

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**WEDNESDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 1958**

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Assembly, adopted by this House on September 11, in reply to His Excellency's Opening Speech and that His Excellency has been pleased to make the following reply—

“Government House,  
“Brisbane, September 18, 1958.

“MR. SPEAKER AND GENTLEMEN,—

“As the Representative of Her Majesty The Queen, I tender to you and the Members of the Parliament of Queensland, my sincere thanks for the Address in Reply to the Speech I had the honour to deliver at the Opening of Parliament on 19th August, 1958.

“It will be my pleasure and duty to convey to Her Majesty The Queen the expression of continued loyalty and affection to the Throne and Person of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II., from the Members of the Legislature of Queensland in Parliament assembled.

“I trust that your labours to promote the advancement and prosperity of this great State will meet with success in full measure.

“I pray that the blessings of Almighty God may rest upon your councils.

“HENRY ABEL SMITH,  
“Governor.”

#### QUESTIONS.

##### BEER PRICES.

**Mr. ROBERTS** (Whitsunday) asked the Minister for Justice—

“Has he noticed the increases in beer prices throughout the State and, if so, in view of the large profits shown by the breweries, will the Licensing Commission investigate these increases and will they also investigate the introduction of plimsol lines on glasses to at least ensure that the beer drinker, who is essentially the working man, gets the quantity he is compelled to pay for?”

**Hon. A. W. MUNRO** (Toowong) replied—

“I have seen newspaper reports of recent increases in draught beer prices at Ipswich, Toowoomba and South Coast. I am advised by the Licensing Commission that these increased prices are under consideration and that an investigation is at present being made to determine whether such increased prices are excessive. If the Commission finds that prices in any locality are excessive the Commission has power under Section 134A of ‘The Liquor Acts, 1912 to 1958’ to fix a maximum price for such liquor in those localities. I will refer that part of the question relating to the provision of plimsol lines on glasses to the Licensing Commission so that consideration may be given to this matter.”

#### WEDNESDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER, 1958.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. A. R. Fletcher, Cunningham) took the chair at 11 a.m.

#### ADDRESS IN REPLY.

#### PRESENTATION AND ANSWER.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** I have to report to the House that, accompanied by hon. members, I this day presented to His Excellency the Governor the Address of the Legislative

COST TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BASIC WAGE INCREASES.

**Mr. LLOYD** (Kedron) asked the Treasurer and Minister for Housing—

“What will be the total estimated cost to the Government during the current financial year of the following cost of living adjustments to the basic wage:—(a) Total weekly increase of 13s. males and 9s. 9d. females, since the December quarter of 1957, resulting from decontrolled prices of food and clothing and the easing of rent control, and (b) The increase of 6s. males, 4s. females, as a result mainly of rental increases during the last June quarter?”

**Hon. T. A. HILEY** (Coorparoo) replied—

“The question is based on unproved and unproveable premises. To omit the effect of drought on the cost of living in early 1958 is sufficient evidence that the premises are unsound. For example, bread, the staff of life, was and is not decontrolled yet drought compelled an increase. But if I dismiss the premises, I have no objection to supplying the cost to the Government of such increases. The costs, based on the number of employees at June 30, 1958, to Consolidated Revenue Fund, Trust and Special Funds and Loan Fund, are—(a) £2,025,000, (b) £891,000. The increase of 6s. males, 4s. females, was largely due to rental increases. In view of the large percentage of Queensland workers who own or are buying their own home this increase is really in the nature of a bonus to those home owners. It will be widely appreciated by those workers who had been cheated for years by Labour’s skilled manipulation of the “C” Series Index to keep Queensland a low wage State.”

RELAYING OF BAJOOL-PORT ALMA RAILWAY.

**Mr. THACKERAY** (Keppel) asked the Minister for Transport—

“In the interest of the development of Port Alma as the port for Central Queensland will he consider relaying the line between Bajool and Port Alma with 80-lb. rails so as to increase the speed to 35 miles per hour?”

**Hon. G. W. W. CHALK** (Lockyer) replied—

“The Port Alma Branch is laid with 61-lb. rails which are quite capable of carrying trains running at 35 miles per hour. The line, however, because of the infrequency of its use, is only being maintained to a 25 miles per hour standard for steam trains. Should traffic warrant it in the future the line could be maintained for a speed of 35 miles per hour, which speed, however, is not necessary under present circumstances.”

TRANSPORT OF COAL FROM KIANGA FIELD.

**Mr. BAXTER** (Norman) asked the Premier—

“Will he inform the House if the present Country-Liberal Party Government has made any arrangements for concessional grants for the transport of coal for local consumption and/or export purposes from the Kianga Coal Field? If so, what are the concessional rates compared with the standard rates?”

**Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN** (Landsborough) replied—

“(1 and 2) In an effort to keep men gainfully employed on the coalfields, my Government is doing everything possible to assist industry in the development of the area referred to by the Honourable Member by considering concessional rail freight rates for large tonnages of coal moved from the coalfields. Any concessional rates granted could involve the possible installation of necessary siding facilities with haulage in fixed train load tonnages. As the discussions between the Company concerned and the Railway Department will not be finalised until the Company is in a position to enter into a firm undertaking it is not proposed to disclose the figures at this stage.”

PURCHASE OF ARAB HORSES FOR GATTON AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE.

**Mr. WALLACE** (Cairns) asked the Minister for Education—

“In view of the statement attributed to him in ‘The Telegraph’ of September 12, 1958, that the Government has decided to purchase an Arab stallion, six brood mares and a yearling colt for the ostensible purpose of training students in animal husbandry at Gatton Agricultural College,—

(1) What is the cost of the purchase of these horses?

(2) What prospective benefit will students derive at the College from Arab horses that would not be applicable to Queensland thoroughbreds?

(3) Is it a fact that the Gatton Agricultural College is being used by the present Government to delegate special privileges to persons interested in breeding these types of Arab horses?”

**Hon. J. C. A. PIZZHEY** (Isis) replied—

“(1) £3,465.”

“(2) For the Diploma Course in Animal Husbandry horse management must remain a feature of instruction. Of recent years Clydesdale stud breeding has been reduced to a minimum as these horses have very little sale value due to the mechanisation of farms. The Arab breed appears to offer outstanding opportunities as breeding stock which bring very satisfactory prices and are keenly sought, for the breeding of station horses and of animals suitable for

general riding purposes. No previous Government has suggested that Gatton College should keep a thoroughbred stud. This is still Government policy. The training of racehorses is not considered to be in keeping with Queensland Agricultural College education."

"(3) No."

#### LOCAL AUTHORITY WARD SYSTEM.

**Mr. DONALD** (Bremer) asked the Minister for Public Works and Local Government—

"In view of the statement which appeared in 'The Queensland Times' on Saturday, September 13, 1958, that many applications have been made to the Local Government Department for the creation of divisions mainly for representation purposes, is it the intention of his Department to introduce the ward system of representation in cities and towns, should they desire same at the next Local Government elections?"

