Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 25 OCTOBER 1968

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Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. D. E. Nicholson, Murrumba) read prayers and took the chair at 11 a.m.

ERROR IN DEPARTMENTAL REPORT

Mr. SPEAKER: I have to inform the House that, an error having been discovered in the report of the Under Secretary for Mines, which was tabled in the House on 10 September, I have authorised an erratum slip to be issued by the Government Printing Office to all recipients of the report.

QUESTIONS

INQUIRY INTO EVIDENCE AGAINST POLICE IN CRIMINAL TRIAL

Mr. Houston, pursuant to notice, asked The Premier,—

(1) Concerning the case of Ian Robert Spiers before Judge McLoughlin and the evidence presented, did he institute an enquiry? If so, who carried it out and has the report been received?

(2) What were its findings and what action does he intend to take on them?

(3) If a report has not been received, what is the reason for the delay as all material facts were fully prepared, put before the Court and a decision made on them within one day?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) "An investigation is proceeding. Until this is completed no further comment can be made."

SUBURBAN RECEIVING OFFICES, TOWNSVILLE REGIONAL ELECTRICITY BOARD

Mr. Coburn for **Mr. Aikens,** pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Mines,—

With reference to my representations over the years on the subject, when will the Townsville Regional Electricity Board decentralise its facilities for the receipt of consumers' account payments in order to eliminate, as far as possible, the long and exhausting journey from outlying suburbs to the present central reception centre in Stokes Street and where will the suburban centres be situated?

Answer:—

"I am advised that the Townsville Regional Electricity Board is continuing with investigations and negotiations on the establishment of suburban offices in the Townsville area for the payment of electricity accounts. Until the results of these activities have been considered by the Board an estimate of possible locations or dates of establishment of any suburban centres cannot be given."

INSTALLATION OF STOVES IN GOVERNMENT RESIDENCES

Mr. Coburn for **Mr. Aikens,** pursuant to notice, asked The Premier,—

(1) What basis is used to determine whether a gas stove or any other type of stove is installed in Government houses and institutions in areas where both gas and electricity supplies are readily available?

(2) Will he have inquiries made as to the truth of allegations that a Gas Company official, Frank Brown, frequently and lavishly entertains high Government officials at his house on the Gold Coast and, if he does, whether this has any bearing on the type of fuel stove installed by the relevant Government Departments, as Brown is alleged to boast that it does?

Answers:—

(1) "In so far as Government residences are concerned, it was the practice prior to 1958 for the Department of Works to install gas stoves where town gas was available and wood fuel stoves in other areas. Since 1958, the provision of gas stoves where town gas is available on reasonable terms has been continued, as replacement of the existing gas installations could not be justified. In other areas where electricity is available on reasonable terms and connection of stoves is permitted by the Supply Authority, electric stoves have been provided. In rental homes erected by the Housing Commission, the decision to install gas or electric stoves is based on an economic analysis which has regard to capital, operating and maintenance costs. This also applies in the case of Government Institutions."

(2) "I am informed a Mr. Frank Brown is an employee of The Gas Supply (Queensland) Pty. Ltd. The Department of Works has had no dealings with Mr. Brown, while those of the Housing Commission have generally been with Mr. Brown's superior. No 'high official' of the Housing Commission associated in any way with the determination of the type of stove to be used in Commission houses has been entertained by Mr. Brown at the Gold Coast nor placed himself under any obligation to Mr. Brown or to any member of the company."

NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING, GEORGE STREET, BRISBANE

Mr. Newton, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Works,—

(1) What is the contract price for the new Government offices being erected in George Street next to the Government Printing Office?

(2) What period is allowed for completion of the contract?

(3) What will be the saving to the Government if the contract is completed ahead of schedule?

(4) What would be the basis of the saving?

Answers:—

(1) "A tender amounting to $7,048,697 was accepted for the erection of the Office block."

(2) The time specified for completion was 143 weeks. The due date for completion is October 23, 1970."

(3 and 4) "There will be no saving to the Government if the work is completed ahead of schedule. Some advantage would be derived from earlier occupation of the building."

TRANSFER OF TOBACCO LEAF QUOTAS

Mr. McKechnie, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Primary Industries,—

As Coolmunda Dam is completed and holding 20,000 acre-feet of water and some local re-arrangement of tobacco-growing areas is necessary, what is the general position regarding the transfer of quotas, particularly when (*a*) the tobacco farm will be inundated, (*b*) the farm is sold to another grower, (*c*) the same grower wishes to transfer his quota to another farm and (*d*) the owner has retained his quota without exercising it whilst awaiting the benefits of Coolmunda water and now may or may not take up his quota?

Answer:—

"The position relating to the transfer of Grower's Basic Quotas for tobacco leaf in the circumstances stated by the Honourable Member is (*a*) Where tobacco farms will be inundated by the waters of the Coolmunda Dam, the Tobacco Quota Committee has already indicated that it will approve of the forfeiture of the existing quota and the allocation of an equivalent new quota to the same person on a new block of land held by the quota holder. (*b*) Where a tobacco farm is sold by an existing quota holder it is necessary for that quota holder to make application to the Tobacco Quota Committee for transfer of the quota to the purchaser. A certified copy of the Contract of Sale must be provided in order that the Committee may establish the *bona fides* of the sale and the ability of the purchaser to service any debt. (*c*) In cases where a tobacco grower considers that the soils on his existing farm are unsuitable or inadequate for the production of tobacco leaf, the grower may apply to the Tobacco Quota Committee for the forfeiture of his existing quota and the allocation of an equivalent quota in his name on another area of land held by him. The Honourable Member will appreciate that the circumstances in such cases can vary widely and each application is considered on its merits. The basic principle adopted by the committee is however to approve of applications where the grower genuinely desires to continue in tobacco production and not merely to effect a sale of his quota. (*d*) On the recommendation of The Tobacco Leaf Marketing Board it has been adopted as policy that no tobacco grower in South Western Queensland will have his Grower's Basic Quota forfeited for failure to produce until the expiration of two seasons after water became available from the Coolmunda Dam. The reason for the adoption of this policy was that it would be unfair and unreasonable to deprive a grower of his quota because of his inability to produce during recent drought years in the absence of adequate water for irrigation."

INSTALLATION OF SPRINKLER FIRE ALARMS IN GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

Mr. Bromley, pursuant to notice, asked The Treasurer,—

(1) As it is policy not to insure Government buildings, will the new buildings being constructed for the Government be fitted with sprinkler fire alarms?

(2) For the same reason as well as for safety purposes, will schools being built or constructed in the future have sprinkler fire alarms installed?

(3) If the Answers to Questions (1) and (2) are in the negative, what is the reason?

(4) What was the cost to the State of the Supreme Court fire and any other fires in Government buildings or schools during the last three years?

Answer:—

"The Honourable Member should address his Question to the appropriate Minister."

REMOVAL OF AMBERLEY STATE SCHOOL

Mrs. Jordan, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Works,—

When will the present Amberley State School be moved to the proposed new site and how many additional classrooms are planned at the new site?

Answer:—

"As a new site has not been acquired for the Amberley State School no indication can be given as to when the existing building will be moved. Planning of additions cannot be commenced until the new site is obtained."

ADDITIONAL CLASSROOM ACCOMMODATION, RANGEVILLE STATE SCHOOL

Mr. P. Wood, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

(1) What additional classroom accommodation is planned for Rangeville State School, Toowoomba, for next year?

(2) Will he consider providing adequate staffroom accommodation and facilities?

Answers:—

(1) "One classroom."

(2) "Plans are at present being prepared for the provision of additional staff-room accommodation and facilities. When an estimate of cost of this work is available consideration will be given to approving of the project in relation to available funds."

FOUR-LANE SECTION, SANDGATE ROAD

Mr. Melloy, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Mines,—

Further to his Answer to my Question regarding the construction of the four-lane highway on Sandgate Road, when will the first stage, Downfall Creek-Zillmere Road, be completed?

Answer:—

"Departmental planning provides for completion by the end of the current financial year."

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

Mr. Melloy, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

(1) Is he aware that (*a*) the absence of the Vice-Chancellor, Sir Fred Schonell, is causing concern and embarrassment to officers of the administration of the University because of the seriousness of the existing situation, (*b*) enquiries regarding the non-functioning of certain bodies and committees within the University cannot be answered by members of the staff and (*c*) the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor L. J. Teakle, is not clothed with decision-making authority while acting for Sir Fred Schonell?

(2) When was Professor Teakle appointed to his acting position, is his authority clearly defined and, if so, what is its extent?

(3) Will he give immediate attention to the serious situation at the University in order to prevent further serious disruption?

Answers:—

"In reply to enquiries made I have been informed that:—

1. (*a*) The temporary absence of the Vice-Chancellor is not causing concern and embarrassment to officers of the Administration of the University. The Vice-Chancellor's illness has not prevented him from attending at the University periodically. While at home he has also dealt with matters requiring his personal attention. (*b*) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor is not aware of any inquiry which has not been answered. (*c*) Under section 14 (2) of the University of Queensland Act of 1965, the Senate has empowered the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, during periods of absence of the Vice-Chancellor, to act for him in all matters not affecting major University policy, which requires a decision of the Senate."

(2) "Professor Teakle was appointed to the position of Deputy Vice-Chancellor from January 1, 1963. His authority during the absence of the Vice-Chancellor is as stated in 1 (*c*) above."

(3) "There is no disruption at the University at the present time."

AIR POLLUTION AT KAIRI

Mr. Wallis-Smith, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Health,—

Has he received a full report on air pollution by Monver Stockfeeds at Kairi? If so, what action has he taken to quickly overcome the health hazard and restore normal living conditions to the twelve houses continually blanketed by dust?

Answer:—

"The State Health Inspector at Cairns has submitted a report of an investigation carried out on October 8, into the dust nuisance arising from the premises of Monver Stock Feed Company at Kairi. The report stated the Atherton Shire Council in a letter dated August 23, 1968, advised the company that unless evidence was produced to show that action was being taken to abate the nuisance, further action would be taken under section 86 of *"The Health Acts, 1937 to 1968"*. The company has produced evidence that a dust arresting machine has been ordered and the expected date of delivery is October 25. A further report is expected."

OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL, ATHERTON

Mr. Wallis-Smith, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

Further to the Answers to my Questions on November 7, 1967, and March 19, 1968, concerning the establishment of an Opportunity School to serve the Atherton Tableland and as a complete survey of the area concerned has been carried out—

(1) What was the result of the survey?

(2) If a school is to be established, will he favourably consider Atherton as a suitable location?

(3) When will the school be opened?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) "A survey of slow-learners was carried out in schools of the Atherton–Mareeba area from September 16–25, 1968. The results of this survey are still being analysed and inquiries are being made regarding the availability of accommodation and the feasibility of transport services to serve central classes if they were to be established. It is not possible to state at this stage where they might be situated or when they might be opened."

APPOINTMENT OF POLICE OFFICERS, ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

Mr. Wallis-Smith, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Lands,—

In view of his Answer to my Question on October 24 relative to the appointment of police officers at all Aboriginal communities, when will the applications be called?

Answer:—

"I am not in a position to state when applications will be called. As I have previously informed the Honourable Member, the matter will be given consideration."

BEACH PROTECTION WORKS, MACHAN'S BEACH, CAIRNS

Mr. Donald for **Mr. R. Jones,** pursuant to notice, asked The Premier,—

(1) Has the Government received a request for financial assistance for the erosion-threatened homes at Machan's Beach, Cairns?

(2) Have plans for beach protection in the area been drawn up and submitted?

(3) Is there a delay in approving of the application and, if so, what is the reason?

Answers:—

(1) "An application for an allocation of loan funds of $20,000 was received from the Mulgrave Shire Council on August 15, 1968, for beach protection works at Machan's Beach and Yorkey's Knob."

(2) "No."

(3) "The Shire Clerk was informed on September 9, 1968, that consideration will be given to the provision of Loan/Subsidy funds following submission of working plans and estimates of costs. These details have not yet been submitted by the Council."

VEHICLES AT BAMAGA ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

Mr. Donald for **Mr. R. Jones,** pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Lands,—

(1) How many motor vehicles are presently assigned at Bamaga settlement, of what type are they and to what duties are they assigned?

(2) Will an increase in the establishment be made and, if so, by what type of vehicle and to what officers and work will the vehicle be allotted?

Answers:—

(1) "Seventeen vehicles and registered trailers are assigned to Northern Peninsula Reserve Area, Bamaga. They are:— QYA 139, timber jinker; QGC 343, Fargo 3-ton tip truck; QGE 734, Willys jeep; QGF 991, Willys jeep; OV 389, Vespa motor scooter; QGG 310, Bedford RLHC truck; QYA 178, timber jinker; QGG 436, Willys FC170 truck; QGG 650, Bedford school bus; QGH 606, Bedford 2-ton truck; QGH 607, Bedford 3-ton truck; QGH 774, Willys 30-cwt. truck; QGJ 293, Bedford 3-ton tip truck; QGJ 416, Bedford 5-ton truck; QGJ 646, Bedford RLHC truck; QYA 293, timber jinker; QGJ 652, Toyota 2-ton truck. In addition, there are:— 1—D4 bulldozer (currently being replaced); 1—D6 bulldozer; 1—D7 bulldozer; 2—farm tractors; 1—Caterpillar 12 power grader (being overhauled in south prior to going forward). Vehicles are assigned multitudinous duties consistent with their type and, of course, subject to direction of the local manager. As such vary from day to day, consistent with needs and pressures in the general administration and development of the community, it is not possible to detail specific duties for each vehicle. The Honourable Member, I understand, has visited Bamaga and observed the vastness of the complex, consequently I am rather surprised that he would direct such a Question which, in order to provide duties of each vehicle, would occasion much detailed documentation and time, the value of which is not at all clear particularly as he has had ample opportunity of observing and gaining at first-hand the information he now seeks."

(2) "No."

STUDENT-DRIVER TRAINING SCHEME

Mr. Thackeray for **Mr. R. Jones,** pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Transport,—

(1) In view of the high casualty ratio of the 17–29 age bracket in road accidents, has consideration been given to granting financial assistance for the installation of equipment and a lay-out that would stimulate good driving practice by road safety bodies?

(2) Has his attention been drawn to the introduction of such schemes in Manchester, England, Tasmania and Western Australia and, if so, has consideration been given to the implementation of a student-training scheme by similar methods?

Answer:—

(1 and 2) "I am aware of formal training schemes in existence in various parts of the world and am familiar with those in use in Tasmania and Western Australia. I have personally inspected the Mount Lawley project as also have several State officers. There are many aspects to the problems posed by the young driver and these are at present under expert examination by a sub-committee of the Australian Road Safety Council. During the year, the Australian Automobile Association sent the Chief Traffic Engineer of N.R.M.A., on an overseas tour of the United States and Europe primarily to evaluate driver education including high-school driver education. This officer's report is not as yet available. I appreciate the Honourable Member's interest but I must point out that there is as yet, considerable divergence of opinion on the efficacy of driver training and whether the

results are commensurate with the high costs involved. In considering the merits of these schemes, it is extremely difficult to obtain reliable figures substantiating their usefulness quite apart from the emotional appeal. If the Honourable Member has available to him any information which could be of value in assessing such schemes, I would be pleased if he could make it available to me."

PARKHURST INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

Mr. Thackeray, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Industrial Development,—

(1) With respect to Parkhurst industrial estate, have any companies inspected the area with the option of purchasing an industrial site? If so, how many?

(2) What is the size of each area and what are the terms attached to each?

Answers:—

(1) "Enquiries have been received from five organisations regarding the availability of sites within the Parkhurst Industrial Estate, Rockhampton."

(2) "The enquiries related to sites from ½ to 10 acres. One company has submitted an application for lease. Until negotiations with the company are finalised the matter is, of course, confidential and must be treated as such. However, the terms and conditions will follow the usual pattern based on the applicant's development programme. The tenure of lease will be thirty years and the rental will be assessed on the basis of 3 per cent. of the capital valuation of the land."

WYNNUM COURT HOUSE AND POLICE STATION

Mr. Harris, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Works,—

(1) In view of the congested nature of the area behind the old wooden Court House, Wynnum, will he consider the demolition and removal of the unsightly structure in order to provide more parking space for Court House staff, police staff, C.I.B. staff, visiting staff and magistrates?

(2) If so, will he further consider disposal of the building either to a church organisation or a charitable institution which has expressed a desire to acquire it?

(3) If he will not demolish or dispose of the building, will he urgently consider remodelling the building to assist in alleviating the cramped and crowded conditions existing at Wynnum Police Station, pending the erection of the proposed new station?

Answers:—

(1 and 2) "It has been proposed that a new police station be erected at Wynnum but funds have not been available for the purpose. It is considered that the old Court House will be required for occupancy for police purposes while the new station is under construction and consequently it has been retained.

(3) "No request has been received from the Police Department for use of the old Court House for police purposes. If a request is received consideration will be given to preparing it for occupancy but no major remodelling will be undertaken."

PAPER

The following paper was laid on the table:—

Report of the Legal Assistance Committee of Queensland for the year 1967-68.

RURAL FIRES ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

(The Acting Chairman of Committees, Mr. Smith, Windsor, in the chair)

Hon. V. B. SULLIVAN (Condamine—Minister for Lands) (11.29 a.m.): I move—

"That a Bill be introduced to amend the Rural Fires Acts 1946 to 1964 in certain particulars."

When the Rural Fires Act was brought into force in 1948 the only areas wherein an organised control was being exercised on burning operations were those where forestry reservations existed. The Act, therefore, imposed in those areas reasonably strict control over fire lighting and for this purpose designated these areas as special fire zones in which the forest officer in charge of the reserve was, by virtue of his office, the fire warden for the district.

The special fire zone is defined as all State forests, timber reserves and national parks and all surveyed parcels of land whose nearest boundaries are within 1 mile of the reservation.

With the development of the rural fires organisation and the appointment of private individuals as fire wardens came a corresponding increase in fire consciousness and the acceptance on the part of the rural population that the permit provisions and other safeguards on fire lighting were essential for the proper control of wildfires.

The result has been a gradual extension of the controls, which were originally restricted to special fire zones, to other districts so that at present, 1,390 appointed fire wardens, whether they are private individuals or forest officers, operate under identical conditions, and the special fire zone is retained in the Act mainly to cover the automatic appointments of forest officers as fire wardens.

This development is most desirable from the point of view of fire control, but, coupled with expanding forestry activity, it has given rise in places to a situation wherein a rural

dweller may well find himself in a gazetted fire warden's district with a fire warden appointed by the Governor in Council and, at the same time, in a special fire zone wherein a newly appointed forest officer may be fire warden by virtue of his office.

To eliminate the possibility where it could appear to a landholder that there exists a form of duplicated authority, it is proposed to amend section 19 of the Rural Fires Act so that the declaration of a fire warden's district will automatically amend the special fire zone if any part is included in the warden's district. This will enable both the Rural Fires Board and the Department of Forestry to adjust boundaries in their interest and in the interest of landholders.

The fire warden's district is regarded as the most important feature of the fire organisation and is declared only after the fire situation in the district has been properly evaluated. Once this has been done and the district gazetted, all residents in it are entitled to accept a single authority for the issue of permits, which is the purpose of the amendment to section 19.

An amendment is also proposed to section 20, which provides that the Minister may ban the sale, use and possession of fireworks. The existing provision allows an absolute prohibition but does not allow of a conditioned prohibition such is as considered to be desirable.

In line with legislation in other States of the Commonwealth, and after considering requests from various sources in this direction, it has been concluded that a restricted period of sale and a form of permit for large-scale fireworks displays provide the most satisfactory means of control whilst still allowing a reasonable use and enjoyment of fireworks. The proposed amendment is designed to give effect to this.

The Bill otherwise is designed to amend the principal Act in minor particulars.

