WEDNESDAY, 18 MARCH 1981

Mr ACTING SPEAKER (Mr C. J. Miller, Ithaca) read prayers and took the chair at 11 a.m.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

MINING ACTIVITY, REDBANK PLAINS; ALLEGATIONS BY MEMBER FOR WOLSTON

Hon. L. R. EDWARDS (Ipswich—Deputy Premier and Treasurer) (11.1 a.m.): I refer to the Address-in-Reply speech by the member for Wolston (Mr Gibbs) last Thursday in which he made certain statements and read from certain correspondence. He also made some allegations concerning my party and my own integrity. I find his allegations totally untrue and inaccurate, and his implications, therefore, are quite irresponsible.

In his speech, he made the accusation that because my departmental officers had answered inquiries concerning freight rates and rail charges for the transport of coal from Ipswich (such inquiries, I might add, were from the railways mainly and not from Rylance as he implied), I was therefore aware, and indeed fully supportive, of a mining activity in Redbank Plains.

Such inquiries of my officers and my department are numerous and are routine so that companies can assess the viability of any mining consideration and authority to prospect applications and mining lease applications can be considered and prepared. The Government’s policy is known and the policy is presented to mining companies. On no occasion was I aware, nor do I need to be aware, of such inquiries and such replies, as my officers at that stage forward routine information under the approved policy guidelines of the Government.

Concerning the letter forwarded by me to the Minister for Maritime Services—this followed a request to me as the local member from a number of mining companies who were seeking coal export sales. These included Rylance Collieries, who were optimistic of export sales of coal from their present operation and also proposed operations for which mining lease applications are to be considered, not by the Government but by the mining warden.

My inquiry was related to the very real problem of port facilities for coal export from the Ipswich field. I am amazed that the member for Wolston would be critical of me for my concern, as the continuation and development of the Ipswich coalfields will be dependent on export sales. This means, of course, that there must be adequate port facilities.

My personal view expressed to the delegation that I received (which, I might add, was highly critical of the member for Wolston for his lack of interest) was that I did not support mining in urban areas in principle, but that I could not, and would not, interfere, as the Mining Wardens Court was the place for determination of these matters.

It is regrettable that the member for Wolston, for whom I have always had the highest regard, should breach the faith of this Parliament by implications and innuendoes based on false information, and, indeed, on matters of which I was not even aware, nor had any need to be aware.

I also remind the House that the area in question is not in my electorate but is in the electorates of the Minister for Education and the member for Wolston. I would have thought that my low-key approach to this matter would have been appreciated and, indeed, understood by the honourable member for Wolston.

BOOKLET ON THE MANAGEMENT OF MALARIA

Hon. B. D. AUSTIN (Wavell—Minister for Health) (11.4 a.m.): I wish to draw members’ attention to a booklet that has been prepared by Dr Tony Musgrave, Senior Health Officer in my department, on the management of malaria.

It is not a comprehensive treatise but has been prepared as a service for medical practitioners, making useful observations and providing practical guidelines to assist in the early recognition of malaria cases, to improve preventive aspects, and to increase public health surveillance of the disease. It is particularly timely because of the mounting concern over a big increase in the number of malaria cases occurring in the State and because of the risk of malaria becoming endemic here again after many years.

I am also concerned over the increased incidence of falciparum malaria, a strain which is becoming increasingly resistant to chloroquine. This is a potentially lethal disease and therefore is a most serious development. Survival may depend upon an early accurate diagnosis and the administration of effective treatment.
The number of falciparum malaria cases notified in Queensland increased fivefold between 1978 and 1979—from 12 to 61. Most of these were contracted in Papua New Guinea. The total number of malaria cases notified in Queensland in 1979 was 161.

Interim figures show that in 1980, although 194 cases of malaria had been reported in Queensland, the number of falciparum malaria cases had fallen to 28. With the exception of one case at Darnley Island, all cases were imported. Ninety-two of last year’s cases were contracted in Papua New Guinea, 66 in South East Asia, 22 elsewhere (including the Solomon Islands and New Hebrides), and 12 were from unknown sources. Four of the patients were Torres Strait Islanders and 49 were Vietnamese.

I am deeply concerned about the possibility of epidemics occurring here. The anopheles mosquito is found north of Townsville, so it is possible for epidemics to occur in that region. We have had several outbreaks in the last ten years, the most recent being in the Torres Strait Islands in January and again in August last year. When these occur we have to mount a very costly operation to deal with them.

As I have said, endemic malaria has not existed in Queensland for many years. The continued importation of cases infected overseas, plus the fact that the presence of the mosquito vectors in the northern coastal area of Queensland and the Torres Strait Islands makes these places receptive to malaria, indicate that malaria remains a potential public health problem of rapidly increasing magnitude.

In addition to the risk of the reintroduction of endemic malaria from persons returning from Papua New Guinea and South East Asian countries, the Torres Strait Islands are highly vulnerable on account of the unrestricted traditional movement of residents of both countries between the islands and the western province of Papua New Guinea.

It has become obvious that there is a great need to increase the awareness of the public and the medical profession in relation to the risks of re-introduction of malaria into Australia and the need for special care in protection and treatment of cases. That is why my department has published this booklet on the subject which provides information relevant to the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of malaria in this State.

Doctors are advised to acquaint themselves with the dangers to individual travellers who plan to visit countries where malaria is endemic. Doctors should plan malaria prophylactic measures for travellers with care, providing up-to-date advice on the use of anti-malaria drugs and anti-mosquito measures. They should be aware of the importance of obtaining a full history of overseas travel in fever cases and of the need to make blood films for immediate examination when an illness could be due to malaria.

Malaria cases will require urgent treatment. Travellers should be warned to seek medical advice should they become ill or contract a fever while away or after returning home. They should state what overseas countries they have visited. There are always two aspects to be considered in each malaria case. These are the diagnosis and treatment of the patient on the one hand and the need to prevent further transmission on the other. The latter requires early notification to the State Director-General of Health. Further assistance with information on any aspect of malaria can be obtained from or through the senior health officer of my department.

I now have great pleasure in tabling the booklet for the information of honourable members. Each honourable member will receive a copy of the document today.

Whereupon the honourable gentleman laid the booklet on the table.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:


PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr R. J. Gibbs (Wolston) (11.9 a.m.), by leave: In this House last Thursday I made certain allegations—in fact, I believe that they were more than allegations—concerning the role of the Deputy Premier and Treasurer in negotiations concerning the coal-mining activities of Rylance Collieries and their application to mine at Redbank Plains, Goodna. I stand by every statement I made in this House last Thursday, and once again draw to the attention of Parliament the documentation that is available for all honourable members to peruse, which proves beyond any doubt that the facts and allegations I laid before the House were true and correct in every way. I make the same offer again this morning relating to those documents, which are still in my possession, along with other documents that further lead me to believe that the Liberal Party and its leader have been less than honest with the people of Redbank Plains concerning mining activities in that area.

I find it rather deplorable that last Thursday it was reported to me that Mr David Walker, the president of PUMA, who happened to be sitting in the public gallery—

Mr Akers: I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is prosecuting a quarrel and not making a personal explanation.

Mr Acting Speaker: Order! There is no point of order. The House has given leave to the honourable member for Wolston to make a statement.
Mr R. J. GIBBS: It was deplorable, to say the least, that at the conclusion of my speech in this Parliament last Thursday, I was advised by the president of PUMA, Mr David Walker, that he was requested by the Deputy Premier to attend at his office for discussions, where he was told by the Deputy Premier that I had said that he, Mr Walker, had in fact provided me with the said documentation. I totally deny having said to Dr Edwards that Mr Walker provided me with the documentation, and as a man whom I have always admired and respected, I am very disappointed that Dr Edwards would stoop to using such a low political ploy to find out where I did obtain the documentation.