**Hon. J. A. HEADING** (Marodian) replied—

"Under the Local Government law, it is not possible for any City or Town to be divided into divisions for electoral purposes, and the law would have to be amended before the system could be introduced. As I recently stated in the House, certain amendments of that law are at present under consideration and I hope to introduce an amending Local Government Act later this Session. The Honourable Member will know the Government's attitude in the matter in due course."

#### SETTLEMENT OF ACTION—PHILLIPS V. T.R.E.B.

**Mr. AIKENS** (Mundingburra) asked the Minister for Development, Mines and Main Roads—

"(1) Was an action before Mr. Justice Stable in the Supreme Court at Townsville on September 10, 1958, for damages caused to his property at the corner of Flinders and Fletcher Streets, Townsville, brought by Peter Phillips against the Townsville Regional Electricity Board struck out on the application of Counsel for both parties, after they had informed the Court that a settlement of the claim had been reached?"

"(2) If so, as the Townsville Regional Electricity Board is a public body handling public money and not a secret society, will he inform the House what were the terms of settlement, and what will be the total amount paid by the Townsville Regional Electricity Board to Peter Phillips to finalise the matter?"

"(3) What costs were incurred by the Townsville Regional Electricity Board?"

**Hon. E. EVANS** (Mirani) replied—

"(1) Yes."

"(2) I am informed that Mr. Peter Phillips claimed £4,500 and on the advice of its solicitors the Board offered final settlement by payment of £2,250 plus £497 legal and other costs, which offer was accepted and the amount has been paid."

"(3) The information is not yet available."

#### ALLEGED BUYING RING OR CARTEL AT WOOL SALES.

**Mr. DAVIES** (Maryborough) asked the Premier—

"In view of the alarming statement by Mr. T. Shanahan, president of the South Australian Wheat and Woolgrowers' Association—'I agree that a buying ring exists which fixes its own prices and thus makes a burlesque of our auction sales. That has been evident for the past twelve months. There is evidence this buying ring exists at the Australian wool sales' and the contrary view expressed by Mr. W. A. Gunn, president of United Graziers' Association, that he had found no evidence of an international cartel which was deliberately depressing Australian wool prices, will he have investigations made in the interests of the wool industry and submit the results of his enquiry to the House?"

**Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN** (Landsborough) replied—

"The only aspect of wool which comes within the cognisance of the Queensland Government is production. The Government has no contact with the marketing side of the wool industry. As the matter is one in which only the Commonwealth Government would be in a position to carry out worthwhile investigations it would appear that if any person has factual information regarding the existence of a buying ring it would be the duty of that person to pass the information on to the Commonwealth authorities."

#### APPEAL TO PRIME MINISTER FOR SHIP BUILDING ORDERS.

**Mr. DAVIES** (Maryborough) asked the Premier—

"(1) In view of the statement by the Prime Minister, Mr. Robert Menzies, when closing the Tumut Pond Dam, an important development in the Snowy Mountains Scheme—'This scheme is teaching us to think in a big way, to be proud of big enterprises . . . It is a scheme which has touched the imagination of Australia,' does he believe that Mr. Menzies has included himself among those whose vision has been broadened and whose imagination has been stirred?"

“(2) If so, does he consider that the time is opportune for a renewed appeal to the Prime Minister to obtain orders for Queensland shipyards at Maryborough and Brisbane and to make special grants to Queensland in a big way in order that important and necessary public works may be developed so as to provide full employment?”

**Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN** (Landsborough) replied—

“(1) I read with interest the statement by the Right Honourable the Prime Minister referred to by the Honourable Member and I would, with great respect, suggest to him that when the Honourable Member displays a minute fraction of the vision and imagination of Mr. Menzies then I feel he will be a particularly valuable Member in this House.”

“(2) All I can say is that it is to be regretted that some Honourable Members, through their lack of interest in informing themselves on answers to questions in this House, insist on wasting the time of Ministers by asking similar questions in relation to the same subject. If the Honourable Member will refer to the ‘Votes and Proceedings’ (No. 9) of September 4 last, he will see at page 100 thereof that I replied at great length to his colleague, the Honourable Member for Kedron, on the subject of shipbuilding contracts. Perhaps the Honourable Member has forgotten the fact that I furnished him a reply on the same question as is contained in page 33 of ‘Votes and Proceedings’ (No. 3) of August 21, 1958. The Honourable Member may rest assured that my Government will not relax its efforts to have the needs of Queensland kept constantly to the forefront in order that our people will be gainfully employed.”

#### PAPERS.

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

Report of the Comptroller-General of Prisons for the year 1957-1958.

The following papers were laid on the table—

Orders in Council under the State Electricity Commission Acts, 1937 to 1957.

Orders in Council under the Southern Electric Authority of Queensland Acts, 1952 to 1954.

Report of the Queensland Coal Board for the year 1957-1958.

Rule under the Coal Mining Acts, 1925 to 1952.

#### COAL AND OIL SHALE MINE WORKERS (PENSIONS) ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

##### INITIATION.

**Hon. E. EVANS** (Mirani—Minister for Development, Mines, and Main Roads): I move—

“That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Coal and Oil Shale Mine Workers (Pensions) Acts, 1941 to 1957, in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

#### MACKAY FLOODS RELIEF BILL.

##### INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Taylor, Clayfield, in the chair.)

**Hon. T. A. HULEY** (Coorparoo—Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (11.24 a.m.): I move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to approve and ratify a certain Order in Council whereby the Governor in Council made provision for making allotments of land available free of cost to sufferers by the recent floods at Mackay, for purposes incidental thereto, and for other purposes.”

Mr. Taylor, it is quite a well-known rule that the Government, while they are the trustee for the public estate of the Crown, are not entitled, except on a basis which the law sanctions and allows it, to pass away the public estate. Except in the extraordinary circumstances which occurred in February last on the banks of the Pioneer River, no Government would contemplate taking steps to give free of cost portion of the public domain to citizens; and indeed if any Government did without the most extraordinary justification to do so, it would be very rightly open to very appropriate attack over giving the public estate away in that manner. In February last in the course of the terrific rain disturbance that swept across North Queensland at that time the areas representing the catchment area of the Pioneer River experienced a record rainfall of almost unbelievable dimensions. On Cattle Creek in one period of 24 hours 34 inches of rain fell and almost the whole upper reaches of the Pioneer River and tributary streams that run into it had such a deluge of flood of unprecedented dimensions that several towns were completely engulfed. The little township of Foulden and other Cremorne areas experienced exceptional flooding. In the course of striking this township of Foulden a number of people's homes were swept away and indeed the very land on which the homes stood was so changed by the character of the flood that what they previously had been was not recognisable and this residential site simply became the scoured bed of a new course of the stream. Faced with this

emergency, the Government's immediate concern was to make it possible for those people who, in this calamitous manner had been rendered homeless, to get a roof over their heads in the full knowledge and confidence that the emergent action we took would commend not only the support of the public but also the support of all parties in this Chamber. The Government knew full well they lacked clear authority to do what they did; nevertheless, based on Order in Council they provided 15 allotments in the town of Mackay to be made available free of cost to such flood sufferers. We bring down this legislation partly to ratify the emergent action then taken and partly also to provide a clear statutory basis upon which under a similar emergency there will be no doubt concerning the right of any future Government to act with the full sanction of the law at the time. As I said, the Order in Council provided that 15 allotments be made available free of cost to such flood sufferers as determined by the Commissioner of Housing with the approval of the Treasurer and Minister for Housing, either in fee simple—on a freehold basis—or as a perpetual lease, as elected by the flood sufferer. For this purpose, arrangements were made with the Mackay Flood Relief Committee to investigate the particular cases and to allocate the allotments by ballot. We did not want any favouritism. We did not want someone getting the first lot and taking the most favourable blocks.