It is proper at this time to review the situation in Queensland in consideration of the developments that have taken place since the last amendments were made to the Act in 1964. Overshadowing all other incidents in that period was the calamitous devastation of Hobart and its environs during the Tasmanian bush-fires on 7 February, 1967. As is by now well known, 53 people died directly as a result of those fires, nine others died subsequently of causes attributable to the fires, and several thousands were rendered homeless. More than 1,000 square miles of country were burnt, and between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. the fire spread at the rate of 2,800 acres a minute. Over the six-hour period from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. the damage caused totalled $40,000,000, or about $7,000,000 an hour.

I might mention that I, with three other hon. members, namely, the Minister for Transport (Mr. Knox), the hon. member for Yeronga and the hon. member for Mt. Gravatt, was in Tasmania on the day of that fire, and we personally viewed the devastation. We were not actually in the fire but we drove into the area at night-time and saw the devastation that had been caused. It was certainly an experience that I hope I never have again because of the suffering of the people involved.

Mr. Bennett: Did you do anything to help while you were there?

Mr. SULLIVAN: The people who were there were handling it very well. The people of Hobart and district rallied and came to their assistance. We were in Tasmania to look at containerisation as it relates to shipping. We were on the wharves, where a shipping company had made one of its large sheds available as a refugee centre. I was very impressed at the way the people of Hobart rallied to assist the refugees. I mention this only because I believe it made us realise—although this matter was not my responsibility at that time—how important it is to keep our fire-fighting services at a high standard of efficiency.

The temperature on that day was 101 degrees, with a humidity of 14 per cent., and with winds of 65 knots. Hon. members can realise how hot that was for Tasmania, and how favourable were the conditions for a fire. For some weeks afterwards Tasmania was sitting on what might be called a tinder-box. The next day we drove back through the highlands of Tasmania, which had experienced a very good winter. We saw tinder-dry grass 2 feet high throughout the grazing areas. If a southerly wind of the same velocity had blown up, the fire could have wiped out virtually the whole of the island. We must guard against these conditions here.

Naturally, a disaster of this magnitude has been thoroughly investigated by competent authorities to determine the causes and effects of the fires and, if possible, to recommend action to prevent any recurrence of such a tragedy. Such reports have been prepared and submitted to the Tasmanian Government, and we in this State would be foolish to ignore the lesson of the Tasmanian fires just because similar fires have not happened here.

It is regrettable to record that, in the first place, the Hobart tragedy was the result of a number of factors common to all bush-fire disasters. It is estimated that there were 89 fires burning in the Hobart area prior to 7 February, 1967, either being permitted to burn free or allegedly under control. That was standard practice in the area and, indeed, it was accepted generally where such fires were not menacing lives or property. However under the extreme conditions of Tuesday, 7 February, these fires behaved exactly as those of Victoria in 1939; they joined forces in a vast confluence of flame beyond any capacity of the available sources to control.

As I said, the weather conditions at the time were freakish. The official figures gave readings of 101 degrees at 1 p.m., with a relative humidity of 14 per cent. and a wind velocity of 65 knots. Those conditions had not previously been recorded in the district and may not recur for a hundred years. But freakish conditions do sometimes occur and it is perhaps not realised that in late November, 1967, this city had a temperature of 101 degrees and a humidity of 8 per cent.; and perhaps it was only the absence of high winds that saved us from facing a peril similar to that faced by the citizens of Hobart in 1967.

It is fairly well known that October and November are Queensland's fire-hazard months. Last week and this week restrictions have been placed on the lighting of fires. If the temperature today was as high as it was then, and the humidity as low, with the winds that are blowing today and with the dryness of the country apparent all around Brisbane and, for that matter, throughout the State, we would be in considerable danger.

I quoted those figures to indicate that it is important for this State to consider the views of the experts who have investigated the Tasmanian fires, and, from their experiences and opinions, apply the lessons to our own State before we might have to face up to a similar situation.

Victoria, New South Wales, Western Australia and Tasmania have upgraded their rural fire organisations after bush-fire disasters, and it is only within our own State that the necessity still remains to take action before these things happen.

One of the main criticisms made by the Tasmanian committee of investigation was that the development of bush-fire brigades had been allowed to lag behind the appointment of fire wardens, and, when trouble struck, wardens were without the organised fire services to deal with the situation. In this respect Queensland has not taken the same approach and has endeavoured to provide each warden with a volunteer brigade to back him up.

The present situation is that there are 921 bush-fire brigades operating in Queensland and 1,400 fire wardens. These fire wardens include a number of forestry officers and, as some brigades are divided into several fire wardens' districts, it may be said that no warden in this State would be without some organised brigade at his command.

I think it is timely to pay a tribute to these voluntary wardens and to the officers and men of the bush-fire brigades, many of whom, while this debate is proceeding, are out dealing with bush-fires or otherwise engaged on fire control—on the basis of a voluntary community service.

If, however, the voluntary brigade is to function effectively it must from time to time be inspected, advised and perhaps at times even directed and certainly encouraged by those trained to carry out this function, and in a large State like ours inspecting over 900 bush-fire brigades is beyond the capacity of the present staff of the Rural Fires Board.

Cabinet therefore recently gave approval for the provision of additional funds to enable the appointment of extra field officers. It is proposed that in each district (southern, central and northern) there shall be appointed a senior inspector and an inspector to work under the former's direction and control. This will mean the appointment of three additional field officers and will double the present outside staff of the Rural Fires Board.

These additional officers will be called upon not only to deal with the routine organisation and inspection of brigades but also to handle the special problems which have arisen, such as the serious denudation of the Cairns hinterland by fires which have patently affected the value of the country from a tourist viewpoint and have left it open to the more serious threat of erosion; the similar problem in the Cattle Creek Valley, where the repeated escape of cane fires has caused extensive siltation of streams and erosion of hills; the problem of the conversion of brigalow lands to pasture and the resultant large-scale fire risk which the improved pastures present; and the promotion of techniques of hazard-reduction burning to be carried out by brigades to minimise damage from such fires as do get out of control.

I am sure that many hon. members, particularly the hon. members for Barcoo and Mackenzie, whose areas envelop the brigalow lands development areas, are aware of the fire hazards that exist there. I have spoken to the hon. member for Barcoo of the problems that will arise in the Arcadia Valley. I am very aware of them, because I had some experience of this danger in my own area in the early days when scrub was being cleared and burnt and pastures established. The problem does not exist today, because the country has been cut up and cultivated and fires can be controlled. When I was in the Arcadia Valley early this year and the Moura area a couple of weeks ago to see the pasture development that is taking place there, it was fairly apparent that, with the grass now being carried in those areas, some careful fire-control measures must be carried out.

Mr. O'Donnell: That is why I appreciate the emergence of the plough there.

Mr. SULLIVAN: That is very true. As the country is cut up and cultivated, barriers are formed from which fires can be fought, but there is a real problem in the initial stages when the whole area carries a heavy body of grass.

The Tasmanian report states that had such hazard-reduction burns been undertaken on a reasonable scale in that State, the damage from the fires would have been significantly reduced. It is of interest here to note that an inspector of the Rural Fires Board reports that hazard-reduction

burns in an area south of Monto have changed the area from one of high hazard to one of comparative safety.

It would be true to say, however, that in the more urgent necessity of providing the State with an adequate bushfire brigade system, the extension of this type of work has not been able to be promoted as widely as we would like, and, as the bush fire brigades are now established and working satisfactorily, it is proposed to concentrate on the preventive action in which hazard-reduction burning plays a prominent part.

It is, of course, not intended to relax in the organising of more and better brigades. Twenty-eight brigades were registered in the last financial year, and their areas of operation are constantly being extended.

Consideration has been given for some time to a widening of interests represented on the Rural Fires Board itself. In this respect the present body has on it officers of the Lands, Forestry, Local Government and Primary Industries Departments and the Police Force, all of whose interests are in some way affected by fire, and an officer of the Department of Labour and Tourism, which administers the Fire Brigades Acts.

It has now been decided to incorporate in the board representatives of the Railway and Main Roads Departments, whose operations involve the use of fire in rural areas and with whom an increasing area of co-operation has been established. In recent operations in North Queensland both these departments have co-operated with the board and the Forestry Department in the establishment of "match trap" firebreaks on the Kuranda Range Road, an operation in co-ordinated departmental effort which is very encouraging.

In addition, it is proposed to extend an invitation to the United Graziers' Association to take a seat on the Rural Fires Board so that to that board's deliberations there will be brought a voice representing the views and experiences of a large section of the rural community who use fire as an integral part of land management.

The investment of additional funds in the upgrading of the rural fire organisation and the increasing of its field staff is seen as a sound one to enable this State to learn by the experience of others and not to have the lives and property of citizens destroyed before taking adequate measures to prevent the devastation and horror which bush fire can bring.

This expansion that I have outlined will perhaps result in further amendments to the legislation from time to time. The amendments that I have outlined to the present statute will be one further step in the improvement of our legislation on bush fire control.

I commend the Bill to the Committee.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba—Leader of the Opposition) (11.50 a.m.): Any measure introduced into this Chamber that will help to eliminate the possibility of tragedy or loss from fire in any part of the State certainly is welcomed by the Opposition. I assure the Minister that hon. members on this side of the Chamber will examine the proposed Bill not with any idea of trying to score politically but simply with the idea of making suggestions that they think may make its provisions even better than those that it now contains.

On my last visit to Tasmania I saw the results of the disastrous bush-fire near Hobart. It was my second visit since the fire occurred, and two things struck me particularly: firstly the immensity of the damage and the luck that some people had relative to their homes; secondly, how the country itself had overcome many of the problems then presented. The action taken by the Government of Tasmania and the Tasmanian people to prevent a recurrence of such a fire is all to the good; they are to be commended for taking it.

No doubt the Minister noticed, as I did, that after the fire had been put out there were cases in which brick homes and homes built of what is usually considered fire-resistant material had burst into flames and burnt, while the fire had scouted round old wooden homes nearby. Those who owned the old wooden homes certainly were lucky. If one traced the path of the fire, it was very difficult to find reasons for its taking a certain course or for its having diverged from a course. The point I wish to make is that it is almost impossible to predict the path of a fire that is out of control, and no-one can say that he is safe because he is in a particular area.

In Queensland, conditions conducive to the starting of bush-fires are likely to occur more frequently than they are in Tasmania—as the Minister said, high temperature, low humidity, and a strong wind. In country areas—indeed, throughout the State—particularly in October and November, and also sometimes through into February, those conditions do occur. Fortunately for us, quite often rain has fallen a short time before, or falls at the time, and the damage is minimised. However, what happened in Tasmania could happen here unless very careful precautions are taken, and I stress—in no way is this to be taken as criticism—that the responsibility for fire and its control rests on land holders. They have a great responsibility not only to themselves, their families, and their stock, but also to their neighbours and to many other innocent people.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: Their responsibility to their neighbour is the more important. If they own some vacant land, they do not even go near it.

Mr. HOUSTON: In a general sense that could be true. I am aware of the fact, also, that those of us who travel over the length and breadth of the State have often been caught in the position of driving along

a road in a car and passing through an area in which a bush-fire is burning. In this connection, again we are very fortunate that no lives have been lost or people trapped. Talking in hotels and other places afterwards I have, on occasions, learned that many people have suffered severe fright when they thought they were trapped in a bush-fire area.

The prevention of bush-fires is a matter of major importance, and, as I said earlier, the first responsibility must lie with landholders themselves. I do not know what the relationship is between fires that are deliberately lit for a specific purpose and subsequently get out of control, and those that are lit for no known reason. I do not know whether the Minister has any figures in this regard, but if he has he could perhaps let the Committee know the relationship between the numbers that were deliberately lit and those the cause of which is unknown. It is important, when we are deciding how to control these things, that we be given some idea of their causes.

I know it has been suggested at various times that people should not throw beer bottles or other glass material into vacant land because the sun's rays shining through the glass can cause combustion and result in a fire. These are things we do not know so let us find out by investigation. Knowing what the cause is makes it much easier to overcome the problem. No matter how we train people for organised fire prevention, human error will always enter into it and people will either be deliberately careless or become careless from a feeling that everything is all right. I am sure the Minister has seen, as I have, even on camping reserves set aside for the convenience of the public, instances of people going to much trouble to put out a camp fire before they leave, whereas others will look at it and say, "It will be all right," and leave it. That is the type of thing that we cannot do very much about, except perhaps try to encourage people to take more care.

Some of the fire warnings one sees are very good. I suppose the calendar put out by the board is one of the most striking of its type we have seen. These things are welcome and should all help to overcome this great problem.

The elimination of duplication of authority, if it serves no other purpose, will certainly make the careless landholder realise that he has no outlet. This might prevent him from being careless and then suggesting that he did not know which authority to approach, and so on.

The hon. member for Barcoo has more experience of this problem than I have but I felt that I should indicate, on behalf of the Opposition, that, as this is such an important measure, we will support it. We will support any measure that will prevent the recurrence of a disaster such as happened in Tasmania or any situation at all that could lead to loss of life or property, irrespective of whose it is.

Mr. O'DONNELL (Barcoo) (11.59 a.m.): First of all, I should like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his kind remarks relative to my knowledge of this matter. I also appreciate the remarks of the Minister for Lands in stressing the importance of this organisation. I feel that, at this time particularly, the importance of the activities of these bush-fire brigades is being brought home to us very effectively. Quite recently there has been a holocaust caused by fire in the Numinbah Valley. There was a very strong reminder that over the last two, three, or even four years, bush-fire activity in this State has been considerably reduced because of the drought. One can realise that during that time the very worthy people who form these bush-fire brigades have had a period of relaxation. Now that the State has returned to its more usual climatic conditions the old danger of bush-fires is back with us, and back with us very forcibly.

I should like to refer to the Minister's remarks about the Arcadia Valley. Last year I visited this valley with members of the Rural Fires Board, and if the Minister had been with me then he would have agreed, as I agree with him now, that a tremendous fire risk prevails there when it is covered with a heavy growth of grass.

At times I feel that the brigalow has been overpulled, and some people put forward the view that certain scrubs can be used as fire-breaks. A fact that added to the gravity of the situation in the Arcadia Valley at that time was the financial position of the settlers. They were not able to purchase agricultural plant, which could be readily used for the construction of fire-breaks. I agree with the Minister that where there is a concentration of agriculture the fire risk is at a minimum. I am not saying that it is eliminated; it certainly is not. In the Arcadia Valley, with the introduction of pastures and grasses, scrub land is being converted to the type of land that can be seen on the Darling Downs. However, this is being done only by destroying a certain amount of the natural protection that is afforded.

A great deal of controversy exists on the value of belts of brigalow scrub as fire-breaks, and I have heard three gentlemen give greatly differing opinions on the desirable width of such a brigalow belt. Their opinions ranged from a width of from 200 yards to one of 1 mile. However, I think that brigalow belts could be of some value in preventing bush-fires. I am talking now about bush-fires, not about erosion. A brigalow belt could be of some value, provided the undergrowth or the dead wood that is lying on the ground is removed. Whilst the scrub itself may not be readily combustible, fire rages quickly through undergrowth and dead wood.

The other day when I flew over the valley I was pleased to see that two or three properties had some land under cultivation. That means that the property-holders had plant which could be used, with the co-operation of the owners of the plant, for the benefit of the valley as a whole and of their neighbours who perhaps are not in such fortunate circumstances.

The Minister referred to hazard reduction, which is a very important matter. My Leader referred to the responsibility of a landholder for his own property. This, too, is important. Of course, we know that a man can be very responsible and conscientious in the protection of his own property. But when a fire breaks out somewhere else it becomes nobody's business. The secret of success of the bush-fire brigades is that they concern themselves with those fires that do not concern anybody else. They are performing a community service for the benefit of all, and they are worthy of the highest commendation.

I commend, too, the officers of the Rural Fires Board. It is pleasing to see that provision will be made for an increase in their numbers. People do not realise that this State contains an area of 426,000,000 acres. Anybody who flies around the State in light aircraft, as members of Parliament do, becomes aware of the extensive areas of bush that still exist in the rural sectors of the State. We know that very few people live in the rural sector, but they have a tremendous area to cope with. This presents a major problem. Any increase in the number of officers will help and encourage the man on the land. In dormant periods, or drought-time, people tend to relax and perhaps become a little complacent. The stimulus provided by officers moving around in their publicity operations, organising, visiting, and keeping this menace prominently before the residents and continually pointing out the risks involved, is most welcome.

Few people realise that fire brigades do not only put out fires. At times they carry out extensive rescue work, and they must have planned operations and know exactly what to do and how it should be done. The appointment of representatives from various departments will be advantageous, because in the past the activities of some of these departments have caused extensive grass-fires and bush-fires. We know that the days of the steam locomotives have almost passed, but I should like a dollar for every fire that they started in country areas when they were in use. The Main Roads Department also undertakes certain activities in country areas, and it is pleasing to note that it is being brought into the scheme so that it will not be solely the responsibility of certain individuals who probably, in the main, are those who suffer because of fires but have nothing to do with their origin.

When I say that United Graziers' Association representation is necessary I may shock the Minister, but we are more concerned about the areas controlled by the graziers of this State than those controlled by the farmers. We know only too well from travelling through the developed brigalow blocks that they are subdivisions of extensive brigalow lands which, at one time, had a carrying capacity of one beast to 30 acres. Even today, with subdivision, the land is used for grazing and developmental purposes, with the carrying capacity increased to at least one beast to 10 acres. The destruction of the scrub has meant the substitution of Rhodes grass, panic, and so on, and in the gidgee country further west buffel grass has been substituted. In good seasons these grasses become thick-bodied. When conditions are right they are a great menace, and, without fire-breaks, as was exemplified in Arcadia Valley last year, only a match is needed in the right place and on the right day for the whole valley, including the homes and the scrub, to go. That would be as great a disaster as the Tasmanian fire.

I have read the report and summary of evidence on the Tasmanian bush-fire disaster, and I have also read "Fire Prevention and Suppression", a report of a Tasmanian committee. They contain a great deal of interesting matter, although some people might say it is like shutting the gate after the horse has bolted. Much is learnt by experience.

Reading the report one can understand that Tasmania, with its unique mountainous terrain, has a bigger problem in some respects than Queensland has. On the other hand, we must not forget that we have 426,000,000 acres and a scattered population, and this is a major problem to us. Reading the Tasmanian recommendations we can say, with a great deal of pride, that we have always been ahead of Tasmania in the development of Rural Fires Board activities and that our bush-fire brigades are far superior to Tasmania's, both in organisation and activity.

Cognisance should be taken of the reference on page 35 of the report to the effect that some planned burning should be undertaken at suitable times and under proper supervision so as to reduce the fuel hazard. Some people have been most vehement that we should not burn anything. On the other hand, we have the type of fellow who wears a bare patch on the side of his Holden from striking wax matches on it and then throwing them out of the car. Some people overdo it, but, from the point of view of property management and the mitigation of fire hazards, planned burning can be of value. It is in this direction that the bush-fire brigades could fit into a scheme covering an area, because it is through them and with their supervision that planned burning should take place. Some thought should be given to this point by the Rural Fires Board on its visits to the various areas of the State and in discussions with local farmers and graziers.

Some people are of the opinion—I think rightly so—that we should be more careful about fires from the point of view of the conservation of our fauna and not only our trees but other forms of flora. This is quite so. There was a recent reference in the Press to an American professor's claim that, compared with what is done in the United State of America, we are miles behind in the conservation of fauna and flora. It is important that we mitigate the danger of the bush-fire menace.