The whole sordid matter will come out in further evidence that I will put before the Parliament at a later date. As far as I am concerned and, I believe, as far as the general public is concerned, the credibility of the Deputy Premier and the Liberal Party in this Parliament stands at an all-time low.

Hon. L. R. EDWARDS (Ipswich—Deputy Premier and Treasurer) (11.12 a.m.): I do not want to continue with this matter, but when I get the file from my office I will be very happy to table all the relevant documents to indicate my integrity in the matter.

It is perfectly true that I asked Mr and Mrs Walker to see me. They came to see me and the whole matter was discussed.

Mr D'ARCY: I rise to a point of order. The Deputy Premier did not seek leave of the House to make a statement. He just stood up.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: The matter before the House is, "Any other business." I am quite prepared to hear the Treasurer at this time.

Mr WRIGHT: I rise to a point of order. Standing Order 110 provides that the statement just made by the honourable member for Wolston cannot be debated and I believe that you, Mr Acting Speaker, are allowing debate on the matter.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: I am ruling that this is not a debate. Certain allegations have been made. I believe that it is not a debate. I believe that the Treasurer has the right to inform the House on any matter at all.

Mr Yewdale: He didn’t even seek permission.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Ministers do not have to seek permission of Parliament; it is only private members of Parliament who have to seek the permission of Parliament. Ministers have the right.

Mr Kruger: There are two standards here?

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order!
Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! I point out to the honourable member that he does not have the right to take a point of order on behalf of any other member of this House or any other person in this State.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

COMMONWEALTH/STATE INCOME TAX SHARING ARRANGEMENTS

Mr D'ARCY: In asking a question of the Premier I refer to the present discussions on Commonwealth/State income tax sharing arrangements.

I ask: As the April Premiers Conference will only enable the six Premiers and the Prime Minister to exchange their attitudes to this important issue and it will not arrive at any final decisions concerning the levels of finance each State receives, is he aware that the real decisions on this matter will be taken at the Premiers Conference as soon as the Grants Commission report on the relativities between the States is brought down?

As this report has to be brought down by 30 June 1981 at the latest, and as Commonwealth legislation is required for the new five-year Commonwealth/State Financial Agreement, is he also aware that this legislation will be brought down at a time when the Fraser Government faces a hostile Senate and would be rejected by the ALP and the Democrats if the deal for the States is brought down?

Mr BJELKE-PETERSEN: No, I was not aware that the legislation would be rejected by the Labor Party in the Senate. The whole matter is under review at the moment, but one thing is certain and that is that the Treasurer and I will be looking after Queensland's interests. I am quite sure that we will succeed in obtaining our entitlements, whatever the situation may be.

Mr D'ARCY: In asking a supplementary question of the Premier I refer to the combined statement by all State Premiers dated February 1981, concerning the review of personal income tax sharing arrangements between the Commonwealth and the States to which the Premier was a signatory.

As conclusion No. 7 of that report stated that whichever tax basis is adopted the new arrangements should include a guarantee similar to that which applied from 1976-77 to 1979-80, but with a significantly reduced betterment factor of 1.8 per cent, I ask the Premier: Why did he support with his own signature a proposal that would give to Queensland less funds because the original betterment factor under the Whitlam Government was 3 per cent?

Mr BJELKE-PETERSEN: That whole question was debated by the Premiers at considerable length, and for a number of reasons we decided that this was the best proposal we could put up. It will not mean we will receive less money. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition can be quite sure that we would not put up any proposal that would ultimately mean we would receive less money. I can assure the honourable member of that. We would not be as simple-minded as that. There have been occasions when we have suggested that personal income tax should be lowered, but at the same time we have also requested that if that suggestion was adopted by Canberra we would then receive tax reimbursements from other areas out of which we are not at the moment receiving funds. Of course we would want to maintain the natural increase to which we are entitled.

Dr EDWARDS: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition does not understand what the collective responsibilities in a Cabinet or a Government are. When I speak as Treasurer of this State, I am speaking on behalf of the Government and as part of it. Unfortunately, with two teams on the other side I am not quite sure which guard would make a statement.

Regarding this particular aspect—the statements that I have made are indeed the Government's policy that is under consideration at the present time. The Premier and I have had a series of discussions about the way in which we, as a Government, can best handle the matter of tenders. Of course, we have also been very closely involved with the Minister for Mines and Energy, who has a major responsibility in these particular areas.

The matter of future tenders is one for the Government to consider. The Minister
for Mines and Energy will be making a recommendation to the Premier and me for consideration, and that will then be debated by the Cabinet in the near future. For the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to suggest that there are differences of opinion about the way in which future tenders will be initiated, or indeed examined or undertaken, shows his total ignorance of the whole fact. The Premier speaks on behalf of the Government, as do I and the Minister for Mines and Energy. We have that responsibility and we will not shirk it.

This Government has indeed been far more responsible in the past than any other Government in the history of this State. Our responsibility is to get a viable project that will ensure the best returns to the people of Queensland. This is why we are continually reviewing situations. As the Premier indicated the other day, these matters are under constant review, especially by the three Ministers concerned, so that a final recommendation can be made to Cabinet.

MATERNAL AND CHILD WELFARE SERVICES, UPPER MT GRAVATT

Mr SCASSOLA: I ask the Minister for Health: Is he aware that the maternal and child welfare services which were provided from premises in Kessels Road, Upper Mt Gravatt, are no longer available? Will he inform the House of the reasons for the cessation of such services, and will he take all necessary and urgent steps to ensure that maternal and child welfare services are provided for all patients seeking the same at the Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Hospital?

Mr AUSTIN: Yes, I am aware that the clinic at Mt Gravatt was closed. It was staffed by an obstetrician from the Royal Women's Hospital. Unfortunately, because of declining numbers, the clinic was closed.

A clinic operates at the new Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Hospital and I think it is worth while pointing out that the clinic operated only for patients who could not be admitted to the Mater Misericordiae Hospital. The honourable member has made representations to me on behalf of the people of this area and I am pleased to inform him that patients will be admitted to all hospitals from the clinic at the Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Hospital, so that all women now wishing to attend an ante-natal clinic at that hospital will be able subsequently to attend the hospital of their choice.

GOLD COAST MONORAIL

Mr BORBIDGE: I ask the Premier: Is he aware that last Friday the Gold Coast City Council approved in principle a proposal of Tourism Consultants Pty Ltd for a monorail to be built at Surfers Paradise? In view of the great public interest in the proposal, can the Premier advise the House whether he supports the concept?

Mr BJELKE-PETERSEN: I wish to congratulate the people concerned on their initiative and foresight and also on the fact that they are prepared to venture into a $15m project that will mean a lot to visitors to the Gold Coast. I believe that ultimately the project will be extended, that it will succeed and also that eventually it may play a part in the electrification of transport to the Gold Coast. At a later date the company may be prepared to put a proposition before the Government in relation to a monorail service to Beenleigh or some part of Brisbane. Naturally the Government would be very interested in that. I wish to congratulate them on this wonderful concept.

LAND BALLOTS

Mr EATON: I ask the Minister for Lands and Forestry: In view of the large number of Queenslanders, particularly young couples, wanting to go on the land, has the Government considered helping people achieve this ambition by making land for grazing and those agricultural crops that are presently viable available for ballot instead of public auction?

