdens the heart of any man or woman who is interested in the welfare of these very important individuals—units of our society—to see what is being done for them in these homes. Certainly they have not perhaps the same individual care, perhaps they have not the same feeling of satisfaction with their own particular home as the ordinary child or as the child who has been adopted into a

home by a man and woman who desire children of their own and whom they can call their own, nevertheless these children are contented and well cared and well provided for, and I think we can commend the work being done for them by these various church institutions. We know also that many private people contribute to the humanitarian work these institutions are doing, but that is not at all times sufficient, and if we as a State Government, through the State Children Department, can lighten the financial burden upon these institutions in any way, I think such a move would have the whole-hearted co-operation of every hon. member. From what the Minister has told us such a provision will be made under this Bill, and I feel that it will have the wholehearted co-operation of the Committee.

All members will agree with me when I say that in view of the wonderful work Mr. Smith has done over the years it is with regret that we know he is approaching the age when in all probability he will have to hand over his fine achievements to somebody else. This may be the last occasion when he will have the opportunity of making recommendations to the Government for inclusion in a Bill to amend the legislation under which he has been working for so many years. That being so, I feel that the Committee will agree with me that we can say to Mr. Smith, "Thank you very much, for the wonderful work you have done for the children of Queensland during the years you have been in the State Children Department."

Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. F. E. ROBERTS: I heartily support the measure and, as I said previously, feel confident that it will receive the whole-hearted support of every member.

Mr. LUCKINS (Norman) (3.51 p.m.): In commending the Minister on introducing this Bill, I should like to say that Mr. Smith and his staff have done a wonderful job over the years. On many occasions I have pressed for better consideration of these children, consideration that in my opinion is long overdue. However, I am very pleased to know that the Minister now has the matter in hand. I am pleased, too, to hear that more consideration will be given to the foster parents of these children. In my opinion, they have been neglected by this Parliament for many years. However, I will not go into the past because I realise the conditions that have been obtaining in this country.

I want to refer particularly to the excellent work that has been done for this State by Mr. Smith and his assistants. I know of no more important civil servant in this State than Mr. Smith. The delicate nature of the work undertaken by him makes it of the highest importance, as it touches the very life-blood of our people. When a child who is born out of wedlock is taken away from its mother, every step must be taken to ensure that it is placed in the care of capable hands and in a suitable home. I have had quite a lot of experience of this department, and Mr. Smith's knowledge of human nature and

humane touch cannot fail to be appreciated by all those who have been associated with him. By instinct he can detect failings in people who imagine, in the same way as most of us, that they have none.

I am pleased also that the Minister proposes to bring to book those wayward fathers who neglect their wives and children. I am sorry to say that in our courts of law too much law and not enough common sense is brought to bear in these cases. In my opinion the State Children Department should be empowered, through its director, to attend the court and demand that these fathers should be brought to book for the neglected condition of their children. We cannot blame the mothers, because we all know from experience that there is no greater love than that of a mother for her child. In the majority of cases men neglect their homes as the result of drink and the evils associated with it.

Mr. F. E. Roberts: There is many an unnatural mother too, you know.

Mr. LUCKINS: I realise that, but the majority of cases of neglect are due to drunkenness on the part of the father.

All those children who come under the care of the State will, I trust, find excellent homes fitting for any child.

I mention my next point particularly to the Minister, because I think the responsibility for rectifying it may fall on him. I refer now to neglected children in the housing camps of this city. Magistrates have drawn attention to it, and I think it is time the director of the department was asked to investigate the conditions prevailing in these places so that action may be taken to rectify sub-normal conditions. Magistrates have drawn attention to the neglected and delinquent children who are in these camps. Unfortunately they have not had the opportunity of being reared in decent homes and many of them are neglected because their parents will not accept the responsibility of looking after the children they have brought into the world.

I am pleased that there is to be a review of payments to foster parents. In view of the present high cost of living, payments should be increased to the extent that the foster parents will be able to give the children the amenities of life that they deserve. They should be able to afford to dress the children properly and gave them a trip to the seaside now and again so that they will not feel that they are receiving less than other boys and girls. A few extra thousand pounds out of the revenue of the State will not be missed and it will be of great benefit to the children who are being reared by foster parents or the State. I pay tribute to those parents who have adopted children and who are bringing them up in their homes.

It is to Mr. Smith that much credit is due because he has investigated the condition under which the children are to be brought up, and approved of the parents who adopt the children.

Dr. NOBLE (Yeronga) (3.57 p.m.): I endorse the remarks of the hon. members who have already spoken. Much praise is due to the officers of this department and the Minister for the humanitarian, sympathetic, and responsible manner in which the department is administered.

I should like to mention also foster parents who take children into their homes and care for them. During the course of my practice I have been into a number of these homes and I have been impressed by the sympathetic way in which these foster parents care for the children. The financial assistance given to them, however, is at times quite inadequate in view of the fact that they have not only to feed but also to clothe the children and give them the other amenities of life. I am indeed very pleased to know that the department intends to increase the amount given to these foster parents.

The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha raised a very interesting point. He mentioned the possibility of a probationary period before adoption was legalised. I do not think I quite agree with his proposal. Such an arrangement may mean an unsettled period in the life of a child. I should prefer that the probation should be in the hands of the child itself, if the child has reached an age at which he could determine the matter. If he felt that he was not as happy in the home as he was in the orphanage, he should be taken back to the orphanage.

I do not understand the attitude of some men who marry and bring children into the world, and then in an irresponsible and unsympathetic manner leave home and leave the care of the children to the wife. I was recently approached by an elector, a very fine type of woman, who was left with two young children. She is in a nice little home which she keeps spotlessly clean, and the maintenance allowance of 30s. a week, paid by her husband, is quite inadequate. She gets also a proportion of a widow's pension. I have discovered since that this man has an income of £30 a week. I think that in such cases where children are neglected the penalty should be very severe. Besides having to pay a statutory amount for the assistance of the children the fathers who leave the mothers to look after the children should be called upon to pay a very big proportion of their income to the mothers who are keeping the homes while the fathers are away enjoying themselves and evading the responsibilities of fatherhood.

I shall have a careful look at the Bill when it is introduced. At the moment I give the Minister full credit for bringing it down because it is very necessary.

Motion (Mr. Moore) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING.

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

The House adjourned at 4.4 p.m.