Not only are our fauna, and trees and other flora, involved; some people seem to take no cognisance of the insect life that prevails throughout the length and breadth of the State, a good deal of which is of value. Many years ago, when I was a young teacher in Brisbane, I said to the head-master, "Where do I get practical examples of nature study for my classroom in the city? There is nothing here; the playground is bare. I suppose I could go down the road and buy a fish or perhaps bring a dog to the school, but I want something more than that." He said, "See that tree? You start on that tree. There is enough insect life in that tree to last you 10 lifetimes of teaching nature-study lessons every hour of every day." And this is so. A tree is not just a tree; it is a home. It is a home not only for the birds and perhaps the koalas, but for insect life as well. I do not think that sufficient research has been done into insect life and its effect on natural resources.

The Opposition welcomes any step taken to mitigate the danger of fire. As I mentioned before, some thought has to be given to fire prevention in the cities, also. It has been necessary, for instance, to restrict the use of fireworks. We are realising that as society becomes more advanced and more congested in circumscribed areas certain risks arise. Whilst no doubt some of the young fry object very strongly to restrictions on the use of fireworks, there will come a day when they will realise that it is all to the good. The use of fireworks in rural areas could be very dangerous indeed; if some smart fellow threw a cracker from a car, he could start one of the biggest bush-fires ever in some areas.

Mr. Sullivan: He could destroy the whole place.

Mr. O'DONNELL: Yes. I do not know whether any hon. members have fought a bush-fire that has threatened the homestead on a property. One can well imagine the feelings of people as they see a fire approaching their home and realise that they are going to lose it and all the things of great sentimental value contained in it. After all, one has a greater love for his home than he has for any other form of accommodation. We all love to go home.

Mr. Sullivan: That is where I am going as soon as the House rises this afternoon.

Mr. O'DONNELL: That is right.

Everything possible should be done to assist those who have to contend with this danger. I know very well that the Government has to assist in this matter. There was a proposal in Tasmania that local authorities should "come to the party" with the Government. I do not think that would find ready acceptance by all shire councils. I feel that the Government should at all times consider in what ways it can help the rural fire brigades throughout the State and the Rural Fires Board. After all, it is a most valuable asset—the state of rural Queensland—that has to be protected.

Mr. McKECHNIE (Carnarvon) (12.19 p.m.): I welcome the Bill, primarily because it will bring about greater co-ordination and co-operation in fighting bush-fires. It has to be accepted that in the future fires will be more dangerous than they have been in the past. That may conflict with the thinking of some hon. members, and it may also seem to conflict with the situation in the southern States. There is in Queensland a lot of timbered country, particularly forest and brigalow country, and, whilst it is harder to control fires in such areas, they do not spread through timber in Queensland as rapidly as they do across improved lands.

As the scrub lands are cleared, there will be an ever-increasing danger of fast-moving fires, which are the fires that are most dangerous to human beings and to animals. Whereas a fire in scrub country might burn out 1,000 acres in a day, which is about the normal burning rate, on cleared land a fire could sweep over it in a matter of minutes. Consequently, one has less warning of the need to shift stock and there is more likelihood of one's becoming encircled by fire. For those reasons, there is need for greater co-ordination and co-operation, and the proposed Bill provides for that.

Up till now the forestry officer has had control of quite a large area of agricultural or pastoral land surrounding national parks or forests. The Act refers to ". . . land the nearest boundary of which is within one mile of any State Forest . . .", and that could include properties with an area of 10,000, 20,000 or 30,000 acres. The fact that the boundary runs within a mile of the State forest does involve the whole property. As a result, there has been some minor conflict between forestry officers and land-owners relative to organised burning off of country, and also relative to unorganised burning off. I am sure, therefore, that it will be of assistance to make it clear that the fire warden, who has greater over-all responsibility than has the forestry officer, will be in control. Forestry officers are concerned chiefly with the timber within the forestry block that they control, and although they have been considerate of landholders, things have not always worked out as amicably as they should. Consequently, I believe that, by passing greater control over to the appointed fire warden, we will make it possible for

arrangements to be arrived at more amicably and with a greater understanding of the problems of adjacent landholders. At the same time, the rights of the Forestry Department will be considered fully, and the fire warden will work in co-operation with the forestry officers.

As I said earlier, danger from fire is increasing mainly because timber has been removed and fires can sweep rapidly across large areas of open country. Although fire-breaks have existed, many of them have been destroyed unwisely. During the drought in 1965, many patches of fire-break on the ridges died out. In much of the country in South-west Queensland, some of the natural defences against fire have died and left weak links. Many problems have arisen not only on the flat lands of the West, such as at Goondiwindi, but also in the mountains of the Great Dividing Range, such as those around Stanthorpe, particularly where there are large areas of Crown land on which fires can creep about more or less uncontrolled.

The fire warden has to consider the over-all effects of fires. He can look into the burning-off of breaks; he can authorise the construction of fire-breaks for the general protection of property and stock.

When it comes to fighting fires on cleared land, there is no doubt that ploughed fire-breaks, particularly if they can be made between shade lines, are the ideal answer. Many people are loth to plough fire-breaks because they lead to the introduction of vegetable pests such as mint, Noogoora burr, Bathurst burr and thistles of various sorts. However, if these fire-breaks can be constructed in the form of long narrow paddocks, they can be cultivated and a fire-break would be achieved. In addition, there would be a profitable return in the form of crops from the ploughed area, whereas if it is just left as a fire-break it will become a breeding ground for all the flora pests I mentioned earlier—mint, burrs, thistles and whatever that type of country is vulnerable to.

Mr. Lee: Galvanised burr.

Mr. McKECHNIE: Galvanised burr, as my colleague from Yeronga says, is one of the pests that occur under conditions of this type.

I should like to compliment the 1,390 fire wardens, who the Minister mentioned are operating in this State at the moment. They do not cover the whole State, unfortunately, but they are the vanguard of a defence system that must be spread ever wider to cope with the increasing fire danger. There is no doubt in my mind that fires in Queensland, as it becomes more developed, will become more prevalent and more dangerous, and consequently the need for this amendment is evident.

Mr. Hanlon: Do you think that there are people who might co-operate in this with fire wardens but who do not realise that they can do so?

Mr. McKECHNIE: Yes, I agree with the hon. member for Baroona; there are people who could co-operate. There are some who do not, as yet, realise the danger, and since 1962 we have had a period of six years during which there has not been a great amount of vegetation in many parts of the State. Six years is time enough to lull most people into a false sense of security. Therefore, I think that some publicity of the dangers and of the assistance available is necessary and very advisable.

Water plays its part, and wherever we can make strongpoints in the form of water to fight fires, it will assist greatly. Since this debate began, only an hour ago, I have received a telegram from Mr. J. C. Bruxner, M.L.A. for Tenterfield, and also a telephone call from the secretary of the Border Rivers project, Mr. Thorne, who also had received a telegram from Mr. Bruxner to the effect that this morning the Premier of New South Wales signed the Border Rivers agreement. That has been causing us some concern, but it now leaves the way open for the introduction into the New South Wales Parliament, and also into this Parliament, of the Border Rivers agreement. I am very happy to be able to announce to the Committee that the Premier of New South Wales signed that agreement this morning, and this leaves the way open for something else that is of great assistance in fighting fires.

Every major, or even minor, water project, wherever it may be developed, is of assistance in fire-fighting. I recall occasions when I have fought fires in the heat. One becomes more or less exhausted, not only from the work and the heat, but from the rarity of oxygen in the air, and it is a pleasure to get back to the watering point and just walk into it, clothes and all. The more strategic water supplies we can place in areas where fires have to be fought—and this must be regarded as throughout Queensland—so much the better. I welcome that part of the amendment of the legislation. To a lesser extent I go along with the amendment that permits the granting of permits for fireworks displays in national parks, particularly where these are national parks purely for recreational purposes. It still amounts to an almost total prohibition, but, should the occasion warrant it and should it be so desired, fireworks displays may be permissible in these areas.

I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill.

Hon. V. B. SULLIVAN (Condamine—Minister for Lands) (12.30 p.m.), in reply: I thank hon. members for the manner in which they have received the proposed amendments. The Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Barcoo indicated their attitudes to the value of rural fire brigades and the work that they are performing. The Leader of the Opposition said that he welcomes the amendments and will take the opportunity of studying the Bill

in an objective fashion. It is natural for us to expect this sort of attitude, because I believe that all hon. members and the community generally are aware of the need that exists for really good fire control in this State, whether it be exercised in the rural or the urban sector.

Fires do not constitute a great danger provided preparations have been made in advance to meet their threat. As I said in my introductory remarks, fires are necessary for land development and the maintenance of pastures. I have always believed that it is possible to plan fires without incurring danger to property and life. I lived in an area in which, during its developing stages, many fire hazards existed. A rural fire brigade has been established there, and I am a member of the brigade. After the outbreak of some fires, which were not disastrous in the sense that they caused the loss of life or huge stock losses owing to the lack of proper control and preparations, we realised that, provided preparations are made, landholders can burn off at practically any time. I have done so myself.

I was interested, too, in the remarks of the hon. member for Carnarvon. Some of the things that he mentioned can have valuable application. I know that he has made a practice of putting into effect the suggestions that he recommends. On one occasion I flew to his property, and I could see from the air that the manner in which he has developed his property shows a conscious realisation of the need to make preparations for the control of fire. He has left standing wide strips of timber both for the purpose of shade for stock and for the provision of fire-fighting areas. This is really calculated and wise development, and I think that many of the suggestions that he made can be put into practice in areas that are being presently developed.

The hon. member mentioned the farming of long strips and the provision of water. This is very intelligent development, and I thank him for his suggestions. In my own locality we have done this over the years. On my own property, when greater fire hazards existed we farmed strips 4 or 5 chains wide along the boundary fences. We could lock a paddock up and give the grass a go, and then plant oats or sorghum in those strips. In that way, stock feed was available at all times. That is a very wise practice.

The proposed amendments appear to be acceptable to the Committee, and I thank those hon. members who participated in the debate for the manner in which they have received them.

Motion (Mr. Sullivan) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

FORESTRY ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

(Mr. Graham, Mackay, in the chair)

Hon. H. RICHTER (Somerset—Minister for Local Government and Conservation) (12.37 p.m.): I move—

"That a Bill be introduced to amend the Forestry Acts 1959 to 1964 in certain particulars."

The main purpose of this Bill is to provide a classification of the national parks—or of parts of national parks—so that the many purposes for which they are managed can be both better understood and more readily achieved.

In addition to this, the definition of forest products in the Act is being amended because of administrative difficulties that have been encountered under the definition as it now exists, and there are five other minor amendments that I will deal with later.

The area reserved as national parks and scenic areas in Queensland reached a figure of over 2,300,000 acres by 30 June this year. These parks cover a great diversity of conditions and a very considerable range of varying public interest. Some areas should be kept in their primitive condition, some require the development of picnic grounds and camping areas, with the attendant necessary facilities, and on others a certain amount of disturbance should be permitted for scientific investigation, and so on. With the number of visitors to the national parks now exceeding 1,000,000 annually, and with a very active increase in the use of national parks for scientific study and research, it is obvious that the administration faces an ever-increasing problem in managing this great diversity of areas to the best advantage while preserving their values intact for succeeding generations.

There are several aspects to this problem. It is necessary to provide more finance and additional staff to carry out the work of management and, in this regard, it is pointed out that the expenditure on national parks is now of the order of $200,000 annually and that in recent years three university graduates have been added to the permanent national parks staff.

As well as providing staff and funds however, it is also necessary to have legislative machinery to cope with the problems of national park administration in today's leisure-oriented society. This Bill is designed to provide this by enabling individual parks or areas within them to be afforded specialised management.

This specialised management makes unnecessary the present classification of "Scenic Area" for a national park of less than 1,000 acres, and of the 47 clauses in the proposed Bill all except seven are merely machinery clauses necessary to remove the term "scenic area" from the legislation. I have never been too keen on this term "scenic area" which appears to me to

downgrade some of the smaller national parks. The quality of an area, as well as its size, is important. The proposed measure makes all of the areas national parks and provides for specialised management as required. As I have said, 40 clauses provide solely for the dropping of the term "scenic area", and the only clauses which amend the Act in other directions are clauses 4, 8, 15, 17, 19, 20 and 24. Of these, by far the most important is clause 17, in which it is proposed that Part V of the Forestry Act, which deals with the management of national parks, be amended to provide for the declaration of areas for special purposes within the national park system.

Mr. Sherrington: That means that all scientific areas will be incorporated in national parks?

Mr. RICHTER: Yes. They will be incorporated as part of the park, but there are special classifications. These areas will be of five types, namely—

> Primitive area; primitive and recreation area; recreation area; scientific area; and historic area.

It is in keeping with world thinking on national park management that, where possible, a major park should have a core area which is retained free from all development. Such an area should be sufficiently extensive to preserve the feeling of wilderness undisturbed by man. I do not think that the term is very important. I believe that in certain countries it is referred to as a "wilderness area", whereas we refer to it as a "primitive area". As far as possible, it should have well-defined natural boundaries.

Mr. Houston: Is it intended to exclude the public from these areas?

Mr. RICHTER: I shall come to that in a moment. This is what is intended for a "primitive area". The public would have access to these areas, but only on foot. However, the access would not be by the easily negotiated, well-graded walking tracks provided elsewhere. They will have to find their own way. No roads or buildings would be constructed on a "primitive area", and no part of it may be leased or grazed, or excised therefrom for the purpose of the provision of accommodation and/or recreational facilities or for opening as a road for public use. Permits for scientific purposes would be issued only where special circumstances warranted such action. The Conservator of Forests would be required to take any necessary action to limit any use which threatened to damage the area. It is expected that such action would rarely be necessary, but it is necessary to have this provision because here we are dealing with natural values that we are endeavouring to preserve for all time.

Mr. Houston: No shooting of animals will be allowed there?

Mr. RICHTER: No shooting is allowed in any national park.

Mr. Houston: No permits will be issued, or anything like that?

Mr. RICHTER: No. The classification of "primitive and recreation area" would cover areas where a system of graded walking tracks and facilities such as huts, shelter sheds, and the like may be provided to facilitate the enjoyment of the area by visitors.

Mr. Sherrington: A "primitive recreation area"?

Mr. RICHTER: That is a "primitive recreation area". The restriction will not be as great in this area as in a "primitive area".

Where necessary for the preservation of the area, fire-breaks and roads could be constructed. It is a requirement that in providing facilities for the use of the park by the public the condition of the area shall be kept as close to its natural condition as is possible.

There is a need for a still more intensive form of use for picnicking, camping and like purposes. Inevitably this will have a more disturbing effect on the natural conditions. In many cases the provision of public road access will be desirable. There is thus a need for a separate category of "recreation area". However, it is considered that the area of any one national park used for this purpose should be limited, and the limit proposed is 400 acres or 50 per cent. of the park, whichever is the lesser. I think that is a fair provision. If it is a large park, an area of 400 acres is taken; if it is a small park, only 50 per cent. of it can be taken.

Mr. Houston: The rest would virtually be the "primitive area", wouldn't it?

Mr. RICHTER: Not necessarily. It could be "primitive and recreation", or whatever the case may be. It would depend on the classification. Where there will be disturbance of a recreation area, there is to be a limitation of 50 per cent. of a small park and 400 acres of a large park.

Mr. Houston: The rest of the park would have to be in the category of "primitive" or "primitive recreation"?

Mr. RICHTER: On a small area, yes, naturally.

All national parks are valuable for scientific study, but some areas are reserved chiefly for their scientific interest. It is necessary that this scientific interest be recognised, and the management proposed for the "scientific area" category is intended to do this. In some cases this could require action which would not normally be applied to a national park.

Mr. Sherrington: Does this provide for scientific areas separate and distinct and apart from those mentioned?

Mr. RICHTER: That is right, and they can be treated as such. I shall explain what I mean. There is, for example, a natural succession of plant growth from wet eucalypt forest, to eucalypt forest with rain forest, and hoop pine, to rain forest only. If for its scientific interest it is desired to maintain one of these stages, or if in the study of this succession it is necessary to hold a section of the area at a particular stage, this would require some special action involving deliberate manipulation of the environment. I think hon. members will understand what I mean there.

It is therefore proposed that the Conservator of Forests should have somewhat wider powers in managing a "scientific area", and he should be able to provide, or allow the provision of, such facilities as are advantageous to the scientific interests of the area.

Mr. Sherrington: That will only be done under permit?

Mr. RICHTER: In these particular areas, which are scientific areas, it will have to be controlled in a certain way.

Mr. Sherrington: But it will only be done on permit by persons carrying out experiments?

Mr. RICHTER: This will be controlled by the Conservator, not individual officers. Though the name "scientific area" indicates that these areas are primarily of scientific value, it is intended that their use by scientists should be controlled by permit. I think the importance of that will be realised. This is essential, firstly, for the preservation of the area, and, secondly, to avoid any interference of one scientific project with another, as could easily happen quite inadvertently if use of the area was entirely unrestricted. The same restrictions on leasing, grazing, or excision of any part for accommodation and/or recreational facilities, or for opening as a road, will apply to a "scientific area" as to a "primitive area".

The final category proposed is "historic area". It is not intended to venture into the field of preserving historic buildings and the like, but where something exists on a national park concerning our Aboriginal or early European history, it is appropriate that it be preserved. The category of "historic area" will empower the Conservator to apply such special management as may be necessary.

The declaration of such areas for special purposes will be by Order in Council upon the recommendation of the Conservator of Forests, which recommendation will be submitted by the Conservator to the Minister. Such recommendation is to be made only when sufficient information is available concerning the natural features of the area concerned and the potential value of it for the various uses to which it may be applied as a national park.

It is stressed that these proposals are tailored to Queensland's requirements at this time. It is neither necessary nor desirable to attempt to prepare comprehensive management plans for all our national parks at this stage. In the foreseeable future this will be desirable for some of them, but at present it would be an unwarranted expense. What is needed now is the special management of selected areas as provided for by this Bill.

In clause 4 of the Bill there is a new definition of the term "forest products". This definition is of particular importance. Legislative protection for areas under forestry control is afforded by defining "forest products" and then setting out what actions with respect to forest products constitute offences under the Act. The new definition clarifies but does not alter the intent of the one in the existing Act.

It has always been intended that all things of animal or vegetable origin should be included in the term as far as State forests and national parks are concerned. Administrative experience has shown that the definition now in the Act, by referring to "animals and birds", did not make it sufficiently clear that all forms of animal life are included. Because of the fundamental importance of this definition, it is most desirable that it be written not only so that its legal interpretation is beyond doubt but also so that its significance will be clear to any person who reads it. The new definition should achieve this. "Animal life", as used in the new definition of forest products, is also defined.

The other change made in the definition of "forest products" is of a similar nature, to make it quite clear that all Aboriginal art, remains, artefacts and the like are included. Previously they were regarded as included in the term "relics", but doubt has arisen as to the legal validity of this interpretation. The amendment proposed in the Bill specifically includes such items in the term "forest products".

I mentioned earlier that there were five other minor amendments. One of these, clause 24 also deals with Aboriginal artefacts. Because they are "forest products" by definition, they are adequately protected on national parks. However, it also means that the Conservator of Forests would have power to sell them on State forests. This, of course, has not been done, nor was it ever intended that it should be, and it would in fact conflict with the Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act.

Mr. Houston: What about fishing in the streams that go through national parks?

Mr. RICHTER: There is no change in that respect.

Mr. Houston: One can still fish?

Mr. RICHTER: I do not think so. One cannot shoot or disturb. It depends what one wants to do.

Mr. Houston: Take it a stage further. If an island is declared a national park, can one fish on the fore-shores then?

Mr. RICHTER: The department has control only to the high-water level; the Department of Harbours and Marine takes over from there. National parks cannot be declared, as yet, below the high-water level.

The amendment to the Act now proposed expressly prohibits the sale or other disposal of such relics on State forests unless the provisions of the Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act of 1967 have first been complied with.