Mr GLASSON: The whole concept of the young-farmer establishment scheme is presently under review. Certain aspects have raised doubts in the minds of many people; but at present I am not in a position to give the definite final guidelines of the scheme. However, we do hope that before too long they will be available to the many people in Queensland who have indicated a tremendous interest in the scheme as a whole.

ROAD TRANSPORT WEIGHBRIDGE FACILITIES, INNISFAIL

Mr EATON: I ask the Minister for Transport—

(1) Because of the increase in road transport and the increase in load capacity of heavy transport vehicles such as semi-trailers and double-deck cattle trucks and trailers, will he give consideration to the building of a public weighbridge in the township of Innisfail adjacent to the Bruce Highway to allow transport operators to stay within their load limits prior to the commencement of long-distance haulage?

(2) What instructions, if any, have been given to Main Roads Department weights and loads inspectors in instances when it can be very hard for drivers to estimate the load weight of double-deck cattle transports?

Mr LANE: It is my intention to visit North Queensland, including the Innisfail area, in the next few weeks. I would hope to meet the honourable member in the town and discuss the matter on the spot.

As to the second part of the honourable member's question—detailed instructions are given relative to weighing of vehicles. If he has any specific complaints about the methods
that are being used and draws them to my
attention, I will make sure that the instruc-
tions are emphasised.

MEDICAL SERVICES IN COUNTRY CENTRES

Mr EATON: I ask the Minister for Health: Would the Government be prepared to assist
the residents of small country centres to
obtain more regular visits by doctors than
they receive at present? The doctor visits
Mt Garnet once a fortnight. If that day
happens to be a public holiday, he does not
make a further visit till the next scheduled
visiting day, which means that he visits that
centre only once in a month.

Mr AUSTIN: My department does admin-
ister the Isolated Patients Scheme. The hon-
ourable member has not mentioned distances
from medical centres. I have to advise him
that my department, in co-operation with the
Commonwealth department, is currently
reviewing the question of distances, and that
matter was raised at the recent Health Min-
isters' conference in Perth.

Mr Eaton: It is only about 80 miles away.

Mr AUSTIN: If it is 80 miles it would be
covered, because the present distance under
the Isolated Patients Scheme is 200 miles.
Because of that, people living in country areas
have some difficulty in obtaining treatment
when they need it. As I said, the Federal
Government finances the scheme and we are
now in the process of negotiating with the
Federal authorities in an endeavour to have
the distance reduced.

I do not know whether the honourable
member has in mind any specific cases in
which people have been directly affected by
the operation of the scheme or whether he is
just taking an overall view. I should be
pleased to hear from him concerning any
instance in which a person's health has been
detrimentally affected by his inability to
obtain medical attention.

Mr Jones: A clinical visit, I think.

Mr AUSTIN: I understand that. I
include clinical visits. If the honourable
member will advise me of any problems in
relation to people's health, I shall be pleased
to have my departmental officers investigate
them.

As I assured the honourable member at a
recent deputation, when he came to see me
regarding another problem in his electorate,
if he has any queries he should get in touch
with me, because I am only too pleased to
look into all matters connected with health
throughout the State.

TAXATION POLICY OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr LESTER: I ask the Premier: Is he
aware that the Central Highlands, with its
own blood and sweat and taxation revenue, is
carrying areas such as Albury/Wodonga,
which still require millions of dollars to prop
them up? Is he aware that the Federal
Government has wasted money to the extent
that it built a hospital in Canberra, only to
find that there were no patients for it and
it has never been used?

What can I tell my people that the Gov-
ernment of this State is doing to counter the
latest selfish, low-down deal under which the
Prime Minister wants to take more of our
money to prop up the administration of
floundering-whale-type operations in New
South Wales and Victoria?

Mr BJELKE-PETERSEN: Perhaps the
honourable member is being unnecessarily
harsh on the Prime Minister, because I am
not sure that the suggestion of taking money
from Queensland to give to other States will
evendue. I hope it will not.

I know what the honourable member is
concerned about, that is, that his part of the
State contributes a great deal to the well-
being of this State and the nation generally.

Companies and individuals in his area cer-
tainly pay an enormous amount in taxation,
and in so many other ways, to Canberra.
I express my appreciation to all the people
in the Central Queensland area—the miners,
the primary producers and those in all other
sections—for their great contributions.
I know the fallacy of the previous Federal
Labor Government's decision to try to make
something out of nothing by propping up
areas like Albury/Wodonga when it was not
possible to generate the activity anticipated.
Enormous sums of money were wasted in
those areas, whereas Central Queensland is
self-generating. It has achieved much without
vast sums from Commonwealth and State
sources. I congratulate the honourable mem-
ber on the part he has played in the whole
operation.

CHARGES TO RESIDENTS, "EVENTIDE" HOMES

Mr WRIGHT: I ask the Minister for
Health: Is it correct that a new policy has
been adopted by his department whereby a
vast number of residents at "Eventide" homes
throughout the State now only receive $7.80
a fortnight after paying for board and lodg-
ing at $120.40 a fortnight? Does this new
policy apply to all residents, or is it true
that those who were resident in "Eventide"
homes before 1 January 1981 are paying
$85.40 a fortnight? If the answer to the
first part of the question is in the affirmative,
will he give a full and detailed explanation
of why pensioners should be required to pay
$60.20 a week, which is considered to be
exorbitant?

Mr AUSTIN: Yesterday I provided a
rather detailed answer to the honourable
member for Ipswich West. I refer the hon-
ourable member for Rockhampton to the
answer to that question, which relates to the
information he seeks. In addition to
that, I point out that there have been some
difficulties in relation to patients in nursing-
home situations such as at the "Eventide"
homes throughout the State, the Challinor Centre at Ipswich and other similar institutions where we have semi-handicapped people. At the moment I am having my departmental officers investigate that situation. When the decision was made——

Mr Underwood: Why don’t you help the pensioners?

Mr Austin: I am doing more about it than the honourable member does. All he does is try to tip buckets on people. He does not try to improve anything. He has not made one constructive suggestion about anything. All he does is take "lifts" from his Federal colleagues. He does not know anything about the State health system.

I am having my departmental officers investigate some of the matters raised. I assure the honourable member for Rockhampton that I am aware of some of the problems that concern him. He is obviously concerned for the type of patient who may be in one of the institutions from which the patients have to go out and mix in the community. We have had difficulty in separating patients who are totally and permanently bed-bound from those in institutions where, probably, it is in their own interests to spend some time in the community. That was not taken into account when the initial decision was made. I remind the honourable member that the decision was made by the State Government at the instigation of the Federal Government. The State Government made the decision, but it was made under instruction, I might say, or some sort of threat. I assure the honourable member for Rockhampton that I am investigating the matter. I hope that I am investigating the matter. I realise that these people should retain in their own pockets.

**ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER LEGISLATION**

Mr Scott: I ask the Premier: In view of the Government’s expressed intention to repeal the Aborigines Act and the Torres Strait Islanders Act, what steps does the Government intend to take to ensure that the 7.5m hectares of land now reserved for Aboriginal use will be retained by the Aboriginal people and not revert to Crown land? Is the enabling legislation now being prepared and what consultation is being carried out with Aboriginal and Islander people?

Mr Bjelke-Petersen: Obviously the honourable member would not be quite familiar with Government policy, which is that we do not tell everybody——

Mr Scott: I am very familiar with it.

Mr Bjelke-Petersen: Then why did the honourable member ask such a question? He cannot get an answer to it. He knows jolly well that while policy is being formulated we do not disclose what it is until it is finalised and comes into the House. We will do the very best we can for these people.