**Mr. Thackeray:** Somebody might want one for a service station.

**Mr. HILEY:** I am talking about people who lost their homes. The purpose was if they lost their homes they would be given a new home site on either freehold or leasehold tenure as they desired, and in order to decide who got the blocks a ballot was conducted by the Mackay Flood Relief Committee.

**Mr. Lloyd:** There would be a condition that a home must be built on it.

**Mr. HILEY:** Yes. The Bill has been introduced to ratify and approve the Order in Council of 15 May, 1958, which authorised the Governor in Council to make land available free of cost to flood and cyclone sufferers where the Governor in Council is satisfied that the home-owner has suffered the loss of his home by reason of flood or cyclone and that it is necessary and desirable to do so by reason of the fact that the land appurtenant to the home is also lost or so damaged as to be no longer suitable as a residential site.

By this Bill the Government seek power to assist only the home-owner who by sudden disaster, and I emphasise that, has lost his house and the appurtenant land. They do not seek power nor do they desire to assist the home-owner who, for example, has erected a house on a site that is dangerous and where slowly over a period that danger becomes more acute. The implication will be clear. A

man who elects on the foreshores to erect a house close to a crumbling sand dune which is steadily receding or getting closer and closer to his house does not come within this category. There is nothing calamitous about the loss of his home. He has ample warning and is not put in the position of being deprived overnight of a safe and habitable site, and the house on it.

**Mr. Hanlon:** He deliberately takes a risk.

**Mr. HILEY:** That is a calculated risk on his part.

The same remarks would apply to many farm-owners who elect to build their house close to the eroding banks of streams through their properties. We are seeking to meet the plight of a person who without warning is suddenly engulfed in some cataclysm of nature. That is why it is linked to cyclones and floods of a sudden character.

**Mr. Duggan:** Is there any provision to meet the case where you have no public land available in the area where the disaster occurs?

**Mr. HILEY:** No. This merely enables the Governor in Council to make alternative land available. If there is no alternative land available, the power cannot be used.

**Mr. Duggan:** Can you resume private land?

**Mr. HILEY:** Not under this Bill. It gives no power of resumption.

I gave this matter a good deal of attention before agreeing to the continuing power granted by the Bill. I have always held fairly strong views about the folly of some people who build on sites that are clearly dangerous, and I have always welcomed the power in the Local Government Act which entitled local authorities to declare sites to be unsuitable for residential purposes. My only complaint, a view that has been hardened since I accepted Ministerial responsibility, is that too few local authorities exercise that power that was very wisely included in the Local Government Act.

The hon. member for Southport and I have considered some of those cases. I refer to houses erected in the Nerang Valley on sites that have been flooded in three years out of four since the days of Captain Cook. If they are not lost next February they will be lost in February or March of some year. They should never have been allowed to erect homes on some of those sites. It grieves me that local authorities do not take steps to prevent the building of homes on those sites. In making that comment, I must say that the present South Coast Town Council impressed me as being very alive to the problem. I do not think any future trouble of that type will occur there.

Some people have built homes in places where their commonsense should have told them it was foolish to build. The Government

do not propose to come to the rescue of those people. They are concerned about the plight of those who are engulfed in some sudden cataclysm of nature, a cyclone or flood which renders an apparently safe site completely uninhabitable. The Bill seeks to ratify what the Government did for the 15 sufferers in Mackay, and gives a continuing power so that if there is a similar occurrence in the future the Government of the day will not be forced to anticipate the approval of Parliament of action taken. I hope the purpose we are seeking to serve will commend itself to hon. members as a whole and that they will give their sanction for the continuing power of the law.

**Mr. DUGGAN** (North Toowoomba—Leader of the Opposition) (11.36 a.m.): Sometimes it has been said that the Opposition wants to condemn any contemplated decision of the Government, but this is an occasion when we can disprove the allegation. I take the opportunity of offering my congratulations to the Treasurer for outlining in a very clear and lucid manner and in proper chronological sequence the events which made it necessary to take the step that the Government took. It was a very humane attitude that the Government adopted and it will meet with the full approval of all people who have a genuine desire to help those who became victims as outlined by the Treasurer.

**Mr. Coburn:** It is in keeping with their generosity towards the Bowen people.

**Mr. DUGGAN:** I am speaking to the Bill; the hon. member can speak for himself. The Treasurer outlined the proposal in a very adequate way and I compliment him and his Government on the steps taken. It is a problem to deal with these freaks of Nature as they occur from time to time and it taxes the resources of the Government. A visitation by a flood or tempest or a savage fire which might affect rows of homes or an important business block poses a great problem to the victims. It is only when these happenings occur and a number of people are involved that public sympathy is invoked. I do not suppose there are any people more generous than Australians in coming to the aid of people who are the victims of a flood or fire. We have heard of various appeals in connection with floods in Lismore and Victoria and we know how readily the public responded. In many instances overseas people contributed towards national funds for the purpose. The people of Mackay who were dispossessed of homes because of this visitation of a tremendous outpouring of water following a flooding in the catchment areas will view with gratitude the action of the Government in making provision for them.

I raised by way of interjection the point where there might not be Crown land available—whether the Government have the right to resume land to make a similar provision for those who may be dispossessed. The Minister said that no such power is taken, but it may be appropriate at some subsequent

time that steps be taken to provide for such circumstances. After all, the damage inflicted and the heavy losses sustained by victims in this catastrophe are irrespective of whether Crown land is available or not. I have had experience myself of applications of a similar kind and I know the disinclination at the time to help people who may have been subject to disaster because of a storm or a flooding. Because of the isolated instance no government help has been forthcoming. It is very difficult to lay down legislation for the set of circumstances which might occur to justify help from the Government. There are many people in Australia and in the world who are victims of disasters but who, because the area might be extremely localised and the damage restricted to a limited number of people have had no such assistance as that envisaged in this Bill.

I do not want to depart from the general outline of the Bill that the Treasurer has given us, but I am very pleased to see that some attempt has been made to define clearly the type of circumstances that will have to take place before help can be given under the provisions of the Bill. I think it is sensible that people in areas where there is progressive erosion should not be protected.