Another amendment is largely an administrative matter. State forests frequently extend on both sides of a watershed and occasionally cross the boundary between forestry administration districts. In some cases it will facilitate administration to have these reserves divided into two or more forests and the amendment proposed will allow this to be done.

Of the remaining three amendments, two are complementary to the provision that no parts of areas declared as "primitive areas" or "scientific areas" shall be leased, grazed or excised for the purpose of the provision of accommodation and/or recreational facilities or for opening as a road for public use, and amend accordingly the relevant sections of the Forestry Acts (sections 32 and 42).

The remaining amendment is a machinery provision amending section 43 of the present Act to make the granting of permits by the Conservator for scientific purposes subject to the new provisions applicable to primitive and scientific areas.

To sum up, the Bill provides for specialised management within national parks by the declaration of appropriate areas as "primitive", "primitive and recreation", "recreation", "scientific" and "historic" areas. It deletes the term "scenic area" (and this deletion involves 40 of the 47 clauses of the Bill). It clarifies the definition of "forest products" with respect to the inclusion of all forms of animal life, and of all Aboriginal art, artefacts and the like. It limits the sale of Aboriginal relics, and it provides for the subdivision of State forests for administrative purposes.

I feel that it will be clear to hon. members, from this account of what is in the Bill, that it makes provision for an important forward step in the management of national parks and defines more clearly than before the principles of their management. The national parks are of great importance to Queensland in so many ways, and yearly play a more significant part in our recreation and in scientific activity. They also contribute in no small measure in attracting tourists to Queensland. It is essential that the national parks should be managed wisely and in such a way that their basic qualities are preserved.

I commend the Bill to hon. members.

[*Sitting suspended from 12.58 to 2.15 p.m.*]

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba—Leader of the Opposition) (2.15 p.m.): I am sure that all hon. members listened with interest to the Minister's introductory remarks. I can tell him that the Opposition will not be opposed to the introduction of the Bill. Of course, that does not mean that Opposition members will go along completely with everything contained in the Bill until they have had a chance to analyse it.

It would appear that the Government has endeavoured to amend the Act so that national parks can be designed in a more practical manner than they have been in the past. Whether or not the proposed exclusion of the term "scenic area" has any important effect is something that Opposition members will look at. The Minister said that 40 clauses of the Bill deal with the elimination of that term. Naturally, the Opposition will look at the Bill to see what is included.

The new classifications to be applied to certain national parks seem to indicate a practical approach to the matter. The Minister has pointed out that the term "primitive" is intended to apply to a park that is left exactly in its natural state, never having been tampered with by man and not being allowed to be so tampered with in future. I take it that all necessary fire precautions will be taken, because it is possible that what will be termed a "primitive area" will be adjacent to a grazing property.

In "primitive" national parks, will encouragement be given to the preservation of our national species of animals and birds? Perhaps the Minister can answer that question in his reply. It is possible that in these areas gum trees are growing but very few koala bears exist. Is it the intention of the Government to restock that type of area with koala bears so that they can breed in their natural environment? Is it intended to prevent humans from having more than a limited access to these "primitive areas"? Is it the intention to use these areas as breeding grounds for our natural animals?

Mr. Richter: I think that the matter of fauna comes under the Department of Primary Industries. Officers of the department have some objection to shifting colonies of koalas from one area to another.

Mr. HOUSTON: That is one of the points that I was going to mention. We are faced with a problem that some of our native animals cannot survive in an area after having been shifted from their natural habitat. For reasons known perhaps only to the naturalists, koala bears tend to live

in colonies, and no matter how hard man tries to establish them in other areas it has proved unsuccessful.

I turn to the "recreation areas". I imagine that these would be tourist areas to be developed for those people, particularly overseas visitors, who like to see Australia in its rugged and natural form. If that is the intention of the Government, I suggest that the Forestry Department pay particular attention to health and toilet facilities in "recreation areas". I have noticed in my travels in Queensland and in other places that the amenities supplied in some of these areas are generally good. Fresh water is available and the other necessaries for comfort are provided. However, in some of the others the amenities are allowed to deteriorate to a shocking extent. I do not wish to name the ones I have in mind. When I have found amenities in a bad state I have tried to get appropriate action taken. Without the necessary supervisory staff to cover these areas fairly frequently, the amenities deteriorate. That not only gives the area a bad name, but it also interferes with the virtually natural advertising of the tourist potential. Satisfied tourists are the best advertising medium we can have. If tourists consider that a place is worth while and that the amenities are up to standard, they publicise it.

Mr. Richter: We are always asking for more money for that very purpose.

Mr. HOUSTON: I agree with that. I do not want to go into Budget matters at this time, but, if we want to extend tourism and attract people in large numbers from other States and overseas to Queensland, we will not succeed unless we can give them something essentially Australian or native to Queensland. When I visit places I do not want to see the same buildings and animals as I can see at home. I want to see whatever else they have to offer. I think that is a normal approach. If the Minister assures me he will do this, I will be happy.

I imagine that this is the type of area in which scenic walks will be provided. In some of the areas I have visited, particularly in New South Wales, which has a more highly developed concept of scenic walks, little provision is made for those who are less agile or fleet of foot than the younger generation. It seems that those who are interested in this type of tourism fall into two age groups. The first consists of the younger, unmarried people who have no family problems and can make the grade on their own. We must cater, of course, for them. They like rougher paths and more rugged scenic outlooks than the older group. There is a fair break between the age groups, probably due to the raising of families, and so on. The second group requires more assistance.

In developing the walks in our scenic areas I think it would be a good idea to designate two classes of walks. First, there could be those where peopie "take their chances", as it were, and second, those that are designed for people who want a more comfortable walk but who still enjoy the natural beauties of their surroundings. I have encountered problems, particularly in New South Wales. I found that the friends I was with could get to the bottom of the walk without any trouble but they had all the trouble in the world retracing their steps, mainly because the walks were not properly prepared. I am in the younger age group, but I know that older people are affected in this way.

The third category relates to the "scientific area". I know that other hon. members on this side of the Chamber are well versed in this matter, so I will not go very deeply into it other than to say that it is essential to know and understand our country in its natural State. If, after developing an area, it is found that things go wrong—this can happen when the scientific methods available cannot cope with the problems—the experts can go to the area and say, "Let us start again and see if we can come up with the right answer."

From that point of view, I think this is quite a good move. I was not quite clear whether this will be a separate area or whether it could be embodied in the two types of "recreation area".

Mr. Richter: This will be a separate area, but a permit will be granted to scientists, on application, relative to other areas.

Mr. HOUSTON: Yes, but it is not intended to be part of the "recreation area" at all; it is a separate area. But it could be in the same over-all park, I take it?

Mr. Richter: Yes, in the same over-all park.

Mr. HOUSTON: Then we could have all classifications in one national park?

Mr. Richter: There could be five classifications in the one park.

Mr. HOUSTON: On that score, problems could arise. What will apply to the "primitive and recreation area" will apply in greater form than to the "recreation area".

The maximum of 400 acres will be a sufficient area, provided that it includes areas that are easily accessible. We could have 400 acres of mountain range which would be inaccessible. I shall leave these matters to the good sense of those making the decisions. I am not querying the size of the area. In fact, if there is a smaller area, it will be more likely that amenities will be provided.

The declaring of "historic areas" will tie in with other legislation dealing with Aboriginal relics, arts, paintings and rock carvings.

Mr. Richter: I think you appreciate that if the total area of the park is 400 acres, the maximum that can be reserved for "recreation" purposes is 50 per cent.; it would not be the whole 400 acres.

Mr. HOUSTON: The other half could be "primitive and recreation", or "scientific". It does not necessarily mean that the other half will be "primitive". It could be any of the other four classifications. It would be feasible, I imagine, to have a "recreation area" adjacent to a "historic area", otherwise the "historic area" would not mean anything. I am adopting a logical approach.

One of the great worries of the Opposition —this matter has been raised on many occasions—is not associated so much with our forest areas which are being handled and can be handled properly, but with the Great Barrier Reef and some of the islands on it. It cannot be said that an island has any forest potential in the sense of recoverable timber. But it is necessary to have islands as national parks and I should like the Minister to make clear whether this legislation covers the establishment of the Great Barrier Reef as a national park.

Mr. Richter: This does not cover a marine park. A committee of officers is now looking into the possibility of setting up some sort of marine national park.

Mr. HOUSTON: That would be the subject of separate legislation?

Mr. Richter: Yes.

Mr. HOUSTON: Then I shall not break new ground in that respect. I asked for that information before moving on to that matter. It is perhaps sufficient to say at this stage that the Opposition supports any move to declare parts of the Great Barrier Reef as national parks. Before the matter is finalised it would be wise for the Opposition to be told of the reports and suggestions. This request is not made on a political basis. The conservation and use of the Great Barrier Reef and the islands on it are outside the ambit of politics. We should all have the one desire, that is, to be custodians of the Great Barrier Reef.

Mr. Richter: I shall be happy to discuss this with you.

Mr. HOUSTON: I am pleased to have that undertaking from the Minister, and I accept it. I shall now leave the more detailed discussion to those of my colleagues who have had some experience in these matters and have carried out some investigations relative to them.

Mr. E. G. W. WOOD (Logan) (2.30 p.m.): I should like to draw the attention of the Committee to the growing potential of Peel Island, in the Redland Shire. From time to time the Department of Lands has attempted to sell land on this island for subdivision. Although Peel Island is admirably situated for a pleasure resort, it will be many years before it loses the stigma of its association with Hansen's Disease and can be used as a pleasure resort. It has beautiful beaches and the best fishing in the bay, and its area is well within the prescribed 400 acres.

The Redland Shire Council endeavoured five years ago to have Peel Island declared a national park, but it was too small for that purpose under the existing legislation. Now is the time for this island, which has such great potential as a pleasure resort, to be removed from the threat of subdivision and brought within one of the sections of the proposed legislation. If it was made a national park, it would be protected for all time. There are many islands in the bay, but all those suitable for preservation as national parks are held in fee simple. I refer, for example, to Russell Island and Macleay Island.

Peel Island has been released by the Department of Health, and the action that I suggest should have been taken a long time ago. I find it difficult to see now, after public use has been made of this island, how there could be any agreement with its being subdivided. One of its main problems is the lack of a satisfactory supply of water. There would be about one poor well on the island, and I doubt whether water could be made available in any quantity for industrial purposes or the needs of a pleasure resort. Across the shallow water there is, in Myora Creek and other places on Stradbroke Island, unlimited fresh water which could be brought to Peel Island as the Forestry Department sought to develop the area. I make this plea now: When the Bill becomes law, I urge that action be taken to declare Peel Island a national park within the terms of the legislation.

There are other areas also that could well come within these provisions. Efforts have been made to obtain finance for the construction of a road to the top of Mt. Cotton, from which a wonderful panoramic view extends for 360 degrees, from Tweed Heads to the Glasshouse Mountains. This could be one of the best tourist attractions within easy reach of Brisbane on an afternoon's drive.

Although that is another matter to which I draw the Minister's attention, my particular plea concerns Peel Island. It has all the facilities necessary for an excellent national park. It is close to Brisbane, and would be a wonderful asset to the people of this city. There is no other place in the bay similar to Peel Island that can now be preserved. The island has a good harbour and an excellent jetty. I have made pleas in this assembly from time to time for the removal of coral from Lazaret Gutter and the provision of a small-boat harbour there for use in rough weather. Most of the live coral in the bay is round Peel Island and it has been suggested that it may have potential as a future tourist attraction, but I believe that a harbour for small boats would be a much greater attraction. For most of the year the waters of the bay are too muddy to enable the coral to be seen clearly.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Carey): Order! I hope that the hon. member will get back to national parks.

Mr. E. G. W. WOOD: I am talking about the development of Peel Island as a national park, Mr. Carey. People have been fishing Lazaret Gutter for many years, and I took advantage of your indulgence to mention that matter.

Mr. NEWTON (Belmont) (2.36 p.m.): As indicated by the Leader of the Opposition, the proposed Bill has been introduced in an endeavour to improve some of the provisions contained in Part III of the Forestry Act. Whether or not it goes far enough will not become apparent until we have the Bill before us, but it is interesting to note that the provisions outlined by the Minister deal with many matters about which the Opposition has been concerned for some time. The hon. member for Salisbury and other hon. members on this side of the Chamber have mentioned on a number of occasions matters affecting the operation of that part of the Act, and the Opposition will be very interested in finding out what action the Minister and the Conservator of Forests can take under the proposed amendments.

The Act now gives the Conservator of Forests power to recommend the setting aside of certain lands as national parks or scenic areas. To do that, of course, he has had a great number of obstacles to overcome. If any Cabinet Minister finds that, for some reason or other, the setting aside of the area in question will affect the operations of a department under his control, the Conservator is in a very difficult position.

Mr. Sherrington: The real villain is the Minister for Mines.

Mr. NEWTON: That is true.

It will be interesting, too, to see what effect the proposed provisions will have on the tourist industry. Under the Act, roads can be built and buildings can be erected in scenic areas, and a certain amount of damage may be done when that work is carried out.

Although the Act deals mainly with two specific matters—national parks and scenic areas—it mentions also land that may be of scenic, scientific or historical interest to the public of Queensland or to visitors to this State, and it is evident from the Minister's introductory speech that he is endeavouring to bring other items within the ambit of the Act. It is true that, under the present provision, areas over 1,000 acres are classed as national parks and areas under 1,000 acres as scenic areas. The amending legislation defines a "scenic area", and reduces it, in my opinion at any rate, to a more reasonable area. It changes the designation "scenic area" into various other classifications and this will possibly serve better the purpose that was intended in the past.

The Bill allows something that we have advocated in the past, namely, the amalgamation of certain areas that could include land of scientific or historic interest, and no doubt, as has been mentioned by the hon. member for Salisbury on many occasions, would cover such areas as the coloured sands on the North Coast, various wild-flora reserves and other such areas. No doubt these matters will be mentioned by the hon. member for Salisbury.

The section of the act that concerns us probably more than any other is that one that covers the powers of the Minister for Mines. Irrespective of what the Minister for Local Government and Conservation intends here today—undoubtedly he is endeavouring to provide some measure of protection—his powers are overriden by the Minister for Mines. Both the Conservator of Forests and the Minister for Conservation are completely powerless where mining leases or prospecting leases have been granted by the Minister for Mines, or any other Minister acting on his behalf. This procedure is specifically covered by the section of the Act to which I am referring, and there is no doubt that it is doing more damage to the things we want to see protected than anything else, in spite of the fact that, since the legislation is being introduced by the Government, it is natural to assume that hon. members opposite also want to see them protected. This legislation does not go far enough in restraining the Minister for Mines. Under the section to which I refer he has the power to grant mining and prospecting leases, and there is no way that he can be overriden by this Act. We contend that this is a very bad aspect of the Act.

The Act also makes it clear that, whatever the Conservator of Forests wishes to do with this land, he must first consult the Land Administration Commission. As a matter of fact, I do not think there is a single Minister who, under this Act, has not some overriding power that affects the ability of the Minister for Conservation to protect national parks and other things that are of interest to the people of this State.

The Act further states that if the Conservator of Forests, in the first instance, makes certain recommendations to the Minister, the views of any Government department that might be affected must also be sought by the conservator, before having any such land declared. If he finds that there are objections from any Government department, he must advise the Minister of the objections. Then, if the Minister is not satisfied he can refer the matter back to the Conservator of Forests before the approval of the Governor in Council is sought to set such land aside.

There is no doubt that the proposals outlined by the Minister do not go as far as the Opposition would like them to go. In the past, some Bills have been described

as being steps in the right direction, and no doubt the Minister is endeavouring to take such a step on this occasion.

There is no doubt that, if the Bill is designed to make better provision for the classification of administration, the Conservator of Forests must be clothed with greater powers than those existing in the Act. If he is given the power to deal with protests and complaints like those that have been received in the past, then that will be a step in the right direction. Nearly every week something occurs in the field of conservation, but the department responsible for it is lying idle. The hon. member for Salisbury recently spoke about the situation that exists at Tallebudgera Creek. Mention has been made, too, of Moreton Island and Peel Island. I agree with the sentiments expressed by the hon. member for Logan, because Peel Island is well known to me. I underwent my training there with the 42nd Water Transport Battalion and have visited it as a civilian. I agree that Peel Island could make a fine national park. The same remark applies to Moreton Island. What happens there? Before anything can be done, somebody else has moved in and applied to the Government for approval to develop it. The American Wendell-West Corporation applied to the Government for a concession to exploit certain areas of the island, and is believed to have planned a subdivisional development and canal estate as well as the export of its resources. We find, too, that application has been made for a sand-mining lease, and in this regard major activities are planned by Associated Minerals Consolidated Ltd., which plans to bring massive equipment from South Stradbroke Island, where it is now operating.

The Government should ensure that adequate investigation is made into the natural resources of all the State's scenic areas before they are spoiled by people who wish to develop them. It is pleasing to see that the Government has set up a survey committee to investigate the potential of Moreton Island. The committee comprises the Chief Lands Commissioner (Mr. G. E. McDowell), the Conservator of Forests (Mr. A. R. Trist), the Under Secretary for Mines (Mr. E. K. Healy), and the Director-General of Tourist Services (Mr. J. Wilson.) It is true that the Opposition might not be happy with the appointment of two of those gentlemen, but it is quite happy to see the Chief Lands Commissioner and the Conservator of Forests on the committee. The Opposition feels that the other members may not be particularly suited for such a position, not because of their personal views but because of certain actions taken by their departments in the past. It is a pity that similar survey committees have not been set up to investigate other scenic areas and national parks.

I have some comments to make about some of the Bill's provisions. It is interesting to note that the Minister told us that the area of land so far set aside for national parks and scenic areas totalled 2,300,000 acres. He then told us—and we should not overlook this point—of the number of people who visit national parks and scenic areas throughout the State. More local people than interstate tourists visit our scenic areas and national parks. I have visited many areas throughout the State—as no doubt most hon. members have—in the northern, central and southern divisions, and in the far-flung areas that have been set aside. We have national parks both in rain forest areas and also in areas away from them. There is a vast difference between them. I am sure that the Minister is not quite satisfied with the management of our parks, but, if we broaden the classifications covered, management will have to play an ever-increasing part. At the present time the rangers have a very hard job in carrying out the necessary work in preventing vandalism in our parks and scenic areas. I had a quick look at the Act and I am sure that clause 17 will play a very important part as it deals with the appointment of officers. I note, too, that it even covers the appointment of honorary rangers for national parks.

The "primitive areas" will have to be watched more closely than any of the others. It seems that as soon as attention is drawn to a new scenic area, people are attracted to it. The Caloundra area with its Christmas bells comes quickly to mind. People flock there and pick the Christmas bells, knowing quite well that they are doing wrong. For years and years people drove through the area where the Christmas bells grew without damaging them, but as soon as publicity was given to it they went there in droves to remove them, even though it was set aside as a protected area. I hope that our "primitive areas" are not allowed to be used, as some of our coastal strips have been, by people who forget that they should wear clothes.

It seems clear that the present concept of "primitive areas" does not provide for firebreaks, roads and other things that may be necessary, but that is easily understood when one considers the name given to this type of area.

The Minister, in his reply, should outline whether a "recreation area", or one of the other classifications, is an area to be taken from a national park, or whether, because it is smaller than the 1,000 acres necessary for it to be declared a national park, it is a "scenic area" under the Act. Throughout Queensland there would be many small areas under the control of the Conservator of Forests. Is that the reason for the new classification?

Members of the Opposition hope that "scientific areas" are set aside for educational purposes so that university and high-school people can visit them to further their scientific and historic studies. Several approaches have been made to me by people to see if an area on a certain island could be opened to them so that they could visit it to continue their studies.