Mr Scott: When will it be done?

Mr Bjelke-Petersen: It will be done in the near future; during this year; perhaps not this session but next session. I can promise that. That will be for sure.

Mr Scott: What consultations are being carried out?

Mr Bjelke-Petersen: The honourable member does not need to worry about that. We can look after it better than he could.

**QUALITY OF RUMP STEAK**

Mr Lee: I ask the Minister for Primary Industries: Did he read in today’s newspaper that the manager of the Parkroyal Motor Inn, Mr Ian Brigham, says that after repeated complaints he has had to remove rump steak from the menu? Could the Minister advise him that I have a property at Brindley Park near Roma with a feed lot and will guarantee that he can get good quality rump steak from there?

Mr Aheren: This morning I read with disbelief the assertion referred to by the honourable member for Yeronga. There are any number of outlets around the city of Brisbane from which first quality rump steak can be obtained. The assertion made by the manager is absolutely ludicrous. I will certainly arrange for the Meat Industry Authority to advise that gentleman that there are adequate sources from which he can obtain first quality rump steak for his menu so that his reputation will remain intact. It is a silly assertion and I will see that the matter is rectified. I can only assume that he has had some argument with his butcher.

**RAIL COLLISION AT CANNON HILL**

Mr Moore: I ask the Minister for Transport: Will he inform the House the circumstances of the collision that occurred between a train and a railmotor at Cannon Hill on 9 March 1981?

Mr Lane: The honourable member for Windsor is obviously very observant to note that a goods train and a railmotor did in fact collide on a cross-over at Cannon Hill at 7.45 a.m. on 9 March 1981. The railmotor was empty at the time and was being towed. I am happy to say that no one was injured in that collision, but the train guard was taken away by ambulance as he was suffering from shock. The diesel loco was derailed and the trailing railmotor unit was also derailed and damaged. The locomotive ran into the rear portion of
the railmotor. Full inquiries have been made into this matter and 'a departmental inquiry board will be set up to deal with it.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

PROTECTION OF CROCODILES AND SNAKES

Mr TENNI (Barron River) (12 noon): I wish to bring before the public the very rapid increase in crocodile numbers in Far North Queensland and the problems caused by their protection under legislation brought down by this Government. I also mention legislation covering protection of venomous snakes.

I do not think I have to bring to the notice of honourable members that yesterday a Press article revealed that in one of the lakes near Cairns two ladies and a child were attacked by a crocodile. That article did not mention whether it was a salt-water or freshwater crocodile, but today's newspaper confirms that it was the latter.

I have never heard of a freshwater crocodile attacking anybody in the past, but I have certainly heard of a salt-water crocodile doing so. People who live in the southern part of the State would find it hard to realise the proliferation of crocodiles in Far North Queensland.

If a person travels north of Cairns with a spotlight at night-time, he will be alarmed at the number of crocodiles he sees. The Daintree River now contains crocodiles up to 21 feet in length. That is what has happened since protection has been provided.

Mr Frawley: Steady on. You are stretching it a bit.

Mr TENNI: In fact, I have heard 22 feet mentioned.

On the way to the Daintree township tourist buses stop at the Daintree River where at low tide on a mud bank can be observed a 21-ft crocodile, a 12-ft crocodile and an 8-ft crocodile. They are always there at low tide and have become a tourist attraction. They may be all right on that far bank but they do not stay there 24 hours a day. If a person travels down the Daintree River at night and shines a spotlight near the mud banks he can pick out up to 50 sets of eyes in a distance of three miles. That is the extent of the proliferation of these creatures.

The Government says that crocodiles should not be shot, they should be protected. That means that the crocodiles can be left at the top end of the Daintree River, which is where kids swim; they can be left in Coopers Creek where kids swim; they can be left in the Barron River, and in Thomatis Creek where one was seen at the mouth last Saturday afternoon, only 300 yards from a residential area and at a place where children play. Last year they were seen in drains in the centre of Cairns. Last Saturday week one was seen only 300 metres from my home. There is a constant increase in the number of crocodiles in the North.

Legislation allows an open season on ducks. Apparently there is a much greater chance of attack from ducks than from crocodiles. The viciousness of a wild duck is not to be believed. The Government says that ducks can be shot because they could kill a person. If a person in a 12-ft dinghy on a river sees a 21-ft crocodile, which could swallow a 10-ft dinghy and its crew, I want to know why should we shoot it because the Government says that it is a nice sort of a creature and must be left alone. The legislation says that we should let the crocodile attack, but we should not fight back. It is urgent that the Government change that legislation to provide for an open season on the shooting or capturing of crocodiles. It is no use saying that instead of shooting crocodiles they should be caught; some of them are impossible to catch. Possibly in residential areas they should be snared, hooked or netted but in areas such as the top end of Daintree River, Cape Tribulation and in the Bloomfield River they could be shot at night with the aid of a spotlight, as was done many years ago in that area when they were shot out.

Some people say, "We do not want to lose that species." I was told some eight or 10 years ago that the crocodiles had all gone; that they had all been shot out. We can easily see that the persons who made the claims were totally wrong, because since then in the area from Cairns to the Bloomfield River there have been more crocs than there were 10 years ago. Therefore, I say to the Government and the Minister in charge of this portfolio that, before there is a fatality in North Queensland, we must make sure that this Government brings forward legislation that will allow us to thin out the crocodile population in Far North Queensland.

I turn now to snakes. The killing of snakes is now prevented in this State.

Mr R. J. Gibbs: Not trouser snakes?

Mr TENNI: We on this side of the House are not rude, as they are on that side.

I am talking about venomous snakes in particular. When a person comes across a taipan he is supposed to pat it on the belly and say, "Get out of the road." He has to leave it there so it can bite someone else later on. It is not permissible to shoot or destroy a snake of any type in the State of Queensland. I just cannot understand that line of thinking. The number of lives lost in Queensland as a result of bites from taipans, brown snakes, black snakes and death adders is alarming, yet legislation preventing the killing of them has been enacted. It has to be changed. I ask the Minister, when considering crocodiles, to think about allowing the destruction of snakes in North Queensland.
The Government also says that pigs cannot be shot. Late on a Friday, when a cane farmer whose farm is adjacent to a forestry area is down on a headland and sees a number of pigs rooting out his cane, he has to say to himself, “Well, I will have to let you feed until Monday because I cannot follow you into the forestry area without a permit.” He has to obtain a permit from the department to follow the pigs into the forestry area and shoot them. Of course, he has to be lucky enough to have the officer in charge issue him with a permit.

Mr Menzel: You have to give them 24 hours’ notice.

Mr TENNI: The member for Mulgrave has just said that the pigs have to be given 24 hours’ notice! If we could shoot the pigs and use them on big hooks to catch the crocodiles, we might at least be achieving something for the people of North Queensland.

However, this is not a laughing matter at all; it is serious. We have reached the highest point of stupidity by allowing the populations of snakes and crocodiles to proceed unchecked. Now that we have a new Minister in charge of the portfolio, all I am asking is that serious consideration be given to introducing legislation for our people.

Furthermore, the same department complains about the thinning-out of barramundi in the Peninsula. Anyone who has lived in the area knows that salt-water crocodiles lie in wait in the lily areas of the rivers and pools and feed on the barramundi. One of the greatest predators of barramundi in the area is the crocodile, and the proliferation of its numbers is helping to destroy the barramundi.

Dr Scott-Young: Oh!