I agree wholeheartedly with the Treasurer's statement about the folly of some people who erect homes in areas that are exposed to the dangers referred to by him. However, I think that hon. members on both sides of the Chamber should examine this matter closely to see whether greater protection than exists at present can be afforded to unsuspecting people. Frequently glowing advertisements are inserted in the Press by real estate people, and it is very questionable at times whether those advertisements conform to the ethical standards that are laid down by the more responsible members of the Real Estate Institute. Migrants particularly can be victims of that type of advertising. It is all very well to say that people enter these deals with their eyes open, but it is possible for a glib salesman who is not very scrupulous in his observance of ethical standards to persuade a migrant merely by showing him a lithograph or some expensive literature, to purchase an allotment of land that a more prudent person would feel was not a safe investment. At some future time it may be possible to plug that gap.

From personal experience, I know a number of people who have bought properties because of their love for the land. After all, migrants are probably more land conscious than Australians. A good deal of land is available in this country, and it is quite possible that the forebears of many of our migrants were driven from their homes during wars, or by pestilence or racial troubles, and have been left with virtually nothing. Consequently, they think there is something tangible in the ownership of land, and when they come here and desire to establish homes of their own, they want to go in for land. We should

do something to assure them that every possible legislative device is available to protect them from unscrupulous salesmen.

I join with the Treasurer in expressing the hope that all local authorities will exercise to the full their power to insist on the necessity for permits before buildings can be erected in areas that are exposed to erosion.

There is not very much more that I want to say. The decision to allocate the allotments by ballot seems to be a very fair one; I do not think a fairer one could be devised. The Bill deals with a limited problem, and the Government have taken action expeditiously. The provision is a wise one and the Government are to be commended for their generosity. I am sure that hon. members on both sides of the Chamber will be anxious to give praise where praise is due. I compliment the Treasurer on the introduction of the Bill.

**Mr. ROBERTS** (Whitsunday) (11.44 a.m.): I, too, should like to congratulate the Government on their humane and sympathetic action in coming to the aid of the Mackay flood victims. I am also both pleased and proud to know that the Leader of the Opposition has spoken in such glowing terms of the Government's action. I remind hon. members that some years ago in this Chamber, after a previous flooding of the Cremorne area, I applied to the then Government to do something for the people who were affected and to make available to them land in another area. I also asked them to give those people some financial help to enable them to transfer to other sites what was left of their properties and buildings. That is exactly what the Government have done and I congratulate them on doing it and doing it so speedily. I congratulate in particular the Premier, the Minister for Development, Mines and Main Roads, and the Treasurer, who has introduced the Bill.

Hon. members may or may not know that every person affected by the flood was in my electorate. At the time I was in hospital. From the hospital I communicated with not only the police in Mackay but also the Minister for Development, Mines and Main Roads and the Premier and I knew exactly what was going on.

The action taken has enabled the unfortunate victims of the flood to see a new ray of hope. It must be a dreadful experience to watch all one's possessions and probably one's life savings, too, floating away down the river, as some of those people did.

In normal circumstances one perhaps would have thought Foulden to be as safe as any other area reasonably close to a river. I suppose it was 30 feet above the normal river height and, though with previous floods the area suffered what could be called severe erosion along the river bank, there did not seem to be any possibility that the river would take away the houses and farms that were taken. As a matter of fact, some two

or three years ago—I cannot be very definite about the time—because of previous erosion and prior to this flood, half of a stone wall was pitched by the Pioneer Shire Council in co-operation with the Government. Immediately after the flood I inspected the erosion area and the only part that was not damaged by the water was the section of the wall that had been stone-pitched, so it seemed to be a very effective method of preventing erosion. The wall was completed at considerable cost to the people. Even though it is paid for by the council it is the people really who eventually foot the bill. Unfortunately that wall and everything else has now gone. We do not want to see that happen elsewhere. The road had been approved for bitumen sealing as part of the Maraju-Yakapari Road going up the North Coast, but it is no longer there. I do not think it would be an exaggeration to say that 12 to 14 feet of sand covered the road, the railway and a farm in that area, which will give hon. members some idea of the severity of the flood. It was a tragic happening for these people, not wealthy people but mostly hard-working battlers, who had built this short distance out of town. We are happy to know that today they have at least got this little piece of mud, this allotment, and that this generous Government have helped them to start again. They greatly appreciate the Government's action. On their behalf I compliment the Government.

Several people from the Cremorne area were affected. Ever since the railway line was built to the harbour in 1938 or 1939 flooding seems to have been accentuated in the Cremorne area, in the low-lying parts of Mackay proper, down to the eastern end of Victoria Street and in the vicinity of the Mackay butter factory. I forget the technical term for the method of construction of the railway line, but previously water was able to flow freely underneath. The railway line has been built up, acting as a bank for water flowing over land between the Pioneer River and Barnes Creek. I have spoken about this matter in the Chamber before. In the parliamentary records there are photographs showing the water 1 foot to 2 feet higher on the one side than on the other. Once the flooding in the Cremorne area reaches the height where it topples over the wall it goes no higher. At the present time there is a move throughout Mackay and district to form a committee to investigate flooding. It is a very serious problem, one that has to be looked at very closely because the whole future of Mackay is at stake. What happened was unbelievable. People who have lived there for 50 or more years had never seen 1 inch of water at the corner of the showgrounds where the Commercial Hotel is situated. On this occasion the water was over the bar in the Commercial Hotel. Something must be done because Mackay is only 3 feet above sea level. We know that on this occasion there was a cloudburst in the Finch Hatton area—34 inches in 24 hours. I do not know whether this has anything to do with it, but prior to the construction of the harbour, as the hon. member for



Mackay will remember, 4,000-ton vessels like the "Canonbar" and the "Baralaba" came up the river and berthed at Paxton's and Michelmores wharves, whereas today one would be flat out taking a dinghy up the river. I would be exaggerating if I said one could walk across the river at almost any tide, but one could walk across the river reasonably comfortably without getting his knees wet, so much has the sand built up throughout the area. It extends much further coming up-stream above the hospital bridge and the railway bridge. It comprises a vast area of sand in this river bed. We have the hospital bridge across the Pioneer River near the hospital and 100 yards away is the fine railway bridge which is similar in construction to the bridge which was wrecked at Mirani. If it is not checked there will be no water running under those two bridges. In view of the way the water cut across this Foulden area and through the farms it looks as though it will create a new channel. The road bridge and the railway bridge would cost hundreds of thousands of pounds to replace.

If the river changes its course we will be left with a traffic bridge and a railway bridge, which cost hundreds of thousands of pounds to construct, standing over a sea of sand. I do not know the answer to this. Perhaps the answer is to pump the islands of sand out of the river. Perhaps a bit of dredging should be done as was done for the "Baralaba" and the "Canonbar". They may set the sand in motion and have it taken out to sea. A few feet down from the Forgan Bridge there is a bridge that was constructed for the harbour line. If you take the cumulative width of the bridge into consideration it becomes a dam and once this water starts to rise and the logs and trees and debris come down it builds up into a dam. We are fortunate that we did not lose the Forgan Bridge. It was built just prior to the war; it may have been 1937 or 1938. It is quite a modern bridge. I do not exaggerate when I say that it was down to five or six feet, and if the flood had lasted perhaps one more day the bridge may have gone. I hope that it will be safe in the future, and that no more expense will be entailed.