I did not follow the Minister's remarks on watersheds. I did interject when the Minister was speaking, but evidently my voice was not loud enough to be heard, which is unusual. I endeavoured to find out what the Minister meant by dividing a forest so that we would have a watershed.

Mr. Richter: This is because one part could be under one control and another part under a different control.

Mr. NEWTON: Finally, I should like to deal with the good work done by those who look after our national parks and scenic areas. As has been indicated by my Leader and other hon. members, people who visit these areas know that these men are doing a wonderful job to provide amenities. I should like to congratulate the rangers, honorary rangers, and all other employees employed on this work, on the wonderful job they do to establish and maintain paths, erect signs indicating the distance of the various walks, ensure a supply of water for drinking and other purposes, and other amenities, for people visiting these areas.

In supporting my Leader, let me say that we are interested in this measure. Possibly it does not go far enough. If it does not, at least it will be a step in the right direction. Let us hope that the Minister will take into consideration some of the contributions that have been made today and have another look at this section of the Act again to see if it can be further strengthened for the protection of the interests of the general public.

Mr. SHERRINGTON (Salisbury) (3 p.m.): Because there is so much that I wish to say on this Bill, I shall of necessity be brief in paying compliments to those in the Forestry Department who are associated with the care of national parks, from those who work in the field, to those who maintain the walking tracks, right to the Conservator of Forests. I should like it understood that the brevity of my reference to them is no indication of the warmth of the regard that I have for their dedication.

Having said that, let me say that I believe that the legislation now before the Committee deserves the closest scrutiny by members of the Opposition, and I believe that the Committee so ably led by the hon. member for Belmont will give it the closest of examination. At the second-reading stage, the benefits of the study made by Opposition members will be made available to the House.

When introducing the Bill the Minister referred to the fact that there were 2,300,000 acres of national parks throughout the State. It is gratifying to know that year by year, irrespective of the Government that has been in office, national parks have, since their introduction in 1908, steadily expanded. It is no criticism of departmental officers when I say that because time is fast running out, there is a great need to widen the types of national parks in Queensland. I think it would be fair to say that the whole purpose of national parks is to preserve in perpetuity representative sections of our environment. I propose to refer to a paper written by a very eminent rain-forest ecologist, Dr. Webb, and delivered at a seminar at the University of New England in 1965. I know that the position has since changed; Professor Specht has since broadened botanical studies, and some of the figures that I am about to quote from Dr. Webb's paper may be out of date in the light of recent discoveries. Dr. Webb states that there are approximately 50 major vegetation types in Australia, and of those 50 some 37 occur in Queensland. Having discussed the matter at some length, he states that of the 37 forms in Queensland four are well represented in national parks, 10 are partly represented, and 23 are not represented. I do not intend what I have to say to be any form of criticism, as possibly one of the present problems is the lack of botanists doing classification work on the various types of vegetation. Using as a basis what Dr. Webb said, I think the Minister would agree that a wide variety of vegetation is not represented in national parks. Whilst the Cooktown orchid, which is the State's floral emblem, may grow in some national parks, it is not represented in a monsoon scrub national park, as such. It occurs, I think, only in certain national parks in the Daintree. The floral emblem of Queensland is not represented in a national park in the monsoon scrub.

Dealing briefly with the various types of vegetation communities, I point out that rain forests have several subspecies, and there are also monsoon forests, to which I referred earlier, sclerophyll forests, woodlands, scrubs, heaths, scrub steppes, savannas, grasslands, deserts, and the littoral complex. Of course, since the publication of this paper, the Simpson Desert, on the border of the Northern Territory and New South Wales, has been added to the national parks and, happily, we now have a desert national park.

In my opinion, the littoral complex is one matter about which the Committee should be concerned particularly. For some time past I have said in this Chamber that, except for small fragments, no portion of the State's coastline has been preserved in a national park complex. However, I shall have something more to say about that later. In the littoral complex, one finds desirable areas that should be preserved—for example, mangrove forests, water-lily lagoons, salt meadows, melaleuca and related forests, and marine flowering plants. Admittedly, some of these are partly represented, but I believe that this is a fertile field in which we can not only spread the concept of national parks but also add to the various types that are already in existence.

When one comes to the grasslands, it might be suggested that, for instance, Mitchell grass country should be preserved, and someone might ask, "What beauty is there in the Mitchell grass country?" True, it may

not be a tourist attraction and may not warrant a second glance from the ordinary person in the community; but it has a definite place in a complex of national parks because of its scientific value and because of what can be determined from an area such as that if it is preserved in perpetuity.

Unfortunately, I must deal only briefly with most of these matters, and I now pass on to scientific reserves. I think the Minister will be generous enough to admit that for some time past I have raised from time to time in this Chamber the need to preserve scientific reserves. Anyone who wants to be enlightened on this subject could not do better than read a paper prepared by Hugh H. Iltis, of the Department of Botany, University of Wisconsin. It is entitled "We need many more scientific areas", and Mr. Iltis makes these comments—

> "We have come to realise during the last 30 years that preservation of soil or forest for economic reasons is not enough; that to really make advances in proper conservation we have to learn to understand the immense complexities of what the British ecologist, Tansley, called the ecosystem, the interrelationship of plants, animals and their environments. In order to study these, we need to preserve areas containing undisturbed ecosystems for scientific study."

Later he says—

> "Natural history is in many ways in its infancy. We may know about how many species of plants grow in Wisconsin, but do we know where and why? And if we think of insects, fungi, bacteria, and other small organisms, in many instances we do not even know their names, far less their potential uses, or importance in the schemes of the living world."

Dealing with the various areas, he says—

> "With all this variety, each area is therefore a tremendous storehouse of potential resources, not only for ecological or taxonomic research but also for the source of as yet unknown economic products of plants. What month goes by when we do not read of a new antibiotic or a new drug that originated from plant sources? We therefore need to keep inviolate samples of as many types of vegetation in as many situations as possible, to keep from extinction as many species of genotypes as possible."

He then goes on to deal with the various types of legumes that grow in certain parts of the State, and the pertinent point that he finally makes is that there is a definite need to reserve these areas. He says—

> "It is indeed a small price to pay, to buy some 50 acres of prairie! For from such as prairie as this, which would barely support a family, came streptomycin or strains of penicillium which helped save this country billions in man-hours and human suffering."

The point I am making here is that many of the species, because of development, are fast disappearing from our continent, and so it becomes necessary in the interests of science to see that as many of these types as possible are preserved. Not only, as Iltis states, do we get new discoveries of antibiotics from the various plants but, in addition, the scientist is able to determine, by his research, the fertility of the soil, and so on. We have at the present time the clearing of large brigalow areas in Queensland, and unless scientific areas are preserved where the scientist can go to carry out his experiments, on land in its undisturbed state, we could be in serious trouble where such things as soil-fertility loss occurs in these areas.

As a matter of fact, to my knowledge the only area of brigalow held as a scientific reserve is in the Meandarra area, some five miles east of Meandarra, and it was held only because of the actions of an enlightened Tara Shire Council. I pay this local authority the compliment that it is very enlightened in that it made available to the C.S.I.R.O. some 365 acres of brigalow exclusively for research purposes. True it is that scientific areas, in the main, fall into two categories. First of all, there is the scientific area which the scientist needs merely for the purpose of observation, to study the changing environment and so on, but there is indeed a second type of scientific area that is required, namely one in which a certain amount of destructive use must be made of the area so that the scientist can carry out his experiments.

I will detail to the Committee, in brief, the experiments that were carried out at Meandarra. One of them involved the destruction of one-tenth of an acre of brigalow. Firstly, all the dried material on this area of land was collected. It was weighed and assessed, and then all the green material was similarly harvested. As a result, the scientists have already produced two papers, and a third is in the offing. They are being printed in the "Australian Journal of Botany". They have been able to produce these papers dealing with the distribution of fertilizer elements such as phosphorus and calcium and their distribution between the earth and the plants themselves. Because this required some destruction of the area, it becomes necessary for some types of scientific reserve to be separate and distinct from any national park.

I believe that, over the years, we have learned a very salient point from the Aborigines. I refer to the use of controlled burns in some types of forest. I can well envisage that a type of scientific reserve may require a controlled burn to carry out such an experiment. Because of that, we cannot be prepared to accept the situation that we have reached the ultimate simply because a large portion of a national park has been set aside as a scientific area. I glean from the Minister's introductory remarks that scientific

reserves need not necessarily be within national parks. Most of the reserves need only consist of small areas, perhaps 300 to 400 acres.

Mr. Richter: It will be set aside as a national park.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: The point I am trying to make is that they need not be part of the existing national parks.

Mr. Richter: They are part of the national parks, but they will be given a particular designation.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: The point I raise is that it is not desirable to have research conducted if it entails the destruction of natural resources in a national park. Isolated areas must be found for the purpose of carrying out scientific research.

I wish to deal with some of the problems associated with the preservation of national parks, and I refer to areas of representative types of forests. I shall deal with the Southwood area, in the Moonie district. Recently I had the pleasure of visiting the area at the invitation of the National Parks Society, the Naturalist Society, and the Wild Life Preservation Society. The area lies 11 miles west of Moonie and contains the last remaining stand of representative brigalow in South-east Queensland.

Mr. Richter: Could you keep up with them?

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I not only kept up with them, but I also led the field.

I refer to this area because I feel that it is urgent that something be done about it. It contains some 17,500 acres, which it was proposed to subdivide. I must say that the Minister for Lands was good enough to agree to a postponement of that proposal following representations from me. After the societies that I have mentioned visited the area, they compiled a case that embodied every aspect of the park, including its zoology, botany and even its fencing. Its case is now in the hands of the Minister for Lands and the Minister for Local Government and Conservation.

Mr. W. D. Hewitt: I have read that document. It is a credit to the authors.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I am glad to know that.

My point is that a handful of people have almost pleaded with the Government to set aside the last remaining stand of representative brigalow in South-east Queensland as a national park.

Mr. P. Wood: Who are opposing the scheme?

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I do not want to delve into that aspect at the moment, but if the matter is debated in the Chamber and is decided against those societies, I will certainly mention those who are opposed to it.

I mention the wallum country, which is already attracting the eyes of developers following recent advances in tropical pasture research. I envisage the same lamentable situation arising that if some portion of the wallum lands is not set aside as a national park we will re-enact this same problem.

I want now to refer to an area that I have constantly raised in this Chamber. I advert to the coloured sands, an area which has been visited by back-bench members, and the awful tragedy that could occur. I do not claim credit for the movement that is afoot to bring the coloured sands area, north of Noosa, into the limelight. I have a very high regard for the Noosa Parks Development Association, headed by Dr. Harrold and Guy L'Estrange, and the work they have done. However, I do claim credit for raising this matter consistently in Parliament for the past two years. But at this time I find myself exactly where I was when I started two years ago to try to have this area declared a national park.

Mr. Porter: What do you think Mr. Nelson Gracie is trying to do?

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I am quite happy to acknowledge his efforts. But for the shortage of time, I could name many others. I do not want to take credit away from them. Kathleen McArthur, the well known artist, is another person who has been tremendously active. I do not want to take any credit, but I do point out that it is a tragedy that this area is not a national park. It is possibly the most outstanding area in Queensland, with a complex of rain forests growing on low-fertility soils, which the scientists cannot explain, and with eucalypt forests growing alongside on infertile soil. Nearby, on the Noosa Plains, there is possibly the greatest collection of wildflower types in Australia, if not in the Southern Hemisphere. The area has peat bogs of some magnitude, which scientists all agree contain the geological history of this area.

I could continue talking for some time about the beauties of this place, and its geology and its geological significance. But, as my colleague said this afternoon, because of the influence of the Minister for Mines over national parks, and because prospecting leases for sand mining have been granted along the beaches and on the high dunes, the whole of this area is threatened.

I compliment Mr. Trist and his officers for their approach in planning a national park surrounding a State forest area. I have a high regard for their acumen and foresight, but I wonder how frustrated they feel. I believe that the Minister for Local Government and Conservation would be sympathetic to this proposal, but how frustrated these people must feel at the failure of their efforts to preserve an area such as this, which, if it was in any other State or country—particularly a place like the United States of America—would be cherished. Instead of preserving it we are

laying it open to the awful devastation of sand mining. These aspects of a national park will be irretrievably lost if the sand mining companies get a foothold in the area. I have tried every means at my command to bring to the notice of Parliament the urgency of this matter. Time is running out.

Mr. Murray: You are not in the same position as you were two years ago. You have a great deal of support.

Mr. SHERRINGTON: I am glad to have it. According to the prospectus issued by one of the mining companies, after 1974 it will commence to mine these high dunes and I wondered if we were any further advanced.

With all the sincerity at my command, I appeal to all Ministers in the Cabinet—not only the Minister for Local Government and Conservation and the Minister for Mines—to remember that if we destroy this area we are destroying one of the greatest heritages the State possesses. In my opinion, any Minister for Mines, or any Minister at all, who sanctions the mining of this area is criminally insane and should be in gaol. I do not intend to retract that statement, because I believe that here we have one of the most wonderful assets. When the area is declared a national park it will return, through tourist revenue, 1,000 times the few lousy dollars that will be received from mining royalties. If this Government and this Parliament realise that land use requires the most sensible use of the land, they cannot fail to be convinced of the value of this area if it is preserved as a national park.
(Time expired.)

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH (Tablelands) (3.26 p.m.): Firstly, let me say how pleased I am that this proposal is before the Committee. I agree with the remarks of the hon. member for Salisbury, who correctly and eloquently dealt with the reason for its introduction. I live in an area far away from what we call control. It is partly for this reason that I intend to speak for a few minutes and leave with hon. members a few ideas on this worthy effort to establish some degree of control.

The import of the term "national park" is slowly sinking into the minds of the people of Queensland. As soon as a person goes to a national park he feels that certain regulations and restrictions control his movements and what he wants to do. This could also be said of the word "conservation". People consider that all we are doing is conserving something. But if we couple "utilisation" with "conservation" we start to let people know that we are not doing only one thing.

The Minister has done this in this proposal. He has told us that we will know the reasons for the establishment of these national parks and the uses to which they can be put. This will go a long way towards educating members of the public. It will appeal to them, and be acceptable to them, if they are told that these areas are for recreation, historic, scientific, or other purposes.

It is also wise to replace the term "scenic area" with the term "national park". The people who run from one scenic area to another are not really the type of people we are looking for. Certainly they obtain some sort of benefit and pleasure but let us save for future generations. That is the object of the proposal.

I have two suggestions. I pay tribute to any person who has anything to do with the publication of information detailing the facilities of Central and North Queensland national parks, and similar pamphlets. It is the distribution of them that worries me. In my area a number of people are only too willing to spread the gospel of national parks, the protection of flora and fauna, and the other matters that we are dealing with today. Yet all they can get are old and out-of-date publications. These pamphlets should be distributed to schools, national fitness clubs, walking clubs, tourist bureaus, railway stations, bus terminals and airline terminals. These are the places where people will sit down and read pamphlets such as this. The people want to know where the parks are, how to get to them, the facilities they provide, their areas, and what is allowed and not allowed in them. These are things the people like to know long before they reach the parks.

The Minister for Primary Industries will admit that many times people have been found shooting in protected areas, mainly because they did not know they were in areas in which restrictions applied. Perhaps a small sign was erected two or three, or perhaps even ten, years ago. The undergrowth has not been cut back, perhaps a wild tobacco bush or a sapling grew near it, and the sign virtually disappeared among the leaves. Let us learn something from the way in which speed limits are marked on the new stretch of road between Sydney and Newcastle. A motorist does not have to look at the side of the road to ascertain the speed limit; whilst looking straight ahead he sees in large white letters on the road "65" or "55" or whatever the limit may be. Would it not be possible to have on the road a sign "National Park" and an arrow pointing to the area at the side of the road? The Minister may say that not all roads passing through, or bounding, national parks are bitumen roads. Nevertheless, these signs could be put on those that are bitumen surfaced. A lot of trouble is caused simply because people are not aware that they are in national parks.

Another suggestion is that the small maps made available of national parks include the names of such features as creeks and mountain peaks. This would provide added interest to those making use of them.

In conclusion, I should like to pay a tribute to Mr. Trist and his officers, particularly those in my area. Mr. Garden, whom I am pleased to name, goes out of his way to try to help people see that national parks are good for the State, and not merely places in which restrictions apply. The National Parks Association is doing a very fine job, and I think that Queensland is now becoming more conservation minded. This is a move that merits assistance to get it moving freely instead of slowly. Let us start with school children. I should like the Minister to consider the things that I have mentioned.

Hon. H. RICHTER (Somerset—Minister for Local Government and Conservation) (3.33 p.m.), in reply: I am pleased with the tone of the debate and the general approval of the Opposition to the principles of the Bill. The Leader of the Opposition gave general approval to it. The hon. member for Logan appealed for the declaration of more national parks, particularly Peel Island and the Mt. Cotton area. The hon. members for Salisbury and Belmont spoke forcibly, chiefly on the declaration of new national parks. I should like to say to both members that I listened to their submissions and I shall also read them carefully. Many of their suggestions are under consideration now.

Mr. Sherrington: What about the coloured sands? You won't indicate your position on that area.

Mr. RICHTER: So far as I am concerned, many of the submissions of hon. members opposite have my support.

The Mines Department was attacked. Both the Mines Department and the Lands Department have a perfect right to be consulted before an area is declared a national park, as it is necessary to ascertain the best use of the land. Once an area has been declared a national park, the Mines Department must approach my department for permission if it is proposed to mine in it. Is it not only fair that the various departments which are interested in land should be consulted before it is declared a national park?

Mr. Newton: Mines has the advantage.

Mr. RICHTER: I do not think so.

Mr. Sherrington: Your department should be paramount in all these matters.

Mr. RICHTER: The views of all departments should be taken into consideration.

Mr. Sherrington: In 100 years' time people will not thank the fellow who wrecked these places; they will thank the fellow who preserved them.

Mr. RICHTER: The hon. member could be correct, but I think that the other departments ought to be consulted.

Many of the matters put forward by the hon. member for Salisbury and the hon. member for Belmont will receive very favourable consideration. Some of them are being investigated very thoroughly now, and I hope that an early conclusion will be reached.

If there is any other point that I have missed, I will reply to it in my introduction to the second reading.

Mr. Bennett: I told the hon. member for Baroona you would say that. I can anticipate you.

Mr. RICHTER: If the hon. member has any other matter to which he thinks I should reply now, I will reply to it.

Mr. Bennett: Reply to all of it now.

Mr. RICHTER: I have taken a note of anything that I think I should reply to, especially anything related to the proposed Bill. I do not have to reply to anything outside the Bill.

Motion (Mr. Richter) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

(The Acting Chairman of Committees, Mr. Smith, Windsor, in the chair)

Hon. H. RICHTER (Somerset—Minister for Local Government and Conservation) (3.29 p.m.): I move—

"That a Bill be introduced to amend the Local Government Acts 1936 to 1967 in certain particulars."

The amendments proposed are generally of a machinery nature. A number of them stem from requests made by the Local Government Association of Queensland, and the others are considered to be necessary and desirable for the more efficient administration of local government in this State. For the information of hon. members, I shall proceed to give a resume of the principal amendments included in the proposed Bill.

The first amendment inserts in the Act a new table of contents. Over the years, as new sections have been inserted in the Act, references to them have not been made in the table of contents in a number of instances. The result is that the present table of contents is incomplete and we have decided to insert a new table listing the contents of the Act. In future, the table of contents will be suitably amended whenever new sections are inserted in the Act.

The next amendment clarifies that a person is not entitled to vote at an election for more than one local authority area, not-

withstanding that his name is on, or that he is entitled to be enrolled on, the voters' roll for more than one area.

Mr. Houston: How could he be entitled?