Mr TENNI: It is a fact. In years gone by we have seen this on the Normanby River. The crocodile waits on the banks where the lilies grow, the barramundi feeds in amongst the lilies and then comes easy prey for the crocodile. If we are fair dinkum about the protection of barramundi, the first thing we should do is help to destroy its No. 1 enemy, the salt-water crocodile.

Once again I plead with the Minister in charge of this portfolio to take some action before a child is taken by a crocodile in the electorate of Barron River. He should immediately change the legislation so that they can be cleaned out. If he does not do so, I will appear on TV, radio and the lot and give him hell, because he will be the one to blame if he accepts these views from his departmental officers who claim that we should not be permitted to kill crocodiles.

The Minister should forget about the conservationists and forget about all the do-gooders who wish to save crocodiles and taipan snakes. He should get moving and introduce amending legislation quickly before a fatality occurs in Far North Queensland.
or not they would grant them. The Treasurer and the members of his party know that that option was not open to the Brisbane City Council and would not have been open to any other local authority. What about the rights of the people?

Mr Akers interjected.

Mr SHAW: The honourable member is always saying that he believes in the right of people to conduct their own business. Now he is saying exactly the opposite. He is saying that the council should have acted improperly, and with great authority, and said, "We are not going to give it to you."

There is much worse to come. The Treasurer then said that the city council should have notified the State Parliament—that it should have notified everybody, in fact—that the application was before the council and given the public and the Government an opportunity to step in and do something about it. He said that, with time, some action might have been possible. I quite agree with him; it was a good idea. It also was a good idea when a former lord mayor, Alderman Walsh, went before the people in 1976 and suggested that such a provision should be written into the town plan for the city of Brisbane.

Let us look at the history of the very requirement that the Treasurer now says would be a good idea. Subsequent to the promise made by Alderman Walsh, it was written into the first proposal for the Brisbane Town Plan that came before the Government. I believe that submission was reviewed by a committee of Liberal Party members. No doubt the Treasurer was involved at the time, or certainly knew what was going on. It has been included in every subsequent proposal made by the Brisbane City Council to the Government. It was included in part 7 of the Brisbane City Council submission to the State Government, in clauses 42 to 51. I have not the time to read them, but if any member cares to do so he will see that they spell out exactly what the Treasurer now says should happen: They provide an opportunity for the public to object. They also provide that the Brisbane City Council may delay a proposal only while it is discussing the matter with the applicant, or it can place a particular requirement on a building that will allow it to be preserved. They allow the Governor in Council to either support the preservation of a building or to reject it, and allow the applicant to get on with the job if it is felt that he is being delayed unjustly.

Those are certainly justifiable requirements. I believe that any reasonable developer would be quite happy to comply with them.

An examination of the town plan for the city of Brisbane that was approved after the deletion required by the very interested committee of Liberal members discloses that in relation to part 7, clauses 30 to 52, relating to the very requirements that the Liberal Party is now saying should be included, the notation "No provision" appears. The provisions were just cut out of the town plan. That is why the town plan makes no provision for action to be taken to preserve the buildings. The requirements were cut out in a very high-handed fashion by people who, I am sure, did not know what they were doing at the time.

If we are fair dinkum about trying to preserve buildings with historical significance, the first thing that has to be done is to insert those provisions in the town plan. That would allow the notification that the Treasurer has spoken about publicly to be given. The action which the Treasurer says the council should take is the every action that he prevented the council from taking.

The next thing that must be done is a very careful research of legislation to cover this very difficult problem. We will never get a complete answer other than by the Government, perhaps with the assistance of local authorities, purchasing all these buildings.

Any legislation that is introduced must provide concessions for developers so that it will be feasible for them to preserve old buildings. It would be completely unfair to expect the developers to carry the full burden of preserving the buildings. I am very concerned about a suggestion from the Government side that fire safety precautions should be deleted. Those precautions would have to be maintained.

Mr Akers interjected.

Mr SHAW: As the honourable member would know, as an architect, it is possible to revamp these buildings to meet all requirements without destroying their historical significance. Other totally significant concessions could be made to help the owners of these buildings. Not the least of them would be to look at the developmental rights for sites. That opens a whole new question that I do not have time to explore, but it could help to solve this difficult problem.

Many overseas cities, including Montreal, do a great deal to protect their historic buildings, but, in spite of the legislation, developers have moved in overnight and destroyed buildings. They have been quite happy to pay the fine because any delay costs them money. So even a fine of $1,000 will not solve the problem. The developers will step in, destroy a building and quite happily pay the fine.

(Time expired.)

VIDEO TAPE INDUSTRY

Mr GYGAR (Stafford) (12.21 p.m.): I rise in this debate to draw the attention of the House to the severe problems that are being faced by the rapidly developing video tape industry in this State. It is one of the fastest-growing industries in Australia. It is providing employment, entertainment and
community benefits. But in Queensland it is unfortunately being stifled and confused by censorship problems that are peculiar to this State.

To understand the problems we first have to see how the video tape hire and purchase system works. I am speaking about movies, short subjects, football matches, etc., which a normal citizen can hire or purchase from a reputable video tape distributor.

Normally, the distributors of these products get them through large southern distributors who work on a list system. Basically, the lists are generated by tie-ins between the larger distributors and the movie companies in the United States, Great Britain and elsewhere.

The large distributors normally require that retailers accept on a list system the movies and products that they distribute. The firm might offer 120 titles ranging from “The Muppet Movie” onwards and if a Queensland distributor wishes to purchase any of those products, he must normally accept the full list. At this stage I do not want to enter into any argument about the hard-core pornography which drifts around the place; I am more concerned with the legitimate operators trying to do a decent job in a legitimate industry.

All of the films on those lists these people get from the southern distributors have been submitted to the Commonwealth Government on their importation and have received a classification from the Commonwealth Film Censor. So they are not under-the-table, raunchy, blue movies; they are legitimate films from legitimate operators.

The problems that are faced by the Queensland retail outlets are really enormous. Even if they export or put into sealed containers all films that have not been shown in Queensland already, they could still run into problems, such as raids by police who come into their stores and seize thousands and sometimes tens of thousands of dollars’ worth of reasonably legitimate films on the basis that they want to inspect them to see if they are objectionable publications under the Vagrants, Gaming, and Other Offences Act.

I do not want to name any particular films, but some films are seen to be reasonable but have to be cut before they are brought into Queensland. I understand that even “Saturday Night Fever” was cut before coming into Queensland. If a video tape distributor saw “Saturday Night Fever” on the list and said that he would take it, he would have no way of knowing whether or not the copy that he would get was the same copy as had been approved for distribution in Queensland theatres.

On many occasions, film distributors go to the Films Board of Review, show the film and willingly and without any duress make cuts in order to avoid any trouble. But the person who gets the video tape list does not know if any cuts have been made. In effect, he might be showing a film that is very different.

Mr Frawley: I went to see “Midnight Cowboy” because I thought it was a cowboy picture.

Mr GYGAR: The honourable member sometimes has difficulty with film titles. Even the industry has difficulty with film titles, because some B movies, not the big ones that make a splash in the city theatres, are often cut and recut and put back together many times under the same title because they do not take off the first time round.

If one watches films on television that one has already seen in a hard-top movie house, one finds that in many instances they are completely different films. There might be up to 15 or 20 minutes cut out of a film by the distributors, but it is still distributed under the same title. So there is no real protection for these distributors; there is no way that they can know whether clips have been ordered or made voluntarily as a result of the activities of the Films Board of Review. Even if they decide, “Righto, we will go in and get each and every one of the films on our list reviewed. We will take in ‘The Muppet Movie’ and ask the Films Board of Review whether they find that objectionable” (I believe there are people who find even Biggles and similar things objectionable now), they cannot do it, because the Films Board of Review does not include in its charter any power over video tapes. So if a legitimate operator —

Mr Shaw: You mean shown publicly, or viewed at home?