I should like to say what a great job the flood relief committee did under the control of Inspector Woodbury and Mr. Maitland Lowe, and many other people whose names do not come to my mind at the moment. They certainly did a great job in dealing with the distress and in administering the relief fund. On behalf of the flood victims I publicly thank the people of the State, particularly those of the Mackay district, for their generosity. Although these people are still in a bad state, their plight would have been much worse but for the many thousands of pounds contributed to the fund.

I cannot let the opportunity pass without congratulating the Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, the Buffalo Lodge, in that area. That lodge lost its only building in the flood. It would have been valued conservatively at

from £5,000 to £7,000. This big building was used as a dance hall, and for wedding and other functions, and was used also by other lodges. It housed the furniture and regalia of the various lodges, which represented a considerable amount of money. A great quantity of cutlery and crockery acquired over a number of years was stored in the building. As a member of that honourable Order, I am proud to say that at no time was there any suggestion of seeking some relief from the fund. That is even more pleasing when it is realised that the members generally represent the poorer class, the rank and file of the community. The lodge has borrowed money to purchase a home which is now being converted into a hall. It could not be compared with the hall that was lost.

The members could not have been blamed if they had sought some little relief, but they realised the distress of the people who have lost homes and would not tolerate for a moment any suggestion that the lodge should receive any assistance from the fund. They are to be highly commended on their attitude.

On behalf of the distressed people of my electorate, I thank the Government very much through the Treasurer for their assistance.

**Mr. WALSH (Bundaberg)** (12.3 p.m.): While I listened to the Treasurer introducing the Bill and giving the reasons for it, my mind went back to the criticism levelled at the previous Government by the Treasurer, and similar criticism recently by an hon. member of his party in regard to government by regulation and order in council. I have frequently heard similar criticism voiced by Government members when they were in Opposition. This is a practical example of the need for executive power to issue regulations and orders in council if in the opinion of the Government it is in the interests of the people to do so.

**Mr. Coburn:** The urgency of the case made it necessary.

**Mr. WALSH:** I am not disputing that, but I am drawing attention to the criticism voiced by the Government when they were in Opposition. Recently the hon. member for Kurilpa referred to the same matter. No Government would exercise the power to issue an order in council or a regulation unless they thought it was in the public interest to do so. I am conceding to the Government that they have done the right thing. I am reminding the Treasurer, and he knows it, of how frequently he has challenged myself as Treasurer with having done irregular things. These things are coming home to him now that he has assumed responsibility as a member of the Government and matters are being brought forcibly before his own eyes. It is pleasing to know that the Government exercised Executive authority to give relief in this instance.

It may be that some precedent has been created. Precedents have been created and there cannot be any grumbling if new ones

are created. There will, no doubt, be many sudden disasters in the future, but let us hope that they do not come about as this one did. Apart from what may be described as an Act of God, there are the disasters created by the Government themselves. What consideration was given to the waterside workers at Port Douglas when their livelihood was taken away from them because of a change in the transport system? What happened to the Mt. Mulligan miners who, because of a decision of the Government, had to pack their chattels and look elsewhere for work?

**Mr. Evans:** It was a decision of themselves; they agreed to it.

**Mr. WALSH:** I do not know. I know that the Government gave some help.

**Mr. Hiley:** And the miners are grateful for it, too.

**Mr. WALSH:** That may be so. Any Government, not necessarily this Government, might decide to close some industry down and the workers would have to shift elsewhere. What is going to happen about help in such a disaster? Let us get away from Mt. Mulligan and take Mt. Morgan. Because the mines closed down thousands of workers found themselves drifting all over the State looking for work, with no jobs to go to in most difficult times. I am not decrying what has been done in this instance. If the Queensland Labour Party demands that some consideration be given to people who have met with disaster we would expect sympathetic consideration of our application.

I give the Government credit for seeing to it that those given the responsibility of advising on who should be granted land in this particular instance took into consideration the financial capacities of the people concerned. I do not think it is good enough to say that a person with a substantial bank balance should be able to get priority over Crown land when that person has sufficient financial resources to meet the situation himself. Here again we meet the problem in this locality which is not unknown to me. What good would Single's farm be to those who have lost their farms? The hon. member for Mirani knows it. What good are the farms with big channels cut through them? Their means of livelihood have been substantially reduced.

**Mr. Coburn:** There are similar cases on the Burdekin.

**Mr. WALSH:** I am coming to that.

**Mr. Evans:** They have been given a transfer of assignment.

**Mr. WALSH:** The Minister would know the position of the farmer who went onto his land with a mortgage and a financial responsibility ahead of him. When he loses all his financial resources away goes his livelihood and his home. In such a case sympathetic consideration should be given. These disasters will happen again in his area, as the hon. member for Burdekin knows.

I agree to some extent, but not entirely with another remark by the Treasurer. Too frequently it occurs that local authorities do not give effect to their own by-laws, particularly those controlling building sites, and so on. In this instance it would be the Pioneer Shire Council. However, it cannot be blamed for not having exercised its powers some years ago, because in the past nobody would have dreamed that a place such as Foulden would have been devastated by flood. Strangely enough, when I was there on one occasion investigating a dispute on the farm of the late Mr. T. A. Powell that the Minister for Development, Mines and Main Roads will remember, I said to the then Land Commissioner, who is now Chairman of the Land Administration Board, "One day this river will cut across there," and I pointed in the direction where the scouring had taken place. It was obvious that it was the old river bed. Similarly, in the township of Ayr it is possible to see where the river obviously once flowed across part of the township.

Many other localities could be affected in the same way as Mackay. It was an unusual circumstance, even surpassing the terrific rainfall during the cyclone of 1918, when 27 inches of rain fell in 24 hours, and 55 inches in three days. In this instance the rain apparently fell during a cloudburst. But it is not good enough merely to blame local authorities. Private individuals must accept a share of the responsibility. They should not be allowed to clutter up water-courses with timber and other debris during the course of settling on farms. Mackay is not the only place affected. The Proserpine River is another shining example.

**Mr. Coburn:** And the Don River at Bowen.

**Mr. WALSH:** That is so. There is sand to the depth of several feet in the middle of that watercourse, and there will be a shocking disaster in the Bowen area at some future date. The problem of shifting sand is one that confronts the Government, the local authority and any trust that might be created.

I can recall the flooding of the Burdekin in about 1946, when I was Minister for Transport. Word reached the Railway Department that the river at Gibson's farm was 8 feet higher than in 1940. All that I could do was sit in my office and speculate on the tragic position of Home Hill, where the flood waters had reached a height of 4 feet in the post office and other buildings. There were no locomotives about and no empty cane-trucks to shift people to the highest land, which would have been at Inkerman. However, the worst did not happen. The river broke through at another point and the water in Home Hill began to recede. There would have been a shocking tragedy in Home Hill at that time if the river had not broken through at another place.

**Mr. Coburn:** That was in 1946.

**Mr. WALSH:** I was Minister for Transport at the time.

These problems will recur continually unless some drastic action is taken to clear the various watercourses. Of course, that will not meet an emergency such as the one we are now discussing, although the headwaters of Cattle Creek are cluttered with island growths, timber, and all sorts of obstructions.