Mr. RICHTER: His name could be on the one roll; he is entitled to vote in another area and he could claim a vote in that area. I was given a case today by the hon. member for Bundaberg, who is enrolled on the Bundaberg electoral roll, and I should say that when that local authority roll is printed his name will be on it. However, he is resident in Brisbane and is entitled to vote here.

Mr. Houston: Does that apply to members of Parliament only?

Mr. RICHTER: We say he must not vote in two electorates.

Mr. Bennett: He cannot now.

Mr. RICHTER: There is a similar clause in the State Electoral Act. It is perfectly true that so far as the State Electoral Act is concerned there is no right to vote twice, and we are bringing this Act into conformity with the State Electoral Act.

Because of the interval of time taken to record transfers of enrolment on State electoral rolls, it is possible for a person's name to appear on the rolls of two local authority areas at a particular date. He could also be enrolled on one roll and be eligible to be enrolled on another. When this occurs at 31 December in a year preceding the holding of local authority triennial elections, it follows that such a person could be held to be entitled to vote at elections in each area.

Mr. Newton: Who would have the power to remove him?

Mr. RICHTER: It is not a case of removing him; he will not be allowed to vote in two electorates.

Mr. Newton: How is it to be decided if he has only to appear on one roll?

Mr. RICHTER: If he wishes to vote for the particular local authority where he is enrolled, that is all right, but he does not get the right to demand a vote in the area where he resides. It is as simple as that. That is exactly the principle in the State Electoral Act.

In order to overcome such a position at State elections, the Elections Acts provide that no person shall be entitled to vote in respect of more than one district notwithstanding the fact that his name is on more than one roll. We have decided to insert a corresponding provision in the Local Government Act in relation to local authority elections.

Further amendments contained in the Bill authorise a local authority to fix by resolution each year at its budget meeting the basis of levy of water charges and the amounts payable to it for inspections of the rate book, the impounding of stock, the supply of a copy of its annual financial statements and the renewal of licences for the erection of licensed gates on roads.

Under the Act as presently in force, the basis of levy of water charges and the amounts of the fees mentioned have to be fixed by by-laws. In the case of water charges, this is considered anomalous since the Act already vests power in the local authority to fix the basis of levy of sewerage and cleansing charges by resolution each year at the budget meeting. We can see no reason for this distinction in the law and have accordingly decided to amend the Act to enable the local authority to fix the basis of levy of water charges by resolution in the same manner as sewerage and cleansing charges.

Mr. Pilbeam: Many of them are doing that now.

Mr. RICHTER: The hon. member should not tell me that.

With regard to the other amounts mentioned, the Act was amended in 1964 to empower a local authority to fix by resolution in each year at its budget meeting various miscellaneous fees and charges which it has power to charge; for example, fees for the registration of dogs and fees payable with applications for building permits. Previously the local authority had to fix these fees and charges by by-laws and had to amend the relevant by-law each time it desired to alter the fee or charge.

There are a number of miscellaneous fees which the Act specifically requires the local authority to fix by by-laws; that is, fees for the inspection of the rate book, for the supply of a copy of the local authority's annual financial statements, for impounding and for the renewal of a licence for the erection of a licensed gate across a road. We consider that there is no reason why a local authority should not be empowered to fix these latter fees by resolution in the same manner as other miscellaneous fees and charges. The Bill makes provision accordingly.

Another amendment included in the Bill authorises a local authority to take land outside its area for the performance of a function of local government. There are certain circumstances in which a local authority may want to take land outside its area for a function of local government —for example, in the case of a shire, for the purpose of providing its public office in an adjoining area.

Prior to the passing of the Acquisition of Land Act, when a local authority required to take land outside its area for a function of local government (other than for the purposes of a water-supply undertaking, which is dealt with specifically under the Local Government Acts), it had to take action under section 54C of the Water Acts. In terms of that section, where the Minister

administering the Water Acts was of the opinion that the land was required by the local authority, he could take the land at the expense of the local authority, and the land became permanently reserved under the Land Acts, and the local authority was vested with the control and management thereof for the purposes for which it was taken.

Section 54C of the Water Acts was repealed by the Acquisition of Land Act, and there is a need to clarify the powers of a local authority to take land outside its area for a function of local government. The Bill vests the authority with the necessary powers in that behalf.

Mr. Houston: What if the other local authority does not want them to have that land?

Mr. RICHTER: They have power to resume. It is a power of resumption for local government purposes.

Mr. Houston: Yes, but they are taking it from some other local authority area.

Mr. RICHTER: There is exactly the same right as exists under the resumption Act. This gives the power to do it, and this could be tested in court.

Mr. Bennett: What if one local authority wanted to acquire the other local authority's premises? How would you get on then?

Mr. RICHTER: I ask the hon. member that question; he should know.

Mr. Bennett: It depends on what your Act says.

Mr. RICHTER: There would be a right of appeal against such a resumption. The Resumption of Land Act would cover this.

The next amendment included in the Bill increases from $600 to $1,000 the statutory limitation on the amount of fees that may be paid to a member of a local authority in any one year for attendance at meetings of the local authority and deputations and the making of authorised inspections. This amendment is sought by the Local Government Association of Queensland.

Under the Act a local authority has power to make a by-law providing for the payment to members of fees and expenses necessarily incurred in attending meetings and deputations and making authorised inspections. The Act provides, however, that the total amount of such fees paid to a member must not exceed $600 in any one year.

Mr. Newton: Didn't we do something about special fees a couple of years back?

Mr. Sherrington: Not us; it was the Government.

Mr. RICHTER: I will give hon. members the history of this. This legislation does not affect any allowance granted under the Act by the local authority to the chairman. It is an entirely different thing.

The statutory limitation was increased from £200 to £300 ($600) in 1959. Hon. members will agree that the cost of living has increased considerably since 1959, and we feel that there is justification for an increase of the statutory limitation from $600 to $1,000. I do not think that there is anything wrong with that. If the present and past values of money are looked at, it must be realised that it is only fair to raise the limitation to $1,000.

A further amendment empowers a local authority to sell or dispose of goods and chattels that come into its possession through being abandoned or left on land owned by it, or under its control, for example, at a council swimming pool. There is a lot of trouble in certain areas on this point. Under the proposed amendment, goods and chattels of a non-perishable nature that are unclaimed for six months may be sold by public auction after the requisite notice is given in a newspaper.

Goods and chattels of a perishable nature may be disposed of by the local authority in such manner as the clerk directs, and goods and chattels that the local authority considers unsaleable may be disposed of in such manner as it directs. The purchaser of goods and chattels so sold or disposed of by a local authority obtains an absolute title thereto.

The proceeds of sale or disposal, after deducting the expenses associated therewith, are, if unclaimed for 12 months, to be paid into the general fund, but the local authority is authorised to meet subsequent claims if it is satisfied of the claimant's entitlement thereto.

Where moneys paid by a local authority to a claimant are later claimed by another person, the local authority is not responsible to make any payment to him, but he has recourse against the claimant to whom the moneys were paid.

The next amendment clarifies the times within which a local authority has to decide an application for a permit to use and develop land under an interim development by-law, and the rights of persons to appeal to the Local Government Court against decisions of a local authority on such an application. An interim development by-law is one made to control the use and development of land pending the coming into force of a town-planning scheme.

The amendment is designed to bring the provisions of the law relating to these matters into line with those relating to applications for site approval under an approved town-planning scheme. Provision is also made for applications for a permit under an interim development by-law to be advertised for objections in a manner similar to applications for site approval

Under the amendment, where an objection is received by the local authority to the granting of an application for an interim development permit and the local authority

proposes to grant the application, it has to serve notice of its proposal on the objector within 40 days from the date of its receiving the application or within such further time as the Minister may allow for the decision of the application. The objector then has 30 days within which to appeal to the court against the proposal of the local authority to grant the application.

In such a case, the local authority is precluded from deciding the application until—

(a) the time for the lodgment of appeals has expired; or

(b) if an appeal is lodged, until it is determined.

In deciding the application, the local authority is bound by the court's decision on the appeal.

A further amendment included in the Bill relates to the obligations of a local authority in relation to the subdivision of land. It provides that where the Minister is of the opinion that a local authority has failed—

(a) to observe an agreement entered into between it and a subdivider under its by-laws relating to the subdivision of land, for example, regarding the reticulation of the land with water supply and sewerage services; or

(b) to spend, in accordance with such by-laws, moneys paid to it thereunder towards the provision of public garden and recreation space to serve the land to be subdivided,

he may issue such orders on the local authority as he deems necessary and the local authority has to comply with such orders within the time allowed by the Minister. I think hon. members will recall that those provisions are contained in the City of Brisbane Town Planning Act.

Mr. Bennett: You will keep the Local Government Court pretty busy, won't you? You will need another judge there.

Mr. RICHTER: Yes, I agree. That is another matter that we are working on now. Would the hon. member like the job?

These amendments follow corresponding provisions contained in the town-planning ordinances of the Brisbane City Council and place local authorities outside Brisbane in a position similar to that council in matters of this nature.

The final proposal is designed to increase from $10 to $40 the sum payable in respect of the nomination of a candidate for a local authority election. This amount has stood at $10 for a great number of years; it was that amount in the Local Authorities Act of 1902.

The Local Government Association claims that the amount payable is so low that it does not deter a frivolous nomination, which could result in the holding of a costly election when a person nominated has no prospect of success.

In view of the change in the value of money in the intervening years, we have decided to increase the amount payable to $40. This is the amount payable under the State Elections Acts in respect of the nomination of a candidate for State elections.

Many local authorities have to hold a costly election in a division, simply because some rat-bag who has no chance decides to nominate.

Mr. Bennett: Who says they are rat-bags?

Mr. RICHTER: It has been proved that some of these fellows are rat-bags. They have not had a chance of success and have lost their deposits. The idea is to keep these people honest.

Mr. Bennett: You are not necessarily a rat-bag because you lose your deposit.

Mr. RICHTER: No. I am not even saying that the hon member for South Brisbane is a rat-bag, even if I think it. Based on the change in the value of money between 1902 and today, I think it is fair to increase the amount from $10 to $40.

I commend the motion to the Committee.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba—Leader of the Opposition) (3.58 p.m.): This is another case in which the main debate will take place after we have studied the Bill and have seen how the proposals fit into the Act. But the Minister has told us sufficient for us to analyse some of the proposals.

Firstly, he referred to the possibility of double voting. He did not say whether he has any cases of this. If there has been any double voting, I am certain that it would not have been for an Opposition member. This illustrates that there has been a failure to check the rolls, which is something that has been going on for many years. The attitude adopted by the person checking the roll seems to be to go to one home and ask who is living there, and then ask who lives in the neighbouring house, and the house next door to that. Quite often names are removed from the roll or are on it when they should not be. This is not in the interests of democracy and our system of electing members of Parliament or of local government. The roll should not be in a haphazard condition. Considering the cost of an election, it is important that money should be spent on checking the rolls at regular intervals.

It is claimed that it is the responsibility of the householder or citizen to see that his name is on the roll. We have the ridiculous situation in this State that the Commonwealth requires a person to be on the roll after residence of one month and the State after three months. There is no sense in that.

I have since found that when many people apply for enrolment they obtain the two cards, fill one in, and, although they intend to fill the other one in, they do not seem to

get round to it. I can see no logical reason why the State should not fall into line with the Commonwealth. It is my opinion that one month is sufficient. At present the stage is being reached at which people are on one roll and not on the other. The real trouble is the lack of scrutiny and checking of rolls to make sure that they are correct.

Mr. Richter: I think you realise that all local authorities outside Brisbane take the State electoral roll as at 31 December, whereas the city of Brisbane compiles its own rolls as at 31 March.

Mr. HOUSTON: That is quite right, but it is the State roll that is checked only every three months. I say that that period is far too long, and causes people not to be on the roll. People come to me, meaning well, and I give them the two forms and say to them. "Make sure you fill in the Federal one as soon as you have been there for one month, and, after three months, fill in the State form". When the time for checking the roll arrives, often it is found that the names of these people are not on it. If you are lucky, you are able to get on to them first and say, "What about your State enrolment?" They then say, "Oh, I forgot about it. My card is still there on the sideboard". I do not think that that is a good thing. The whole essence of the Australian electoral system is compulsory voting, and clean rolls make it worth while.

The Minister made same reference to "rat-bag" candidates. If that is the case, apparently there are "rat-bag" voters, too. I am not prepared to suggest that that is so. I would perhaps suggest that people have not become sufficiently informed before casting their votes, but that is their privilege as human beings.

Mr. Newton: They are the informal voters.

Mr. HOUSTON: That is correct. There are many reasons why that happens. I do not particularly blame those who are on the two rolls. I say that it is up to us, in our efforts to make democracy work, to have the rolls checked regularly.

Whilst on this subject, I may say that I do not agree with the use of police officers for this work. There are plenty of retired men and women who are quite capable of doing it conscientiously. If the rolls were checked regularly, they would always be up to date. At census-taking time, the Commonwealth Government employs the type of person to whom I have referred, many of them being pensioners.

Naturally I do not support a person's voting on two rolls, or in two electorates, although quite often it is not the fault of the person concerned.

The next things that the Minister referred to were water levies and other charges, and the fact that budget time is the time to look at them. That is fair enough. A change in a council could mean a change of charges. I think it is appropriate to say now that the Government has to have a good look at the financial position of local authorities, as I do not know how they are going to continue to operate with the demands now being made upon them. Every time a road is improved, more people go to that area. Every time it is suggested that sewerage is to be provided or the water supply is to be extended, there are extra charges on the local people and on the local authority. If, for instance, the local authority decides to sewer its area, it is no good saying, "We will do this street today and the next street in five years' time". If it is necessary to sewer one home, it is necessary to do the lot.

Local authorities have to be given finance to enable them to carry out their projects as complete units. I am not suggesting that a town can be sewered in a week or a month; what I am saying is that if a local authority has only its ordinary revenue to rely on for carrying out all of this work, it will find it impossible to do it. The Minister may say that work of that type is done with loan money. Even so, the loan has to be repaid, and its repayment is governed by the rates that the local authority receives. As hon. members know, local authorities try to do many things from their consolidated income, if I may put it that way, quite apart from what they do from loans. As a State Government, I think we must find ways and means of assisting them more than we do at present.

Mr. Richter: I think you appreciate that this amendment is designed to enable them to do this by resolution, instead of bringing in a new by-law every time they introduce new charges.

Mr. HOUSTON: I agree, and I have no fight with that proposal. Local authorities have asked for it so that they can get money more quickly, save delays, and simplify their bookkeeping.

However, I am using this opportunity to say that I believe that local authorities have reached the end of their tether as far as the availability of finance is concerned. One finds that in many local authority areas residents are beginning to be worried by rate charges. As I said during the Budget debate, the electoral rolls show that in many country areas the number of people is decreasing instead of increasing. Consequently, the burden of payment is carried on fewer shoulders, and that burden will get heavier if the trend continues. I suggest to the Minister that there is an urgent need for the Government to find ways and means of assisting local authorities.

Mr. Houghton: A typical example of that is the beach cleansing that is thrust on seaside areas.

Mr. HOUSTON: I was coming to the tourist industry. I intended mentioning the Gold Coast and the North Coast, and the situation at Redcliffe would be similar, as the hon. member reminds me, and at

Sandgate. Roads and motor vehicles are improving; people are getting more leisure time. All those things are desirable, but they will mean that more people will go to seaside resorts. Additional services will be required to cater for them; additional cleaning will be required after they leave, as the hon. member for Redcliffe said. That will add again to the costs of local authorities, and I do not believe that residents of the area should have to pay for the comfort of other people.

From talking with people who have gone to live in seaside local authority areas, I know that they do not want people to come there. They have a small house on a small block of land; they want to live quietly and fish nearby. They do not welcome people who come there and disturb the quietness of their surroundings. When the local authority asks them to pay more so that more people can come to the area, they are not happy. In particular, I know the feeling of some of the people on Bribie Island, and I know that the situation is similar at Scarborough and other nearby areas.

I suggest, therefore, that at this point of time the Government should try to find ways and means of assisting local authorities.

Let me turn now to the question of fees. Strangely enough, hon. members are told on many occasions in this Chamber, "There is no great increase in the cost of living; there is no need for price control; there is no need for many other things. Prices have not risen very much." They are told that things are much better today and that competition is keeping prices down. What a lot of nonsene! The Minister now tells the Committee that in nine years costs have increased 66⅔ per cent. and that the gentlemen concerned now require $1,000. I do not suggest that it is an unreasonable amount to give them; that will be a matter for investigation as the Bill passes through the various stages. The point that does strike me is that if the Government is prepared to increase the maximum by 66⅔ per cent. and the reason given is that costs have increased, that is not in line with other arguments that have been used from time to time in this Chamber.

Mr. Richter: That is not the only argument I put up. There is added work in local government today compared with what there used to be.

Mr. HOUSTON: For the councillors?

Mr. Richter: Yes. On your own argument there is added work.

Mr. HOUSTON: I am not saying there is not, but the Minister did not mention the extra work as one of the reasons; he said it was due to increased costs.

Mr. Richter: There are other reasons.

Mr. HOUSTON: There may be other reasons. These are the matters we will be looking at. If we approve of the increase and support the Minister on the terms that $1,000 is all right, we will have taken these other things into account, plus the extra costs.

The Minister then went on to mention disposal of property. I think this is a common-sense approach. People do lose things, but I suggest that if an article is lost and subsequently found, and is of some value, the attempt to advertise it should be more than through the Government Gazette. How many people read the Government Gazette? I think there should be intensive advertising in the local area, even if the person who owns the article has to pay a certain amount to redeem it.

I notice that some of the articles occasionally advertised for sale through police stations are articles that would be very difficult to lose. I am inclined to think that the person who loses such an article cannot remember where he lost it and does not know where to apply for it. Some of these articles may be of considerable value.

As to the subdivision of land, I am afraid that the Minister did not quite clear up some of the points that I am interested in. He said that if a local authority wants land outside of its own area for a certain purpose, it can put a requisition on it.

Mr. Richter: They have that power now. They do it through the Water Act. Because of the Acquisition of Land Act the power is taken out of the Water Act, so we are substituting this provision for it.

Mr. HOUSTON: The point I was getting at is that it is virtually requesting land from another local authority. Under the terms of this Act, will it be possible for the two local authorities involved to come to a mutual arrangement?

Mr. Richter: They usually do.

Mr. HOUSTON: That is under the Water Act, but will the same thing apply under this Act?

Mr. Richter: The same thing will apply. It is the only method of doing it.

Mr. HOUSTON: The Minister did not tidy up that point.

I do not think the Minister referred to offices. He means that if something is wanted for quarry purposes or for some other purpose——

Mr. Richter: Even for offices—even if offices have to be built.

Mr. HOUSTON: This is obvious, but there could be other occasions where a local authority wanted to resume some ground for other purposes, such as quarrying.

Mr. Richter: They could always do this before, until the Land Acquisition Bill was introduced. It took the power away from the Water Act, and we are substituting this provision for it.

Mr. HOUSTON: On the last point, I think the Minister mentioned an increase in nomination fees from $10 to $40. I do not particularly like the terminology used by the Minister, although it is true that some Liberal candidates do lose their deposits. I do not think he meant it in that sense. But neither do I think that $40 would stop a person from nominating if he felt he should nominate. To my way of thinking, there should not be a fee high enough to stop a person from nominating if he believes he has something to offer the community, even though it may only be an offer of his personality.

Mr. Newton: If he is a ratepayer he has an interest.

Mr. HOUSTON: He not only has an interest, he has a definite stake in the area.

Mr. Richter: The same principle is contained in the State Electoral Act.

Mr. HOUSTON: That is right, but on my understanding——

Mr. Houghton: He gets it back.