Mr GYGAR: I am talking now about the distributors who will rent out video tapes for people to show in their own homes. There are other operators who will rent them out to football clubs or other groups that want to show them for commercial profit, but that is somewhat different.

An Opposition Member interjected.

Mr GYGAR: The honourable member says that it is not films such as “The Muppet Movie”, but I am advised by the distributors that they make more money out of “The Muppet Movie” than from most of the R-rated movies they rent. It is one of the most popular films.

An Opposition Member interjected.

Mr GYGAR: The honourable member might have trouble with his football club, but I can assure him that the Brothers Leagues Club in my area is a family club and it does show movies such as “The Muppet Movie” for the children of patrons. Perhaps the honourable member comes from a somewhat rougher area in which people regard football clubs as being slightly different from the responsible clubs that I have in my area.

Even if the distributors act in good faith, however, they have no way of knowing whether they are right or not. They can look up lists and bring in only films that
have previously been shown or apparently previously been shown in Queensland, but they cannot go to anyone and ask, "Can I show it or can't I?" They just have to fly in the dark, and when they do they are getting burnt, and burnt rather badly. None of these distributors can afford to have $10,000 or more worth of films tied up for weeks after they have been seized by the police to determine whether they rate as obscene publications under the Vagrants, Gaming, and Other Offences Act. All that these distributors want, and all that the industry needs if it is to develop properly in this State, is a degree of certainty, and they do not have that at the moment.

Any person who opens up a legitimate business has a right to expect that he will know all the rules he plays under. Because there is nowhere the distributors can go to get an objective standard, or even a subjective standard for that matter, as to what is allowed to be shown by people in the privacy of their own homes, they do not know the rules. This problem needs to be looked at urgently by the Government, and while it does that, it will have to look at the even more vexing problem of what it does with X-rated films or material that is pornographic.

The Government will have to face up to the problem of whether or not it has the right to interfere with what people see or show in the privacy of their own homes at their own discretion and of their own volition. But that is a far larger issue, and one that I really do not want to canvass at the moment; the present situation is causing absolute chaos in the video industry. It is depriving the people of Queensland of a social facility that is widely available to people in southern States. Because of this uncertainty, the industry has not taken off here.

Mr Moore: You have said that, but you have not suggested any answers.

Mr GYGAR: My suggestion is that the Minister for Police should issue a directive to the police stating that under no circumstances will they seize any film that has a Commonwealth film censor's rating if it is hired for private use. The answer is to say, "Righto, we will trust the Commonwealth just this once." I suppose that, until there is more worth certainty under the law, the police will go on seizing pornographic material and all the rest; but the whole situation has to be reviewed and put into some sort of order if the video industry in Queensland is ever to do any good. I suggest to the Government that it take this problem on board immediately and institute an inquiry into what should be done to solve it.

In the meantime I call on the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Police to issue a directive to police officers in Queensland that, until such time as that review is completed, they are not to seize in the State of Queensland any video film that has a Commonwealth film classification on it.

MORAYFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

Mr FRAWLEY (Caboolture) (12.30 p.m.): I have been a member of this Parliament for approximately nine years, and never once have I risen to my feet to raise a matter of public interest unless it has been of great importance to my electorate, and today is no exception. The Morayfield High School in my electorate was constructed at a cost of approximately $1.2m, and it opened this year with 133 pupils. It is an excellent school. It is built on about 14 ha of land east of the North Coast railway line at Morayfield and about 3 km south of Caboolture. It has a first-class staff and a good principal.

Many children walk to the school, and I agree with that. I think that children should walk about two miles a day, and it would not hurt some of the members of this House to do the same thing. One only has to look at the excess weight that some of them are carrying now to see that that statement is correct.

About 40 children come to the Morayfield High School by bus, and this is the problem. They are set down just off the main road at Morayfield and they walk about 700 m to the school. They cross the North Coast railway line at the Morayfield boom gates, and there is nothing wrong with that. But it is not so good in wet weather. Recently a girl got soaking wet while walking from the bus to the school in the rain, and now she is down with bronchitis.

The proprietor of the Kangaroo Bus Lines is a very humane and concerned gentleman. He does not set the children down on the main road at all. He drives into a laneway and sets them down on a service road. That is to eliminate the problem of the children's having to cross the main road. The drivers of the buses cannot set the children down at the school because there is no bus turn-around. The regulations prohibit a bus reversing at a school because of the danger to children; and I agree with that.

On 4 February 1981 the p. & c. association of the Morayfield High School wrote the following letter to the chairman of the Caboolture Shire Council—

"Dear Mr. Barr,

"May we seek your help in resolving the problem of establishing a turnaround, safe entry road, and safe embussing/debussing points for the new Morayfield State High School.

"As parents and rate payers, we are seriously concerned at the situation that exists at the school area which apparently, to date had defied resolution. We believe that it is only a matter of time before a serious accident occurs. In addition to
The traffic situation at the Morayfield High School, at the present time is chaotic. I have been there and have witnessed that.

Mr Shaw: Did you say it is a new high school?

Mr Frawley: A brand new high school. The non-political Caboolture Shire Council has disclaimed all responsibility in the matter, stating that it is a Government matter. That is not correct. They are council roads. Buchanans Road and Visentin Road are secondary roads. The school is situated in Division 2 of the Caboolture Shire. Two of the councillors for that division are playing politics. Mr McKechnie: They would not play politics with schoolchildren?

Mr Frawley: I think they do.

The deputy chairman of the Caboolture Shire Council, Cr J. T. McLoughlin, who was the old guard Labor Party candidate at the last State election, and his campaign director, Cr Barry Broomhall, are two members of that council. Both of them do not seem to realise that the election is over and that they should settle down to represent the people in Division 2 of the shire. The people elected them to the council but rejected them in the State election.

On 30 December the Caboolture Shire Council wrote to the Director of Works enclosing four plans for a bus turn-around and set-down bays, by exercising the land free of cost to the local authority. The construction and maintenance of such facilities adjacent to State Schools is, however, a matter for attention by the Authority responsible for the provision of these roadways.

That letter was signed by Mr W. A. M. Gunn. I urge the Minister to have this bus turn-around constructed as quickly as possible.

While I am speaking about the Morayfield State High School I mention the lack of a sports oval, and I have no hesitation in stating that is a Government responsibility. At present the school has no sports oval and I understand that one is not planned for construction until 1982. I hope the Minister takes note of what I am now saying.

Mr Frawley: That is ridiculous. It is a council road; the school is a facility for the people of the area and their children. The road is outside, not inside.

On Thursday, 12 February, I attended the first annual p and c association meeting. Those two councillors were present and they played their old trick of attempting to convince the people that it was not a council matter. Every time a parent rings one of the councillors with a complaint about the Morayfield State High School, he tells them to ring their local member because it is a Government responsibility.
The 1975 Commission of Inquiry into the Nature and Extent of the Problems Confronting Youth in Queensland recommended that school curriculums be expanded to include greater emphasis on courses which offer education for leisure, especially for Years 8, 9 and 10. Of course, such courses should not be limited to the playing of sport on a field, but in these times of awareness of the value of fitness a school sports field should be a priority. In fact, I believe that school sports fields should be one of the first things constructed at a school. Even if some other facilities have to be sacrificed they should be there on opening day.