In the first place, local authorities should be made to enforce their by-laws, and secondly, we should have some rigid law to prevent commission agents and salesmen from disposing for building purposes of any property that is threatened with disaster, such as is the case at Bowen. Foulden is isolated from Mackay but, as in 1946, it suffered a very damaging flood—fortunately not nearly so damaging as that in the Burdekin.

**Mr. Coburn:** You would not have any residential area in Home Hill at all.

**Mr. WALSH:** That confirms the point I made a while ago. If a farm has 15 feet of sand deposited on it the owner can at least get rid of it with a bulldozer if he has the money. Not long ago I met a man who told me that it cost him £15,000 to rehabilitate his farm after the cyclone. That was a colossal outlay. Many properties with erosion problems will pose difficulties in the carrying out of legislation of this nature unless some very definite principles are laid down for the allocation of the land. I do not think it is reasonable to suggest that anybody should be entitled to a piece of Crown land simply because his house has been washed away. As the Treasurer said, it has to be a sudden disaster and no doubt one that will be defined in some way for the administering of the law.

**Mr. GRAHAM (Mackay) (12.17 p.m.):** I join with my leader in expressing appreciation of the Government's action in making land available to people from Foulden who were forced to move to other areas in Mackay because of the destruction of their property by flooding. Those people, too, appreciate his action.

I join with the hon. member for Whitsunday in expressing thanks to the people of Mackay and Queensland who so generously supported the appeal to alleviate the distress and suffering of those affected by the great flood. At the same time, we cannot look only to the past. We must have vision and we must pay some regard to what might happen in the future. It has been said that it could not happen here. We have had floods in Mackay in the past but no-one could have foreseen the damage that was done at Foulden and Cremorne in this particular flood. We have been talking for years in Mackay of the flooding that occurs in the Cremorne area, but until something is done it will recur, perhaps with a greater loss of life and property.

**Mr. Coburn:** What could be done to prevent it?

**Mr. GRAHAM:** That is beyond me. The matter has been discussed by people for the last 10 or 15 years. A flood prevention committee was set up by a past Labour Government and investigations have been held into the causes and effects, but we are no further advanced. Somebody will have to accept full responsibility or perhaps in one or two years, or ten or fifteen years, we shall have a similar experience.

The flooding that caused the damage at Foulden was due to very heavy rainfall in a very short time in the upper reaches of the river and the silting of the river in the lower reaches. The railway bridge and the railway embankment contributed to the flooding in the Cremorne area.

At the present time there is agitation in Mackay for the flood prevention committee to carry out further investigations. I understand that the university is undertaking certain work including the modelling of the Pioneer River in an effort to ascertain just why flooding occurs, particularly in the Cremorne area. I have my own views but they are only a layman's and consequently may not be worth anything. But there is one factor that should be taken into consideration. Anybody who has seen what happens at the outer harbour would be influenced into believing that the construction of the outer harbour has had some effect on the silting of the Pioneer River. The harbour is built about 2 miles away from the mouth of the river but on the southern wall the beach frontage has built up an additional 200 yards from its original frontage. In 10 years the beach frontage has gone out 200 yards from the original beach frontage along the southern wall of the harbour.

**Mr. Gilmore:** How far does that wall project out to sea?

**Mr. GRAHAM:** The best part of 1,600 or 2,000 feet. The beach front is shifting out. The harbour walls would affect the tidal flow and in all probability it is that tidal action which has caused the silting of the river. Anybody who has had a long period of residence will verify what I am saying. I have lived there for 40 years. As the hon. member for Whitsunday said, over a period of years there has been serious silting of the river to the extent that now in the morning boat races could be held whereas in the afternoon horse races could be held on the river. The river in parts goes completely dry. Since the stone wall was put in the centre of the river we have seen the building up of huge sandbanks above what is known as Forgan bridge and what is known as the hospital bridge. Until some scheme is devised to remove the sandbanks there will continue to be flooding of the Cremorne area. Because of the huge sandbank above the Forgan Bridge the water is diverted to Cremorne. Eventually

that area will be completely eroded, more property will be washed away as was the Buffalo Hall and other buildings.

**Mr. Coburn:** The difficulty is that nobody can tell us how to remove the enormous quantity of sand.

**Mr. GRAHAM:** I always say that nothing is impossible. Engineers of the Department of Harbours and Marine and the Irrigation Department, together with other technical men, could make a complete investigation. There are thousands of acres of land that could be reclaimed by using the river sand. For years there has been talk of reclamation work round Mackay using river sand for filling, but nothing has been done. The Government have to take a greater interest. I am not making any apologies for past Governments because I realise these matters were raised. Despite approaches to past Governments to investigate whether the harbour railway was causing flooding or aggravating flooding, nothing was done. A long section of railway line from the Pioneer River to Barnes Creek has been built without one outlet or culvert in its construction to allow the water to flow through. A huge volume of water coming down from Roeklea through the Cremorne area strikes the railway line and builds up. As the hon. member for Whitsunday said, photographs have been taken of various floods in the Cremorne area showing the water on one side at rail height and on the other 3 or 4 feet lower. That proves that the railway line does hold back the river. It does not cause the flooding but I cannot be convinced that it does not aggravate it. Every time a flood occurs in the Cremorne area it must cost the Railway Department thousands of pounds to repair the railway line. That has gone on year after year. Every time there is a flood in Cremorne the railway line from the Cremorne Hotel to Barnes Creek is washed out, and hundreds of tons of ballast has to be put into it. This is washed out again when the next flood occurs. This has happened on a number of occasions.

**Mr. Coburn:** It was in an awful mess after the last flood.

**Mr. GRAHAM:** It has been washed away about six times because they have not given the water a free flow right through. The Government should carry out investigations to ascertain the cause of the flood in the lower regions of the Pioneer River.

Unless the cause of the flooding is ascertained and removed there will be a repetition of previous disasters. The removal of the stone wall in the Pioneer River has been suggested. This was constructed many years ago with the object of deepening the channel, in order to allow the river to be used for shipping purposes. The hon. member for Whitsunday mentioned that small boats used to ply in the river bringing cargo in and out on the high tide but now you could hardly take a flattie or a small motor boat up the river because of the heavy

silting. I think the stone wall has been a factor in causing huge sand deposits in the lower reaches of the Pioneer River.

Consideration should be given to the establishment of a relief fund. For many years we have experienced disasters such as occurred at Mackay and Bowen recently. When these disasters occur an appeal is made to the public for funds for relief purposes. If the Government established a relief fund the money would increase over the years and when a disaster occurred they could be more generous in relief measures for flood victims. The establishment of such a fund would be very helpful to the Government who might be short of funds when a disaster occurred. The Mackay and Bowen floods must have cost the Government £75,000 or £80,000.

**Mr. Coburn:** More.

**Mr. GRAHAM:** A flood relief fund would be of advantage to the State and the people in general. I support the Bill. The Government have done the right thing in making land available to those people who lost their homes.