Mr. HOUSTON: If he gets a certain percentage of votes. I do not want to start arguing the State Electoral Act at this stage, but that leaves the question open, too. A person could get a maximum vote of 3 per cent. or 5 per cent., and if there are enough candidates he saves his deposit. If there are only a couple he still gets the same total vote and his vote is not dependent on the other candidates, and he can then lose his deposit because of the relationship to the highest vote.

There are a lot of loop-holes, but the idea was originally to cover the cost. I think that is going back a long time in our system and in our thinking. Certainly, the propaganda machines today are very different from those of bygone days, and today issues can change. We could have a person coming forward as an Independent on some popular issue in a certain area and he could do very well, but within six weeks the issue may no longer be of any importance. So that the person need not be a rat-bag, as the Minister suggested, when he nominated, but the only issue for which he nominated could completely slip by.

I do not know whether it is going to be argued that the nomination fee should be the same as that required for a State election. I hope the Minister is not going to argue that, because the council nomination fee has been increased from $10 to $40, the State nomination fee should be increased from $40 to $400. One of the successful features of our democratic system it that, first of all, we have clean electoral rolls, and, secondly, we allow to any person who feels that he would like to nominate for Parliament the right to nominate. These are fundamental bases of our democratic system, and I should not like to be a party to any move that would tend to change it. It is the right of the citizen to put in his own nomination, and if he can find six people to support him he is entitled to nominate. Naturally nomination fees are charged. I suppose it could be argued that today $40 is not a large sum of money, but there are some people who feel that they cannot find $40 but can, perhaps, find $10. I think the Minister said that it was in 1905——

Mr. Richter: 1902.

Mr. HOUSTON: Well, let's face it; in 1902 there were not many Labour members in councils and Parliament, and it could be that the fact that they were receiving only £5 a week prevented them from nominating. I think that the Opposition will have to look at his Bill not so much on the aspect of money values as on the aspect of giving everyone the right to nominate if he so desires. We will not oppose the introduction of the Bill, but we will have a look at its relativity to other Acts and its effect on the average person.

Mr. PORTER (Toowong) (4.18 p.m.): I rise to support the introduction of the Bill, which proposes machinery amendments. Quite obviously, in general terms they are regarded as desirable. I think that they are the requirement, too, of the Local Government Association.

I wish to draw attention to some of the principles which, in terms of local government, are observed more in the breach than in the act. Some of the machinery amendments lean quite heavily on those principles.

If we consider the Act that we are being asked to amend, we must accept that the proper concept of local government in this country, or in any other country, for that matter, is that it has to be local, and also that local government must exercise power, duties and responsibilities that are delegated to it by a sovereign Government. I consider that both these vital principles are totally abortive in the case of Greater Brisbane, and this is something to which I have referred on previous suitable occasions and to which I want to refer again.

I think it is desirable to keep on repeating this in order to aid in inducing a favourable climate of change to get something done about what I regard as a very important matter. I freely concede that my own view on this is not totally shared by members of my own Government, although I think the gap between what I feel and what is held in other quarters is shrinking. Certainly it is a lot less than it may have been a couple of years ago.

If local government is to be effective it is essential that it be local. By that, I mean it must be of a certain size and have a certain homogeneity about it. It has to be a real community and it must be close to the ratepayers so that they feel part of it. I wonder if anybody feels that this applies in any sense whatever to Greater Brisbane. I find it quite difficult to believe that anybody would regard Greater Brisbane as a local authority in terms of the Local Government Act. It is in no sense close to its ratepayers. I imagine that most people residing in the capital city area find the so-called local authority something alien and hostile and, very often, quite malignant. It is something which, to them, seems to possess a very vast power which operates with quite autocratic methods, whose titular head seems to tend to act like a despot in that he does not act in terms of the established methods and procedures that the Local Government Act quite properly embodies, but seems to act more by whim and by wish.

I think that this leads to a situation where anybody who has the temerity to quarrel with this peculiar form of local government in Queensland's capital city risks quite vindictive persecution and, indeed, the Bennett inquiry very clearly proved that this was the case. Throughout the Local Government Act it will be found that it enshrines the belief that a local authority must be totally part of a local community. On the contrary, I would say that Greater Brisbane is the reverse; it is the autocratic enemy, as it were, of the community, something of a repressive and quite baleful force that bears down on the individual and quite harshly compresses him into the mould of this autocratic city-State.

Mr. Lickiss: It is virtually a State within a State.

Mr. PORTER: It is, indeed. It is almost a partner State with the State Government. I meant to refer to that. The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha has put his finger right on it.

In the capital city of Queensland we have something which is called a local authority which operates under its own Act, which grows out of the Local Government Act but which, in real fact, is not a local authority at all. It certainly does not exist as a local authority in the sense of being close to its community so that it can enlist the enthusiastic, dedicated citizens who want to work, plan and think for their own local communities. That means that we have nothing in Brisbane comparable with the vast reservoir that other capital cities possess in the energy, enthusiasm, inspiration and goodwill of local citizens.

I often wonder what this must mean to us in terms of hard cash. We have to pay for everything that is done here, but all other cities with smaller local councils can draw on free, voluntary and, at times, extremely expert co-operation from local citizens. I also wonder whether, because we have to pay for so much of what is done voluntarily in other capital cities, we get the same quality of work and inspiration.

The unhappy situation that we have in Brisbane is that, as I say, we have local government only in name but in no sense in fact. This means that we are in a poor situation compared with most other capital cities. Anybody who wishes to test the validity of this can do so by going to the other capital cities and to their outer suburbs and making visual comparisons for himself.

For instance, we in Brisbane have few made footpaths once one gets out of a very restricted inner metropolitan radius. Our roads are things of shreds and tatters, to put it mildly. For instance, I wonder how much new roadway has been built in Greater Brisbane by the council over the past three years and how much new road is in fact the contribution of developers. I think that the Greater Brisbane City Council's contribution to new road is not very great. On most of our roads in suburban areas we seldom see bitumen on more than the crown of the road. Unfortunately, as so many visitors comment, in every area of nature strip or paddock, weeds, grass and rubbish are found in profusion, something one seldom sees in any other capital city in Australia.

Brisbane is a sub-tropical centre which enjoys a superb climate, it is built on better hills than is Rome, and has quite a noble river bisecting it in a serpentine course. With all these natural advantages it should be colourful, gay, fresh and delightful. But all too often it appears to the visitor to be frowsy, slatternly and down-at-heel.

A comparison of Brisbane with other cities shows that we have few parks, open spaces or play areas within reasonable access of the people. It is not much help to say that we have an enormous acreage of parks. These are big open areas which are more regional projects than urban projects. In other words, the importance of open areas is their ready access to the people who want to use them. That is their effective distribution. I think that the town-planning concept is that there should be 10 acres of open space for every 1,000 population. In the electorate that I represent, which is one of the oldest settled areas in Brisbane, I doubt very much whether, in terms of effective open space, we come within cooee of the rule of 10 acres to 1,000 population.

Compared with other cities we can be forgiven for thinking that we have in Brisbane, owing to our peculiar form of "non-local" government, if I might put it that way, an almost deliberately induced ugliness. Each day I drive in and out along Coronation Drive, and every time I drive along it I look on the other side of the river and think to myself: how in heaven's name, as a civilised people, can we put up with this horrible prospect which still litters the south bank of the river.

Mr. Newton: Don't forget about the South Brisbane Drive. If you want to debate that, we will keep you here all day.

Mr. PORTER: I also know where the South Brisbane Drive began.

This is not the only part of it. Everybody who moves around Brisbane cannot help but be struck by this desire to turn useful residental areas into a multiplicity of service stations. We are not worried about creating a concrete jungle in Brisbane. I think we should be worried about creating a series of concrete deserts in Brisbane.

There is ample evidence to demonstrate that Greater Brisbane has not a local government in terms of the concepts embodied in Act that we are asked to amend. It most certainly does not draw from the well-springs of community goodwill and hence we suffer, and suffer badly, by comparison with other capital cities where true local government does exist and where this concept of Greater Brisbane is regarded with loathing and horror —make no doubt about that—and is paraded among people who serve on town and regional planning as a great horrible example to avoid at all costs. Let us not have people suggest that in other places Greater Brisbane is looked upon as a magnificent concept that they want to emulate. I have not found any trace of this in governmental, local authority, citizen, or effective planning circles.

The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha interjected a moment ago about a sovereign power. I think that Greater Brisbane is not a local authority working with the State Government as a body properly exercising delegated powers, but is increasingly becoming an equal sovereign body competing with the State Government. This inevitably means that we are lagging woefully behind other capitals in concepts of planning, development, beautification and citizen welfare. As we lag behind in this race for the desirable things, we tend to gallop ahead towards the undesirable things, namely, rising city costs. Hon. members will have noticed quite recently that the announced cost-of-living rise in Brisbane was almost three times the average of the corresponding rises in the other capital cities, and the total constituent parts of that rise are Brisbane City Council charges—increases in electricity and rates.

This is not the occasion to go into details of the infrastructure of the Brisbane City Council—I intend to do that on another more suitable occasion—but I do want to record my personal regret that the Government, in administering the Local Government Act, tends to display a reluctance to accept that Brisbane, which is currently a city in the throes of tremendous changes and development, is fundamentally its responsibility. I think it is a responsibility which far outweighs the considerations that one might have in regard to believing that because a body is an elected body one should not interfere in any way with its decisions.

Mr. Graham: Would that apply also to any other provincial city?

Mr. PORTER: No, I think it applies only to Brisbane.

Mr. Graham: Why?

Mr. PORTER: Because Brisbane is the only place where there is a local authority of such size and power as to be not a local authority at all.

Mr. Graham: Is it different from any other local authority in its powers?

Mr. PORTER: It has infinitely more power than any other local authority.

Mr. Graham: Rubbish!

Mr. PORTER: Brisbane is the only capital city where this situation obtains, and it is only here that a State Government washes its hands of responsibility in terms of decisions made by the local authority, apart from approval of the broad aspect of a city town plan. I make no bones about the fact that I disagree with this attitude, and my disagreement is not as unique as it used to be; as I mentioned earlier, I think the gap is closing. I disagree with the belief that we cannot interfere because the Brisbane City Council is an elected body. Other State Governments do interfere with what local authorities do in terms of planning for the capital. They interfere substantially, consistently, and effectively, because a State Government must accept a residual responsibility for what happens in its capital.

Mr. Murray: In Sydney they interfered drastically.

Mr. PORTER: Well, we may do so one day —I hope. I think that we are so much the worse for being out of step in this regard. I do not for a moment castigate the Minister in this matter because he must necessarily be the instrument of Government policy. The effect of this was seen when recently he replied to a question asked by one of my colleagues. I think it was the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha who asked a question about the redevelopment of the old markets area at Roma Street. The question was asked to ascertain whether the plans announced by the Lord Mayor were compatible with the previous plans for which some of the land had been made available, and if plans for the area were being handled in such a way as to integrate the development there with what was being done in the city square and other places. Quite obviously the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha thought that the Minister's answer was rather a brusque brush-off, as if to indicate that the question was "not quite cricket" and should not have been asked. As I say, the Minister had little option but to do that while Government policy is as it is at the moment, and I hope that, in speaking in this way, I can help to induce a climate in which Government policy may change.

I believe that, far from the Government's having no warrant, let alone no right, to interfere with what the city council does in Brisbane, if it believes that it is not the right thing it has every warrant to do so. As a result of the State Government's refusal over recent years to accept the role that all other State Governments play in regard to capital cities, we are going to have a massive car park in the centre of Brisbane, and nobody yet knows how the city will cope with all the manifold problems of the distribution of that traffic at peak hours as it leaves the huge hole in the ground. Equally, nobody yet knows precisely what the vast concrete lid of that car park will be. We have had so many proposals, so many plans, so many presentations relative to that, and they have followed each other so fast, that one might think they were some form of moving picture.

Certainly nobody is aware of precisely what is to be done with the Roma Street area. It appears that about six or seven tenders were submitted, each one for a different scheme. To my mind, there are two aspects of this which cut right across all proper principles of local government, especially as regards tendering. In the first place, it means that if contractors are asked to submit proposals for a design plus a tender, town planning is literally being done not by town planning authorities but by construction tenderers.

Mr. Lickiss: On an ad hoc basis.

Mr. PORTER: Well, even on an ad hoc basis is a rather favourable way of describing it because, with each one of these a different plan, how is it possible to compare the economic basis of each tender with the others? And who is going to decide which design is the best design for the city, apart from its economic feasibility? How will these things be done? What criteria will be used?

Mr. Lickiss: Who can tell what the city is going to look like?

Mr. PORTER: Obviously nobody cares very much what the city is going to look like.

Whose will be the ultimate decision on these matters? I saw a television programme after I had come back from spending some days in Sydney, where I had the good fortune to interview the men who are at the helm of the planning authority there, and I was appalled to see the Lord Mayor being interviewed, shuffling plans round like a pack of cards, and saying, "This is a nice one. This one does so-and-so." When he got to the end, it seemed—strangely enough, this was the last design that he looked at—that he was inclined to a design and tender by somebody named Stephens. I suppose that was not really very surprising. But here is a major aspect of city planning where the decision made may affect generations to come, and it is to be handled on the basis of competitive tenders for different designs and the design will never be the determination of properly constituted and competent town-planning authorities. In my view, this would not do for a South American banana-land republic, let alone for an up-and-coming State such as Queensland, with a capital city in which some 60 per cent of the State's population will live within the next 10 to 15 years.

I think that hon. members have to refer to electoral procedures here to understand part of the story, and that, of course, is encompassed in the proposed amendments. The role that the Lord Mayor plays in the Greater Brisbane concept is one of the major reasons why it is such a dangerous situation. As I say—it has been said by others—Greater Brisbane is not a local authority; it is a city-State, and the Lord Mayor is its ducal prince. I make no attack on the person of the Lord Mayor, because I freely concede that it would be much the same, no matter who the Lord Mayor was or which party was in office. The type of office it is makes it quite inevitable that when we have one man who is elected to office by more votes than all his followers, this makes for the constituent parts of a despotic system and, as the years go by, a Lord Mayor elected in this way inevitably exhibits prima-donna characteristics of some sort; he tends to resent opposition; he wants to ignore his colleagues, and he tends more and more, as a person elected in his own right—as I say, by a greater vote than his followers—to want to treat with another head of State as a head of State in his own right.

Mr. Graham: This is a very biased speech.

Mr. PORTER: I hope it is biased, because I am strongly biased against Greater Brisbane as it stands at the moment. If the hon. member does not understand that I am biased, I am wasting my time.

Mr. Graham: If the Lord Mayor was a member of the Liberal Party he would be a champion.

Mr. PORTER: To the contrary; if he were a member of the Liberal Party I would not alter one word of what I am saying, and I say this in reference to present and past Lord Mayors, as well as future ones.

I have said that the role of an elective Lord Mayor, elected by such a huge weight of votes, makes for much of the worst elements of the situation with which we are confronted. On a comparison of the last State and city council elections, we find that the Lord Mayor not only received a greater

vote than his colleagues—this incidentally is the rule more than the exception—but he received something like 50,000 more votes—almost one-third more—than the party which is the dominant party in this Parliament and which supplies the Premier. One can therefore see how a Lord Mayor elected under this system inevitably feels that he has enormous electoral muscle, as it were, and can afford to flex it when he wants to.

I think it is unavoidable that in these circumstances a Lord Mayor regards himself, as it were, as another sort of Premier, or a sub-Premier, to say the least. This is certainly not local government as the Local Government Act enshrines it, and certainly not local government as it is understood in other places. I hope that the day will come when the Government will deal with this freakish situation, which is not in the best interests of either the City of Brisbane or the State of Queensland.

(Time expired.)

Mrs. JORDAN (Ipswich West) (4.43 p.m.): I wish to say a few words in regard to this legislation. The various amendments recounted by the Minister seem to me to cover correction of anomalies which have become apparent, and to give legality to some things that have arisen as the result of development and to some procedures that have already been adopted by local authorities and are really quite above board but which could be subject to challenge.

The first amendment, I think, is purely a machinery matter arising from the growth and spread of local authority Acts. The second relates to voting in two areas. People who live in Brisbane would not have as much experience of this as people who live in outside areas. In Ipswich the question does arise, but, as the people live close enough to be contacted, they can be told of the position.

For instance, the rolls for all local authorities outside Brisbane close on 31 December, and that is final; no supplementary roll is brought into use. After that date, anyone who leaves the area remains on the roll, and anyone who comes into the area cannot get on the roll or get a vote, even though he or she may have been resident there for three or four months. A person who moves to Brisbane can fill in his electoral cards in the normal manner, in the time allowed, lodge them with the electoral office, and be placed on the supplementary roll for Brisbane. This means that he is legitimately on the roll for Brisbane as well as being on the roll for the local authority. That is what happens under the Act as it now stands. Some of my friends have been legitimately on the roll in Ipswich and have moved to Brisbane in the months prior to the Brisbane City Council election and have sent in their enrolment cards. They have asked me what they should do and where they should vote. They have worried about being fined either for not voting in Brisbane or for not voting in Ipswich. The Act does not define this situation, and under it I doubt whether they could be prosecuted for voting in both places. This anomaly calls for correction.

I turn now to alteration of charges by resolution. I am sure that local authorities will welcome this provision. Very often delays have occurred because this had to be done by the passing of a by-law and that takes time. A council may not want to wait until its Budget is presented. I understand that it will now be possible for it to make the alteration by resolution whenever it desires to do so.

On the power to resume buildings, I point out that many places are the headquarters of more than one local authority. There could be many reasons why a local authority would want to obtain land in that area. In many instances that can be done by negotiation, but, in the event of a recalcitrant local authority digging its heels in, I think it is necessary to give the power to the other local authority to resume if it feels that it should. I do not think that this power will be abused.

The proposed increase in allowances to aldermen or councillors merely covers the increase in the cost of living. We owe quite a debt of gratitude to many people who have worked in local government. Over the years local government has been served by many dedicated people, and I think that they should be paid an allowance commensurate with the responsibilities that they take upon themselves when they enter public life.

I have heard experienced councillors say to people who are thinking of entering local government—indeed it was said to me—that they need to have a little bit of a nest-egg behind them before doing so because the allowance that is paid to aldermen in no way covers the expenses that are incurred in performing their duties for the benefit of the public. Councillors not only attend meetings —and some councils have more meetings than others—but also make inspections and investigations. In addition, their homes become places at which the public can gather, and their time is taken up in performing duties in the street, at entertainments and at sporting events. Their time is not their own. Dedicated people who enter that field of public life should be paid an allowance commensurate with the cost of living. This would ensure that only the best types enter this field and that people in local authorities outside of Brisbane will not say, "Why should I have to put up with all the abuse and destructive criticism that I get, when I am out of pocket doing it?" There are quite a number of able people in the community who, because of what they have to take in carrying out local authority duties, just will not nominate. It is a good

idea to raise this allowance so that they will get some recompense for expenses incurred.

The Minister said that the candidate's deposit has not been increased for many years. I can see nothing wrong with increasing it. As a matter of fact, I would not mind if it was increased still further because money values today are much higher than when the deposit was fixed. An increased deposit would discourage from nominating for local government some people who have nothing to offer local government and who, in fact, would seriously detract from it. I have in mind some people I know, even in my own area, who adopt a "knocker" attitude to local government affairs and busy themselves with this, that and the other in a destructive way. Somehow or other, these people always seem to get the backing of people who believe what they say without looking into the facts or questioning them. Because the local Press likes a news story and gives it undue headlines, without bothering to look into the rights and wrongs of it, other people back them.

Mr. Lee: Do you believe that a higher nomination fee would help to keep that type out?

Mrs. JORDAN: Yes. It might not keep them out, but it would tend to make them think twice about it.

I come from a working-class town and do not want to make the deposit so high that it will debar people in the lower income groups, but an increase would not prevent them from nominating because someone will always help a person who has ability. Political parties help, and individuals back Independents.