Morayfield State High School is a beautiful school with plenty of room. Because a lot of pupils would not leave the Caboolture State High School, which is overcrowded, the Morayfield State High School has only 133 pupils. Many of the 1250 pupils at the Caboolture State High School elected to stay there.

An Honourable Member: What is the capacity of Morayfield?

Mr FRAWLEY: It could take 300 straight away, and there are only 133 there now. At the moment only Year 8 is being taught.

Mr Shaw: How much did it cost?

Mr FRAWLEY: $1.2m.

Mr Shaw: That is a lot of money per pupil, isn’t it?

Mr FRAWLEY: Yes, it is a lot but more pupils were expected to go there. The confident prediction is that either next year or the year after the school will be filled to overflowing.

The $600m for this year’s education budget represents 23.9 per cent of the total State Budget, so nobody can say that the Government neglects education. However, I realise that Ministers can only work within the budget allocated to their department. That means that things must be done on a priority basis.

As I stated when I commenced speaking today, I do not speak about frivolous things, only about matters of great importance. I really believe that what I have mentioned about a playing field and the school’s playing field is a matter of great public importance. If the funds are not available to completely construct the playing field, I urge the Minister to at least clear the field.

Mr WRIGHT (Rockhampton) (12.40 p.m.): In 1979 I presented to this Parliament a petition signed by some 3,000 small business proprietors in Queensland calling for special protection against landlords because of leases, key money and the general conditions that apply to tenancy in the major shopping centres. Whilst I accept that no specific action was taken on that petition, members will recall that in 1980 a Small Business Development Corporation was established.

I had hoped at that time that that corporation might be used in some type of advisory capacity, not only for small business people but also for Government. Whilst the Government may not like to admit it, much of the plight that small business people are facing at the moment is being worsened by the decisions made by Government. I refer specifically to the recent approval by the Local Government Department to allow a number of new shopping complexes to be built in towns and cities throughout Queensland—a decision that is going to affect many, many people; a decision that will result in the failure of many small businesses.

In fact, the Toowoomba Kern complex will bring about the economic demise of the Newtown complex, which means wiping out 30 to 40 small businesses. Its approval should be rescinded, as should all these other approvals, until we have had a full and proper inquiry into how those approvals were given.

I take the Toowoomba instance as an ideal case in point. It was totally opposed by members of the town-planning profession; it was totally opposed by the Chamber of Commerce in Toowoomba; it was described as an economic and town-planning disaster; it was described by people in the consumer movement as economic madness. It is barely 100 m away from the existing Newtown shopping centre. It will further deteriorate turn-over in the central business district.

To take an example of how a central shopping area can be affected, one has only to look at Toowoomba when the K mart was established some three years ago. A survey carried out in the central business district found a 30 per cent drop in turnover of the 400 retail businesses in the area. Kern state that they will require 20 per cent of the Toowoomba trade to be viable. That must affect not only the central trading area but also the other complexes that exist and the 150 small businesses.

It will do little to create employment, regardless of the claim made by Kern that they will require something like 300 employees. We only have to look at the K mart when it was first established, where it was stated that 300 people would be employed. I was told this morning by a local businessman that there are now 150 people in that complex, 85 per cent of whom are junior casuals. Coupled with that is the loss of further employment opportunity in the central business district.

I repeat that there are 400 businesses involved in that area and another 150 small business proprietors who will be affected. Those people are major ratepayers, but no consideration has been given to them.
It is obvious that the decision has been made to allow the Kern complex to go ahead despite the town-planning opposition and despite economic opposition. It is certainly not in the economic interests of the small business community specifically or of Toowoomba generally.

This morning I read a report based on an independent survey carried out by a town-planning expert. Some 943 people were surveyed. It showed that 90 per cent of the respondents said the existing shopping centres satisfied their shopping needs. It showed also that Toowoomba already provides twice the Australian average retail space per capita; that is, double the accepted standard of retail space in any area. The centre would severely aggravate an existing retail over-supply within that city, which will bring about the demise of the small businessman—the family complex; those people who employ their own children; the husband-and-wife complex; the business of the type of which there are 750,000 in Australia. They are the ones to be affected—people who employ something like 60 per cent of all those employed in Queensland. Figures given to me show that almost 400,000 people are employed by small businessmen in this State. I note also that the survey found that more than half—54 per cent—of the respondents did not see the need for the new proposed centre. Many, many more were undecided. The number in favour was a small minority. It showed that the proposed centre would have a disclocative effect not only on other suburban centres but also on the future operations of the central business district.

What worries me is that an independent survey was carried out and the report was totally disregarded by the Local Government Department and also by the Toowoomba City Council. I believe that honourable members must ask why. Why is it that a proposal that is not in the interests of the city, is not wanted by local business, people, is not wanted by local consumers, and will have an adverse economic impact on an area, is accepted by a Government department? I suggest that it is because of political interference at the highest level.

A Government Member: How did the council vote on it?

Mr WRIGHT: I reiterate that it is because of political interference at the highest level, and I shall have some comments to make about the Toowoomba City Council.

It is rather coincidental that approval has been given for new complexes at Toowoomba, Mooloolaba, Blackwater, Atherton and Booyne Island all for the Kern Corporation, and that the managing director of the Kern Corporation is Mr Barry Paul, who happens to be the Townsville chairman of the Bjelke-Petersen Foundation. I suggest that there is political involvement and that, if documentation were tabled in the House, we would find that Mr Barry Paul has been deeply involved in getting approval for these complexes.

He also became involved when small business people tried to get together and put out a document to say with whom small businessmen should insure. They began to realise that groups such as the SGIO are receiving money, in some cases compulsorily for third party insurance and for workers' compensation insurance, and money from small businessmen and are then turning it back into shopping centres that are wiping out the small businessmen.

Why is it that no economic study was carried out in relation to these complexes? I accept that applications were made almost a year ago. But surely the whole principle of the new law was that an economic survey or impact study would be carried out wherever complexes were to be put. None were carried out in these instances.

There are serious allegations involving the Toowoomba City Council. I have information—in fact, I have a document that was compiled as a result of a search of the share register—showing that a Toowoomba Liberal alderman, C. V. Brimblecombe, and his wife acquired 6,250 shares in Kern Corporation Limited in April two months after the council approved in principle an application for rezoning of land involved in the Kern complex and two months before the council voted to approve the application on 17 June 1980. Why has not the Minister acted against that? The Local Government Act provides that no alderman is allowed to debate a matter or be involved in a decision in which he has a pecuniary interest.

I am told that Mr Brimblecombe has now sold his shares. I should like to know what he paid for them and how much he received for them. I should also like to know what other interests aldermen in that city have with the Kern Corporation, as there are rumours that one alderman may benefit from a proposed sports complex.

I have never knocked the Kern group, because I realise the important developmental part that it has played in Queensland. But when it begins influencing decisions at the top level, when it flies in the face of decisions that will affect hundreds, in some cases thousands, of people, one must look again, because there is now political interference.

There is a similar situation at Southport relative to the Hudson Conway complex. Mr Ron Walker of the Hudson Conway group is linked with Mr Ian Rice of the Bexley Corporation and establishing the Victorian committee of the Bjelke-Petersen Foundation. It may be a coincidence, and people have a right to pursue their political interests; but this is too much of a coincidence, especially in the Toowoomba case.
The question of the independence of the Local Government Department arises. As I said earlier, the Minister should table all documents relative to this approval. He should place before honourable members all documents that came from the companies relative to it. He should give a full explanation of why he went against the recommendation of the independent inquiry.