**Mr. COBURN (Burdekin) (12.31 p.m.):** With previous speakers I heartily congratulate the Government on the introduction of this legislation. After all it is merely legislation to ratify an Order in Council which the Government issued because of the urgency of the problem. To the Government's credit, they acted quickly to minimise the suffering that resulted from the awful disaster at Foulden. This action is in keeping with that taken when a devastating cyclone struck Bowen early this year. Many people lost not only their homes but also every worldly possession that they had three hours previously. The Government hastened to do what they could do to minimise the hardship suffered by those people. Those actions have been greatly appreciated.

The only objection by the hon. member for Bundaberg to this legislation is that it will establish a precedent which future Governments might find it impossible to follow. In my Address in Reply speech recently I dealt with disasters that occur from time to time and suggested that we should have some form of national disaster insurance fund.

**Mr. Walsh:** The Queensland Labour Party subscribes to that viewpoint, but on a proper basis.

**Mr. COBURN:** It must be on a proper basis. I suggested that, so that these cases could be met at all times. If we are going to be stopped from doing what is right and humane simply because of the fear that we are establishing a precedent, many things we should do will be left undone. To ensure that we will always be able to help when help is warranted, we should act in such a way that we will be able to meet all situations as they occur.

The possibility of destruction of homes by flooding of rivers is ever present on the

coastal strip of Queensland. The statements of the hon. member for Mackay on the existing condition of the Pioneer River could be applied equally to any of the rivers along the coast, the Proserpine, the Don, the Burdekin, Ross Creek near Townsville, the Herbert and others. Those streams are all full of silt and sand. As mentioned by the hon. member for Bundaberg, in the Don River there are great hills of sand higher than the banks. Bridges that at one time could be ridden under by a horseman are now sitting on the bed of the river.

We are not unaware of the cause of floods. We know the cause. Every farmer who practises irrigation knows that if his drains are cleaned the water will flow freely and will not break the bank, but once they become clogged with vegetation or are filled by earth falls, the drains have not the capacity to carry the water and will overflow. The farmer takes steps to clean his drains. It is easy to say that we should take similar action with rivers, but, with a mighty stream like the Burdekin, which is three-quarters of a mile wide and in which countless millions of tons of sand have been deposited, how can we get rid of the sand? All sorts of schemes have been proposed for the cleaning of the Burdekin. Some people suggest that bombs should be dropped on the river from aeroplanes just before the wet season is imminent, so that the sand will be loosened and will be carried away by the water. Others say that, if the vegetation in the stream is destroyed and the old dead wood which collects the sand removed, the sand will be washed away by the stream.

**Mr. Walsh:** Put bulldozers in.

**Mr. COBURN:** The use of bulldozers has been suggested. It was suggested to put a bulldozer in the middle of the stream, cut a track to the mouth of the river and let the water do the rest. Knowing the Burdekin as I do it is absolutely a physical impossibility to get rid of the sand deposit. We have to face the problem of the Burdekin overflowing its banks because of the sand.

**Mr. Walsh:** You have got over 100 feet.

**Mr. COBURN:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! The hon. member's speech is most interesting but this is not a general debate on flood mitigation. I must ask the hon. member to apply his remarks to circumstances which may possibly be similar to those at Mackay where allotments of land were made available to those who suffered as a result of floods. I ask him please to keep his speech away from a general discussion on flood mitigation.

**Mr. COBURN:** The reason for the disaster at Foulden was the great amount of debris and sand that had collected at the mouth of the Pioneer River. If it had not been there and the stream was able to flow freely the water would have stayed within the banks of the river and there would not have

been the necessity to make available this sum of money to relieve distress. I am suggesting that we should deal with the things that cause these disasters and thereby save the Government large sums that are now required for relief purposes.

**Mr. Walsh:** The same thing could happen at Home Hill.

**Mr. COBURN:** Yes. There are many places along the banks of the Burdekin where the river could overflow and become an unbridled torrent through Home Hill and carry away not one or two but dozens of houses and the land on which they stand.

It has been said that some people build in places known to be dangerous. In 1940, when the Burdekin River broke its banks, a farm with a mature crop of cane on it two miles away from the banks of the Burdekin, was completely washed away, and there was no sign on the following day of where that farm had been the night before. At Home Hill there are houses which are distant from the banks of the Burdekin River and they could be swept away as happened at Foulden. Nobody objects to the action taken; everybody welcomes the Government's action in helping the Foulden people to rehabilitate themselves. Many lost not only their homes but the land on which they stood. They would not have been able to re-establish themselves in homes had it not been for the generous action of the Government in making land available. In this instance the help applies only in respect to Crown land if it is available in the district. Suppose a similar disaster to the one at Foulden should occur in a place where there is no Crown land available. It would still be necessary to rehabilitate those people by making allotments available to them. I think it would be consistent with the Government's action if they decided in such circumstances to resume land and make it available to those who lost their land. If a situation like that occurs I think it will be the attitude of the Treasurer to suggest that the Government take that action.

There have been instances where houses on the banks of the Don River have been swept away, but on those occasions the Government had not come to the rescue or the help of the people who had been affected. They have had to depend either on their own resources or the generosity of the general public, who have contributed to funds that were set up to help them. The possibility of these sudden disasters is always with us and it is encouraging to the people—and it gives them a sense of security—to know that we have a Government who will help them generously if it is utterly impossible for them to establish themselves elsewhere without some aid.

The Bill is a ratification of something that has already been done by Order in Council. I saw the devastated land through which the railway lines pass a couple of days after the flood waters had subsided, and I witnessed the wreckage that they had caused. Although I did not see what took place at Foulden, I could visualise the destruction in that area

from what I saw at a place lower down where it was not considered necessary to give the people any help. I sincerely hope that nothing will occur in the future that will make it necessary for the Government to act as generously as they have done in this instance. However, if it does, I hope that they will take similar action.

**Mr. AIKENS** (Mundingburra) (12.42 p.m.): Quite a number of towns and cities in Queensland are faced with the problem that is presented by flood waters, and I am particularly pleased that in introducing the Bill, the Minister made it clear that it was not designed to protect people who deliberately build in low-lying areas or those subject to flooding, nor was it designed to cover ordinary cases of erosion. I understand that the Bill will apply to future instances where a home or land has been swept away and rendered useless by a visitation of flood waters that could not be reasonably foreseen. I think it is a particularly wise measure.

I listened with interest to the remarks of the hon. member for Bundaberg, and I was struck with the fact that apparently he and I have the same viewpoint on this matter; that is, that every local authority should be forced to face up to its responsibilities. Far too often do we see local authorities, for purposes that at times can be held suspect, permitting homes to be built on land that is not suitable for that purpose—low-lying areas that are subject to flooding.