Mr. Lee: It would not hurt the genuine person.

Mrs. JORDAN: It will not do any harm to the genuine person. If he got a reasonable vote, he would get his money back.

Mr. E. G. W. Wood: It only keeps out the irresponsible ones who cost the Council a lot of money.

Mrs. JORDAN: I agree with that. I would be quite pleased to see the deposit twice as high as the figure given by the Minister. Nevertheless, I agree with the proposed amendment at this stage.

The interim development by-law for which provision is made in the Bill can be likened to regulations that would apply under a town plan which a local authority has drawn up and which is awaiting gazettal. The Ipswich City Council is operating, and has been operating, under an interim development by-law such as that referred to by the Minister. Indeed, it has dealt in the manner suggested in the interim by-law with such things as advertising for objections, the waiting time, and time for people to take a matter to court, and the various decisions on it. However, it could be open to challenge. This amendment will cover local authorities that are quite above board in dealing with matters that they have to deal with in this interim period. This affects local authorities outside Brisbane more than the Brisbane local authority. Brisbane has authority covering site approval whereas local authorities outside Brisbane do not. The interim development by-law will cover them.

I have dealt with most of the amendments referred to by the Minister. I too would like to add my voice to those who feel that there should be a wider scope for local government to obtain revenue. More and more is being required of local government. With urbanisation of the community a higher standard is demanded in what is provided by a local government.

The tendency of people to live in the suburbs rather than in the heart of the city means that facilities and amenities are more expensive to provide. The suburban sprawl, as we have come to call it, is costly to local authorities. They must have some avenue of revenue available to them other than property or rate tax, the loans that they are allowed to raise and the little they get in special grants. I suggest that, in discussions to be held in Canberra on the loan programme, this appeal for more finance for local government be kept in mind.

One proposal the Minister mentioned that I forgot to deal with relates to the money paid in to a local authority for the provision of water, sewerage, and so on, to a subdivision, the period the local authority is given to carry out this work, and what is to happen if it does not proceed with the provision of amenities such as parks for which money has been paid in. This is a good proposal which makes the local authority get on with the job instead of dilly-dallying. It is not fair to subdividers if the money is tied up and nothing is done about it from year to year.

These proposals will bring the Local Government Act up to date with what is required. It is an Act that must be amended frequently to cope with changing conditions and new ideas. It cannot be left static if it is to meet the needs of the people.

Mr. NEWTON (Belmont) (4.58 p.m.): The debate has been broadened by the contribution of the hon. member for Toowong. Of course, this can be done when we are dealing with the Local Government Act. From the Opposition's point of view, let me say that the contribution made by the hon. member for Toowong did not surprise me at all. He has made many contributions of a similar nature on this subject, with the same bias against the Brisbane City

Council. It amazes me that those of the same political colour who are supposed to be the Opposition in the Council do not raise some of these matters instead of having members of Parliament do it for them. If we rise and make a similar speech, which we have done on many occasions, we are called "knockers". The speech of the hon. member for Toowong relative to the development of this city pre-judges the position. He allowed no opportunity for the work being carried out by this administration in the metropolitan area to be completed. He is "knocking" it before it is even under way.

Mr. Porter: What about having a referendum on the breaking-up of Greater Brisbane?

Mr. NEWTON: This is a pet subject of the hon. member. After all, his political counterparts controlled the city council for long enough and they did not want it, so why should we support it? It is quite evident that what is really getting under the skins of some hon. members on the other side of the Chamber is the progress and development taking place under the present administration in Brisbane.

My experience has taught me always to adopt a cautious approach to amendments to the Local Government Act. Amendments have been brought down from time to time with which we have agreed, and which in some instances are now starting to have repercussions. Let me make it clear that whilst we may agree with the abolition of local option polls, we will not let the Minister out on a number of things that may have to be approved by him concerning by-laws and ordinances of the Brisbane City Council or other local authorities without having a close look at them.

As was mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, all the discontent at present in local authority circles results from a shortage of finance. We on this side of the Chamber have never said that local authorities throughout the State do not do a good job. Many amendments to the Local Government Act result from requests made to the Minister by the Local Government Association of Queensland, which is composed of representatives of local authorities throughout the State. Whilst much is heard about the problems of the Brisbane City Council in the metropolitan area, the Act is amended mainly in an endeavour to overcome some of the problems of local authorities right throughout the State.

Mr. Lee: Brisbane has its own Act.

Mr. NEWTON: That is true. Many of the requests made by local authorities concern matters which also have application to the Brisbane City Council. The hon. member for Yeronga said that the Brisbane City Council has its own Act. If he makes a study of it, he will find that when it was drawn up it was based on the contents of the Local Government Act. It is true that the Act governing the Brisbane City Council has been amended from time to time, just as the Local Government Act is now being amended.

Mr. Lickiss: You wouldn't think the reverse was the case?

Mr. NEWTON: It could be. The Minister has indicated that the amendment brings these provisions into line with those in force in the metropolitan area. I agree with the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha that it could operate the other way.

In dealing with the proposed amendments outlined by the Minister, I should like to say that I am very interested in his comments about a table of contents. It is very difficult at times to hear the Minister clearly from the Opposition benches; but if, as I think he said, a new table of contents is to be drawn up, that will be of great assistance.

He referred also to the question of people who are entitled to vote at local authority elections. It seems strange that what the Minister said happens does happen. However, I do not doubt it, because the Minister must have had some examples to justify his bringing the amendment forward, and it raises a number of other questions in this field to which consideration could well be given.

In country electorates—it is not done, to my knowledge, in the metropolitan area, and I am not sure what happens in provincial cities—the State electoral rolls are compiled on the basis of subdivisions in a particular area. I take it that the rolls for local-authority elections in the capital city, the provincial cities and local-authority areas throughout the State are compiled by the State Electoral Office, because whenever anyone completes an application for enrolment on the State electoral roll, he also completes, on the other side of the card, an application for enrolment in the relevant local-authority area. The question is: where are the rolls compiled for local-authority elections? As far as I know, the work is done at the State Electoral Office. In my opinion, the rolls must be compiled on the basis of subdivisions. Take the electorate of the hon. member for Logan as an example. It includes part of the Redland Shire and, down at the bottom end, some of the Albert Shire. If subdivisons are included in the rolls, it makes it easy to take out those that are included in a particular local-authority area, and that should overcome any problems that might arise.

On the question of registration and persons endeavouring to claim two votes, I suggest to the Committee that some people may not have been informed correctly and may not have the position clear in their minds. They may have properties or buildings in two local-authority areas and they may be paying rates in those two areas. Therefore, they may believe that they should have some say

in the administration of both those areas. There may be some justification for that argument, because the operation of local authorities revolves round rates and charges, and a person who finds himself in that situation may try to overcome his problems by voting in each of the relevant areas.

My main reason for entering the debate is to deal with the fixing of charges by resolution. The Minister indicated that some matters are already dealt with by resolution. He mentioned water rates particularly; I think he referred also to cleansing charges and sewerage rates. As it has been agreed to do away with option polls in local-authority areas, I may use the fact that charges are fixed by resolution as a lever when the Opposition is deciding what policy it will adopt on amending legislation that is brought down in future.

It is my opinion that at the present time, where any of these things cannot be done by way of resolution they must be done by a by-law or approval of the Minister. As chairman of the Opposition's Local Government Committee, let me say that many approaches have been made to me on by-laws of local authorities throughout the State which certain sections of the community felt were not in their interests. It was only by drawing the matter to the Minister's attention by letter that something was done to make sure that the interests of these people were protected.

Mr. E. G. W. Wood: It has to be advertised in the local Press, and there is the right of objection to the Minister direct.

Mr. NEWTON: That is true. Whilst these objections may be lodged with the local authority concerned, it is then decided by a majority vote of the council. If carried, the council then applies to the Minister to have the by-law registered. We as a Parliament have to watch how far we go. We have to make sure that we give protection where necessary. From time to time we have agreed to having many provisions deleted from this Act, and the Opposition feels that this position must be looked at.

To me, the matter seems to revolve around the question of expenditure which local authorities feel may increase their rates and charges to the residents of their areas. Over recent months many approaches have been made to me in this regard. Yesterday we had an example of some discontent at Sarina, and it was not as a result of any A.L.P. activity. That was not the case as presented to me; it involved ordinary people there who could have been members of the A.L.P., the Country Party or any political party at all. In fact, they may not have been members of any political party. This sort of thing is going on and we feel it should be watched.

On the question of a local authority requisitioning land outside its area, this is not new; it has been going on for goodness knows how long. Some problems must have arisen somewhere, and the intention here is to give some protection in this regard. There is no need to go any further than a provincial city for an example. Take, for example, the city of Warwick. It has its own council chambers, and, if my memory serves me rightly, it also has the Glengallan Shire Council office and the Rosenthal Shire Council office in its city area, and there may be another one, too. The people from those local-authority areas come to Warwick because it is the main town where they do their business, and no-one could have any objection to that. I do not think there will be any argument between councils on this aspect.

I do not think there will be any argument about the increases that have been indicated, because we realise and appreciate that chairmen and councillors in these various areas sit on various committees and have to make inspections and things of that nature, sometimes at much inconvenience to themselves and their businesses or farms. There would be no objection to that amendment.

On the question of the disposal of goods and chattels, the Minister has indicated that where an article is lost on council property, every step will be taken to advertise it. We have to visualise just where these things happen; I think swimming baths were mentioned; and it could also be in a civic centre or a dance hall. I was very pleased to hear the Minister say that it has to be advertised. I hope that this is so. It should be advertised in the local Press, because sometimes very valuable articles can be left in a particular place and if that fact is advertised the owner would know where he left the article.

On the matter of the permit for the use and development of land in a particular area, I do not intend to go any further without having a look at the measure. The Minister has indicated quite clearly that it is on lines similar to those on which the Brisbane Town Plan was drawn up, that is, the agreement between the local authority and subdivider and the payment of moneys.

I will have a good look at the Bill because my experience with this Act has taught me to be very cautious about what I say at the introductory stage of a Bill without being able to compare it with what has been said. With those remarks, I leave further comment until the second-reading stage.

Mr LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha) (5.16 p.m.): Local government is vital to our way of life, but when we consider local government we must ensure that it is kept in its true perspective. For this reason I enter this debate to support my colleague the hon. member for Toowong. I find myself supporting him on this occasion, and on other occasions I have appreciated his support

when I have led an attack on this monolithic structure that we would call the Greater Brisbane system, which, of course, is under the authority of the Brisbane City Council.

It is undoubtedly true that we are facing a situation in which we have virtually a State within a State. This is bad enough. But the type of administration that is constituted under a local-government set-up is not conducive to that sort of administration. It is too large and too unwieldy, and the situation becomes even more grave when we find that this monolithic structure is controlled by a virtual dictatorship. Surely we who believe in democracy cannot support the present situation.

For the benefit of the hon. member who has just resumed his seat, I say that when I complain about the concept of Greater Brisbane I do not complain merely because of the present party in office. I would be equally as critical if another party held the upper hand in the Brisbane City Council. It is the concept with which I disagree, not the personnel involved. However, I must say that at no time in this democratic country can we respect or support what I have already described as a virtual dictatorship. We find that if the aldermen-in-council are inclined to reject a proposal that is placed before them by the Lord Mayor, he has ways and means of making his will prevail. He is not above calling in the masters at the Trades Hall to assist him in this regard. Whilst we have this type of administration, the City of Brisbane is in danger.

On the other hand, when we deal with the matter of planning, it is one thing to provide the machinery but we, as the sovereign Government of the State, have the residual responsibility attaching to the planning concept, whether it be on a town or regional basis. This statement would be readily acknowledged in any other part of the Commonwealth. I, like the hon. member for Toowong, had the benefit of quite some discussion with planners in Sydney and other prominent people in local government in that city. Contrary to what we have heard from the city fathers here, I found no indication at all that other cities would like to move over to a greater city complex.

Mr. Porter: It is quite the reverse.

Mr. LICKISS: Indeed, it is quite the reverse, as the hon. member has stated and they have demonstrated this quite forcibly in Sydney.

I suppose it is quite significant that the Vice-Mayor, on his return to Brisbane, was no sooner on the ground than he advocated the Greater Brisbane system. In fact, he said that, having travelled abroad, he found that this system is the envy of people abroad; it is what they would like. I suppose they have to go farther afield to be convincing, because I have heard the Lord Mayor state that every other city in Australia envies the Greater Brisbane system. When we travel to other cities and speak to top Government leaders and people with some knowledge of this subject, the evidence is diametrically opposed to that statement.

I have already mentioned that there must be Government residual responsibility in all matters attaching to planning. That does not mean, of course, that the Government would take over totally the role of planning, whether on a town or regional basis. The concept of town and regional planning that I should like to see adopted in this State is one where the Government, or the planning authority, works in co-operation with the local authorities and assists in rational planning. I think that would be acceptable to members not only on this side of the Chamber but on both sides.

It is quite significant to visit other States and see the benefit of smaller local government administration. Members of such councils can get very close to the people in their areas, and it is good to see what can be achieved. The benefit of competition between one area and another can be seen. At Double Bay, where I stayed for a few days, there were no fewer than two free car parks provided by the local authority to encourage people to shop in that area. That is the policy everywhere in Sydney, but we have nothing like that in Brisbane. If we build a car park, people pay for its use. I have nothing against that, but I do object to the way in which some of these projects are undertaken.

I have already voiced my opposition to the concept of the city square. I do not propose to canvass that subject again because my colleague the hon. member for Toowong has voiced my views on it. When the city square was proposed we were told that Albert Street would be kept open for both lanes of traffic. Because there was a cave-in almost at the inception of the scheme we have only had one-way traffic in Albert Street.

Mr. Sherrington: No-one can forecast the weather. Unfortunately, a lot of this work was done during wet weather.

Mr. LICKISS: That is only one point.

We have witnessed what is happening in relation to the "grand" scheme for the redundant Roma Street market area. The total outcome to date has been the calling of tenders with proposed plans for the development of part of that site. I do not wish to canvass the question that I directed to the Minister for Local Government. He knows quite well my feelings on that subject and on his answer to my question. This is the sort of piecemeal development that can come about when one man is at the helm. I believe that this is not the type of planning required for the capital city. The planning of the capital city is a responsibility of all the people of Queensland, it is their capital city, and the people who represent all the people

in Queensland constitute the State Government, and I believe that it has an obligation in these matters.

When this grand plan for the Roma Street area was advanced, it was met with approbation at Government and city council level and by members of the public, and was favourably commented upon by the planning experts in this country.

Mr. Porter: This is the Bligh plan?

Mr. LICKISS: This is the Bligh Plan. I believe this is likely to be frustrated by the City Hall itself. It would not surprise me at all if, within the next few weeks, we see a plan for the redevelopment of the area emanating from the City Hall. If Opposition members feel that I am not predicting correctly, they should make some inquiries before they say anything. This is the sort of shoddy thing that goes on in this community, when the planning of the city is left to the type of administration we have. I say quite categorically that I do not believe that the city council is equipped to plan the City of Brisbane. It is certainly not equipped to plan the City of Brisbane in relation to the adjoining shires. This is where it is absolutely essential that there be Government supervision of total planning.

We should look at this Greater Brisbane concept and decide where we should go. I would be the first to reject any idea that Greater Brisbane, in the first instance, be merely broken up into smaller local authority areas. But I do say that the time is long overdue when we should consider taking away such responsibilities as water, sewerage, transport, electricity, and, to a certain degree, over-all planning. I do not mind the individual sections being undertaken by the council, but I believe that the over-all planning should be a joint responsibility of Government and council. What would then be left? A very large unwieldy local authority administration. At that point of time it would be right to look at the possibility of cutting Brisbane into more workable areas. It is only by doing this that we will inject into this city——

Mr. Sherrington: Do you want a hillbilly capital city?

Mr. LICKISS: Does the hon. member consider that Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth are hillbilly capital cities? If he does, the sooner he starts to travel the better.

Mr. Sherrington: They are a lot older than we are.

Mr. Porter: Perth is a lot smaller than we are.

Mr. LICKISS: Perth indeed is a lot smaller and is much better planned. The day that we in Brisbane can look at a plan such as that advertised for the Greater Sydney area, to the year 2000, handled by the State Government planning authority, for the needs of the area, which extends from Newcastle to Wolloongong and west to Katoomba, we will start getting Queensland off the ground and Brisbane to the forefront as a capital city.

Mr. Sherrington: Have you seen some of the accounts the householder gets for road improvement in some of the shires in Melbourne?

Mr. LICKISS: I have never heard objections raised by people down in that area. They are proud of their local municipality and local authority area. That is what we lack in Brisbane—the personal pride in one's suburb. If there is a local government election in Melbourne there is no shortage of the very best candidates. They are people who are prepared to devote their time and expert knowledge to the interests of their city and its development.

Mr. Porter: They really take part in local government.

Mr. LICKISS: It is part of their life. These people are devoted to this type of service.

Mr. Porter: And they do not want to be paid.

Mr. LICKISS: They are paid nothing but normal expenses. They enter local government with the desire to contribute to the community.

It is claimed that the Greater Brisbane concept is an economic way of running the city, but when we look at it what in fact are we developing? We are developing something of which in years to come we will not be very proud. We are virtually developing a State within a State. We are developing political pressures which already tend to wear away and breach the whole concept of sovereign powers under which we, as Queenslanders, are part of the Federal system.

This brings me to a most important issue. We have already heard advocated at Federal level, through the Federal Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Whitlam, that local authorities should deal with the Commonwealth Government. To the unthinking, I suppose that would seem to be a reasonable proposition, but again I remind the Committee that there are two sets of sovereign powers in Australia; there are those vested in the Commonwealth Government, and those vested in the State Government. I say, without speaking in any derogatory manner, that local government is a form of government inferior to the sovereign powers of the State and the sovereign powers of the Commonwealth. All that Mr. Whitlam was fostering, in advocating direct dealing between local

authorities and the Commonwealth Government, was the policy of the socialist A.L.P. of whittling down the powers of the State and strengthening the central Government. As Mr. Calwell said, what is needed to run Australia are 57 administrative areas (States), with a central Government supreme. Often we are unwittingly encouraged to look at this type of fallacious argument, and we do not analyse it and find out its true meaning. Already in America, as a result of direct negotiation between local authorities and the central Government, State Governments hardly ever meet; they have been bypassed and have virtually nothing to do.

Mrs. Jordan: Local authorities in America have police and education under their control.

Mr. LICKISS: That is right, and that has produced some of the problems of which they are complaining. It has reached the stage at which people are pleading to have that trend reversed. When the sovereign Government is further removed from the people, a direct dictatorship is encouraged. That, in our civilisation, must never succeed.

I believe that local government in Queensland should be supported as strongly as possible. Whilst we support it, however, we should remember that the fathers of Federation vested sovereign powers in the Commonwealth and retained the residual sovereign powers for the States. I am not prepared to accept that local authorities should ever have sovereign powers; there must always be reserve power in the hands of the States.

For those reasons, I believe that the State Government has a responsibility in the planning of the State, on both a town and a regional basis. This, surely, is in the best interests of the whole of the State. I am against the type of planning which segregates areas into watertight compartments. Town and regional planning is an over-all planning system, and, until we accept that concept, we will not be serving Queensland adequately.

Hon. H. RICHTER (Somerset—Minister for Local Government and Conservation) (5.34 p.m.), in reply: I thank the Committee for the general acceptance of the Bill. I especially commend the hon. member for Ipswich West on her sensible approach to the proposed amendments. I appreciate that she knows and understands local government, and I thank her for her contribution. I defer further comment till the second-reading stage, and commend the motion to the Committee.

Motion (Mr. Richter) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

The House adjourned at 5.36 p.m.