There is a need for a further inquiry—a judicial inquiry—and there is a need to change the system of appeals to the Local Government Court. Instead of having appeals to that court, provision should be made for appeals to an independent tribunal constituted by a District Court judge, a town planner, and an expert in commerce and industry, because the whole system is now being used against the appellant. It is costly; it is being used by the lawyers. People bring in barristers and town planners; and it is almost impossible for anyone to get justice. The position should be considered very carefully. There should be an appeals system that is informal and free of major cost.

I reiterate that it is time the small people took on the insurance companies—groups such as the SGIO—which are in fact taking money from them with one hand and using it against them with the other.

I ask that the decision made by the Minister for Local Government and his department be rescinded. I ask that all decisions involving complexes to which local authorities have been opposed, to which chambers of commerce have been opposed, to which there has been opposition by the people, as there was at Mooloolaba, be rescinded and that an inquiry be held. An inquiry into small business is needed in this State similar to the one held in Victoria in relation to iniquitous leases. Proper economic surveys ought to be carried out before any decision is made, because the future of towns, small business people and families is involved. Unless this Government or this Parliament does something, we will find that, rather than 75 per cent of small businessmen going out of business in three years, it will be 95 per cent.

**FIRE ALARMS, PARLIAMENT HOUSE**

Mr AKERS (Pine Rivers) (12.51 p.m.): The subject I raise today might please many people in Queensland. It concerns the prospect of every member of this Parliament being eliminated in one fell swoop. I can think of two ways in which that could happen. One would be by knocking out the columns that hold up the swimming-pool and dropping the whole lot in the Chamber during division-time, which would ensure that everybody was squashed or drowned. A much more effective way would be to start a fire in the building, probably on the third level, as everyone in the building totally ignores the fire-alarm system.

This morning the fire alarm went off at the same time as the joint Government party meeting was taking place.

Mr Mackenroth: That is a good time.

Mr AKERS: I suppose the Opposition was meeting, too. I did not see any Opposition members around. I did not see them running for the front door.

No-one in the building paid the slightest attention to the fire alarm. I really believe that no-one other than one or two of the security staff was even concerned about it. I walked down the front fire stairs from the sixth level to the third level. Until I knew what was happening I did not want to get into a lift while the fire alarm was sounding.

When I got to the third level I found that the door to the fire stairs was propped open. If a fire had been on the third floor, the whole of the stairwell would have been full of smoke, as the big fan would have sucked it in.

While I was waiting for the fire brigade to arrive, one of the attendants calmly walked over to the lift with a party of visitors and took them, I suppose, to the fifth or sixth level. While the fire alarm was ringing! One of the basic rules is that people do not get into a lift while a fire alarm is ringing.

The alarm indicator board showed that the fire was on the 16th level, but so far as everybody else in the building was concerned it could have been in Perth or Hobart. It did not matter in the least.

Mr Shaw: It's like the boy who cried "Wolf!"

Mr AKERS: That is a very good point, although it might not be quite apposite here. I am trying to highlight the danger.

Several firemen came with the usual things that firemen arrive with. They got here in a hurry because it could have been a real fire. They went up in the lift to the 16th level. I went with them and the security officer to find out what was going on. The cleaning lady was there. She met us in the lobby totally unconcerned. She and the security officer opened all of the doors on the 16th level, which happens to be a level of ministry suites. Finally we found a warning light showing on a smoke detector in Sir William Knox's room, but there was no fire.

I then went back to the joint Government party meeting to find that the joint parties had already dealt with the minutes and correspondence, and the Whip was about to give his report. Not another soul was worried that the fire alarm was sounding throughout the building. Long after I had returned and had explained that it was safe for everyone to stay where they were, the alarm was still ringing.

The whole point is that not one person in the building really cared a damn that the fire alarm was sounding. Because the alarm is
I am not sure that every staff member and every member of the House really knows that it is a fire alarm. It is a weird electronic sound that emanates from the sound system. It is not a ringing of bells.

Mr Moore: It sounds more like Brahms "Lullaby".

Mr AKERS: It literally puts people to sleep. But it could put them to death very soon if they are not careful.

The fire alarm is worse than useless; indeed, it is positively dangerous. It goes off at all times of the day and night. Honorable members who sleep here know that they are likely to hear it at any time of the night. I have come down here a couple of times at night when the alarm has been sounding only to find that no one else has been worried about it. Staff members and members of the House ignore it totally. One day the person who cries wolf will find that there is a wolf—there is a fire and there could be deaths. This is a $20m modern building and it should be totally safe to work in.

Mr Davis: Are you staff-bashing again?

Mr AKERS: I am not staff-bashing. I am probably criticising Mr Speaker, if anyone, because he is the person who is directly responsible for safety in the building.

The Premier is on a fitness kick at present. Maybe he and Dr Edwards should take up abseilling and drop down the outside of the building because, by the time someone tells them there is a fire, it will be too late for anyone to use the lifts or stairs. Their bedrooms are on the 23rd level and they would not be able to get out; nor would any other Honourable members sleeping here.

I could not get any support in this place to stop the construction of a squash court, but because members' lives are at stake I hope I will get support for positive action to make this place safe for the people who live and work in it.

This problem goes beyond Parliament House. Brisbane has many other fire traps. There have been plenty of examples of fires in tall buildings overseas. Lately we saw the movie "The Towering Inferno", which showed the danger with fires in tall buildings.

Mr Fouras: Don't you want the fire regulations removed from old buildings?

Mr AKERS: No. They have to be amended so that buildings can be made safe. Obviously the same sort of fire regulations cannot apply to this building and an old building being restored.

There is extreme and total lack of interest in safety by the occupants of buildings throughout Queensland. Unfortunately this Parliament, which should be leading the way, is lagging badly behind. No fire drill procedures are explained to members of Parliament and the staff.

Mr Moore: You didn't read the book.

Mr AKERS: I admit that there is a little book that is left in desks.

When the alarms are sounding, no use is made of the totally objectionable PA system in this place, which sounds like a cross between a fish shop and Kmart, to tell people what is happening.

This morning, the fire brigade knew that there was no fire more than five minutes before the alarm stopped sounding. As I said, I had time to come down from the 16th level, walk into the meeting and talk for a while before the alarm stopped sounding. Part of the delay was caused by people getting into the lift while the alarm was sounding. That is one of the most dangerous things to do in any tall building when there is a fire alarm.

When the alarms are sounded in this place, the computer automatically opens all the doors. So security is a joke. If an army wants to get into this place, all that is required is for someone to blow smoke into any one of the hundreds of fire detectors in the building. All the doors will open and anybody who wants to get in would have a clear go.

It was not always that way. When the building was originally opened, only the car-park doors shut.

Mr Moore: They locked you in.

Mr AKERS: That is right. It was to discourage members from trying to get their cars out during a fire. But nobody was told. No-one knew the fire doors shut while the others opened. I found out because I was down there during a false alarm and I could not get out. I had to sit in the car-park while the alarm was sounding. If there had been a fire, I would have been dead.

I urge Mr Speaker to take action to have the smoke detectors adjusted so that there will be fewer false alarms. This would save some of the costs of the fire brigade services in Queensland. I ask Mr Speaker to organise fire drills for the staff in their responsibilities to evacuate members and visitors from this building. I ask Mr Speaker to instruct at least three of the staff to assist the security officers when the alarms are sounding. One of them should be given the job of immediately advising everyone over the public address system of what is happening in the building. As I said, this morning the security officer was completely on his own.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Row): Order! Under the provisions of the Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 10 March, the time allotted for the debate on matters of public interest has now expired.

The House adjourned at 1 p.m.