In Townsville an outrageous example of class distinction is being practised by the Townsville City Council. It is throwing people in a certain part of that city wide open to the provisions of the Bill. When I was a member of the Townsville City Council two problems faced it: one of erosion, and one of potential flooding and disaster. The erosion was along the beach front of Townsville, known as The Strand. The sea was eating into The Strand to such an extent that at high tide the water was only a few feet from the roadway. Our Council raised money and built a very fine sea wall all the way from Kissing Point to the eastern breakwater. That stopped the erosion. If we had not built the sea wall, the sea would now be virtually lapping at the bottom of Castle Hill.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! The hon. member for Mundingburra was not in the Chamber when I requested the hon. member for Burdekin not to go into a general discussion on flood mitigation or sea erosion. The Bill deals with certain matters relating to the consequences of floods similar to that at Mackay and I ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to that subject.

**Mr. AIKENS:** Thank you, Mr. Taylor. As you know, no-one is more meticulous than I at all times to keep strictly within the limits of the debate. I merely mentioned the erosion at Townsville to exemplify the point made by the Treasurer that the Bill will not deal with problems of erosion. However, we

did the job at The Strand and we saved all the land there. It is ironical, as you know yourself, Mr. Taylor, that at the council election the party that did the job—my party—hardly get a vote from that area.

We have in Townsville, too, a problem of the type that the Bill deals with and that is the possibility of a flood causing great havoc, destroying homes and making a new channel, as the Hwang Ho, or the Yellow River, in China did when it changed its course and made a new mouth for itself 300 or 400 miles down the coast and when thousands upon thousands of lives were lost. In Townsville we have the ever-present threat of the Ross River making a new channel for itself. In 1946, at the time of the big flood referred to by the hon. member for Bundaberg and the hon. member for Burdekin, the Ross River ate very deeply into the banks between Aplin's Weir and the Ross River Bridge. Moreover it came across and rushed down Sheriff Street to such an extent—and this might have been covered by the Bill—that it lifted one house from its stumps and smashed it to matchwood against another house, and the impact knocked the second house off its stumps and it was swirled away down the estuary of the Ross River, if I may call Sheriff Street that, it was an estuary on that occasion. Eventually the house came to rest, like the Ark on Mt. Ararat, on another piece of land and after the flood subsided the owner of the house bought that land on which it had finally come to rest and re-erected the house there.

Anyone who has had a look at Townsville—and I am sure the Treasurer has had a good look at it when he has been there and probably he has seen it as he has flown over it—would have observed that sooner or later the Ross River is going to break through Sheriff Street from between Aplin's Weir and the bridge, and cut a new course for itself through Sheriff Street and probably join Ross River, as it is at the present time, further on. For the last 10 years the council has done nothing to prevent it. We made provision to stone-pitch the town-side bank between Aplin's Weir and the bridge as a start to prevent the catastrophe. When the present council took office in 1949 it secured the approval of the then Treasurer and took the money away from that stone-pitching account and used it elsewhere, and the chairman of the works committee of the present council made a public statement that the land in the Mundingburra area was not worth saving. Of course, he implied at the same time that the homes of the people and the people themselves in the Mundingburra area were not worth saving either.

**Mr. Graham:** He was not talking about the hon. member?

**Mr. AIKENS:** I will tell the hon. member what they would do with me if they had the opportunity. They would gladly immolate me and do it without a qualm of conscience.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order!

**Mr. AIKENS:** But I am not talking about their attitude towards me. I am talking about what will happen if we have a bigger flood or even a flood of the same magnitude as that in 1946, when two houses were washed away, one of them smashed to matchwood and the other floated off to another site. We also had loss of life.

**Mr. Walsh:** A train went over the bridge.

**Mr. AIKENS:** Many things happened in that flood elsewhere. But the Treasurer and his Government should strive to make local authorities face up to their responsibilities in the matter. For ten years nothing has been done by the present Council to prevent the disaster that we all know is going to strike some day. It is true that they have flown alleged experts to Townsville at tremendous expense only for them to make all sorts of stupid reports. It is true that they had a mud map at the Queensland University for some time, with simulated tides and what-not. They made some sort of report including the suggestion that water from the Ross could be diverted to the Bohle. The shiny-pants at the University have not sufficient intelligence to know that if the Ross is in high flood the Bohle is also in high flood and could not take any water from the Ross. Incidentally, when the Bohle is in high flood God help the abattoirs that the Treasurer went up recently to officially open.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! I ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to the Bill.

**Mr. AIKENS:** What will happen to the abattoirs if the Bohle comes down in flood? It will be washed out to sea. Will this Bill cover the replacement of the abattoirs?

**Mr. Hiley:** No.

**Mr. AIKENS:** I am glad that I can clear that point up. The thing is to do what the hon. member for Bundaberg suggested, have some measure of responsibility placed on the aldermen or the councillors who are negligent in their job in failing to take the necessary precautions against the disasters that are envisaged in the Bill. In Townsville we have aldermen actuated purely and simply by class hatred who are deliberately refusing to do anything tangible to prevent the flooding of the Ross and the destruction of a large number of homes and probably huge losses of life in Mundingburra Rosslea Estate and lower areas of Hermit Park. It happened in 1946; it will happen again. They are doing nothing to prevent it. What responsibility rests upon them? Will they be held individually or severally liable for any damage, death or destruction caused by an evil that they should and could have taken action to prevent?

**Mr. Hiley:** No.

**Mr. AIKENS:** No, unfortunately again we run up against the law, and as was said

by Mr. Bumble in "Oliver Twist," "The law is a ass." It certainly is "a ass" in this regard. The present Townsville Council was elected because of a split in the Labour Party, as were the present Government. The poor old A.L.P. candidates contest every municipal election in Townsville but they run last but they take enough votes from us to defeat us.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order!

**Mr. AIKENS:** I have seen all the snobocracy of the silvertails who do not care if they throw the people of Mundingburra, Rosslea Estate and Railway Estate to the wolves. They are doing absolutely nothing to prevent the disaster we all know is going to occur. When it does occur, if the present Treasurer is still in control of the Treasury benches he will do all he possibly can and say, "I could not force the Townsville City Council aldermen to prevent this disaster, but now that it has occurred through their deliberate neglect, through their deliberate disregard of homes and property, I am going to try to find fresh land for those who are still alive and have not been washed into Cleveland Bay."

**Hon. T. A. HILEY** (Coorparoo—Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (12.55 p.m.): I am grateful to hon. members for the way they have received the Bill. They will forgive me if at this hour I decline to respond to the invitation to engage in a general examination of the cause of flooding or the ways flooding can be mitigated. As you, Mr. Taylor, reminded the Chamber on two or three occasions, the Bill is narrowly directed at the problem of enabling people who have lost their homes by sudden disaster to be provided with land free of charge.

**Mr. Hilton:** Would you explain why the land, if it has been given free of charge, has not been given on a freehold basis?

**Mr. HILEY:** I shall tell the hon. gentleman why we did it. We thought there may be an element of truth in the contention that often fell from the lips of hon. members on the other side that people did not want freehold land. So as not to force people we said, "You can please yourselves. You can have freehold or leasehold." So far we have been 100 per cent. right. We have said to these people, "You can buy it on whatever tenure you wish." So far everyone has said, "Give me freehold." And we have given them what they asked for.

Motion (Mr. Hiley) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING.

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

The House adjourned at 12.59 p.m.