

NOTE: There could be differences between this document and the official printed *Hansard*, Vol. 314

TUESDAY, 8 MAY 1990

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. J. Fouras, Ashgrove) read prayers and took the chair at 10 a.m.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following Bills reported by Mr Speaker—

Griffith University and Gold Coast College of Advanced Education Amalgamation Bill;
Queensland University of Technology and Brisbane College of Advanced Education Amalgamation Bill;
Police Service Administration Bill;
Public Sector Management Commission Bill;
Retail Shop Leases Act Amendment Bill;
Legal Aid Act Amendment Bill.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

Hon. K. Coghill, MP (Victoria)

Mr SPEAKER: I wish to extend a welcome to the Honourable Ken Coghill, MP, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria, who is present in the Speaker's gallery today.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

ELECTIONS TRIBUNAL

Absence of Presiding Member

Mr SPEAKER: I wish to inform the House that while the Honourable Mr Justice Derrington is absent from the Supreme Court of Queensland, the Honourable Mr Justice K. W. Ryan, CBE, will be the judge of the court who will preside at the sittings of the Elections Tribunal, petition No. 1 of 1990. This petition relates to the matter of the election of a member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Nicklin.

PARLIAMENTARY REPORTING STAFF

Death of Chief Reporter; Appointment of Acting Chief Reporter

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I regret to inform the House of the death on 22 April of Mr Peter Bradshaw Rohl, Chief Reporter, Parliamentary Reporting Staff. As a mark of respect, I ask all honourable members to stand for a period in silence.

Honourable members stood in silence.

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, until an appointment is made to fill the vacancy, the duties of the Chief Reporter will be performed by the Deputy Chief Reporter, Mr Alan John Watson.

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF LANDSBOROUGH
Resignation of Member

Mr SPEAKER: I have to inform the House that I have received the following letter from the Honourable Michael John Ahern, member for the electoral district of Landsborough—

"6th May, 1990.

The Speaker,
State Parliament,
George Street,
BRISBANE. 4000

Dear Sir,

I hereby resign my seat in the Legislative Assembly of Queensland to take effect from midnight, Sunday 6th May, 1990.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed)

The Hon. M.J. AHERN, M.L.A.,
Member for Landsborough".

Seat Declared Vacant

Hon. W. K. GOSS (Logan—Premier, Minister for Economic and Trade Development and Minister for the Arts) (10.06 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"That the seat in this House for the electoral district of Landsborough hath become and is now vacant by reason of the resignation of the said Honourable Michael John Ahern."

Motion agreed to.

PAPERS

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

Report of the Premier's Department for the year ended 30 June 1989.

The following papers were laid on the table---

By-laws under---

Queensland Performing Arts Trust Act 1977-1988

Harbours Act 1955-1989

Orders in Council under---

Harbours Act 1955-1989

Harbours Act 1955-1989 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982-1989

City of Brisbane and Market Act 1960-1985 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982-1989

Dairy Industry Act 1989

Diseases in Timber Act 1975

Forestry Act 1959-1987

Meat Industry Act 1965-1989 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982-1989

Plant Protection Act 1989

Primary Producers' Organization and Marketing Act 1926-1989

Sugar Experiment Stations Act 1900-1983

Water Resources Act 1989

Regulations under---

Fishing Industry Organization and Marketing Act 1982-1989

Proclamation under the Forestry Act 1959-1987

Reports---

Bread Industry Committee of Queensland for the year ended 30 September 1989

Cannery Board for the year ended 30 November 1989.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Western Queensland Floods

Hon. W. K. GOSS (Logan—Premier, Minister for Economic and Trade Development and Minister for the Arts) (10.08 a.m.), by leave: Today, I wish to report to the Parliament and to the people of Queensland on aspects of the recent devastating floods experienced in western Queensland. It is difficult to convey accurately the extent of damage and loss caused by those floods—the worst in recorded history.

In dollar terms, the damage bill will far exceed \$100m. Some very preliminary estimates of damage include—

	\$m
immediate response and clean-up	2
personal hardship assistance—subsistence grants	3.6m
housing	25
housing contents	13
business enterprises	10
public facilities and infrastructure	30

On top of that, there are the stock losses and property damage suffered by primary producers, which will obviously run into tens of millions of dollars.

The damage caused, however, has another major dimension that cannot be quantified—the suffering and loss by the people of western Queensland. For the people of the towns inundated by the raging floodwaters—particularly the people of Charleville, Alpha, Jericho, Augathella and Blackall, and those on properties across vast areas of western Queensland—recovery will in many cases be a long and costly process. The Government of Queensland, however, is committed to the survival and recovery of western Queensland.

The destructive force of the floods peaked in the major regional centre of Charleville late on the night of Friday, 20 April, and the following Saturday morning. Over the previous 48 hours, serious flooding had occurred in the towns of Alpha, Jericho, Blackall and Augathella, and surrounding areas; but nothing to match the scale of devastation that Charleville was to experience.

On the morning of 20 April, the situation deteriorated, with increased flood levels around all population centres. The State Government placed its aircraft at the disposal of the State Emergency Service, ferrying emergency supplies from Brisbane and stranded travellers from isolated towns.

Alerted to the deepening gravity of the situation, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mr Terry Mackenroth, flew to Charleville on the Friday. That evening, as the local population braced itself for flooding—but not expecting the severe flooding that ultimately resulted—he returned to Brisbane.

The situation report released late on Friday by the State counter disaster organisation was ominous. The report stated that Charleville flood levels had already exceeded

the highest recorded level of 6.96 metres and that water was rising rapidly upstream at three inches every 10 minutes. Throughout that Friday night, Charleville was inundated not just by the highest but by the most destructive floodwaters in its history. The Charleville flooding was a full-scale disaster, with nearly 1 200 of the town's houses—80 per cent—inundated. Over the next 27 hours, residents were rescued from rooftops by a fleet of helicopters and the entire town was evacuated to the Charleville Airport.

On the Saturday, I visited Charleville with the Police and Emergency Services Minister, Mr Mackenroth, and witnessed first-hand the shock of townspeople at what had happened. The State counter disaster organisation, the State Emergency Service, the police, the defence forces, the local authority personnel and the residents themselves handled the crisis with great courage and professionalism. Given the force and the scale of the flooding, it was miraculous that serious loss of life did not occur.

The State Government responded immediately to the flood disaster. At its meeting on Monday, 23 April, in Townsville, State Cabinet considered an urgent report on the situation. Cabinet authorised a comprehensive and coordinated Government response to the flooding disaster, with numerous departments participating. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services will shortly inform the House of details of further assistance being provided by State Government departments.

Cabinet also approved the setting-up of the western Queensland flood appeal, with the appeal committee headed by former Brisbane Lord Mayor, Clem Jones. Our thanks go to Mr Jones for the magnificent effort that he and his committee are presently putting in. The Queensland Government's contribution of \$250,000 to the western Queensland flood appeal on behalf of the taxpayers of this State was the first in tens of millions of dollars it will eventually pay out in flood relief and a variety of forms of assistance. The Federal Government, which was already committed for tens of millions of dollars under disaster relief arrangements, contributed additionally a matching amount of \$250,000 to the appeal fund.

On Wednesday, 25 April—Anzac Day—I flew to Charleville with the Acting Prime Minister, Mr Keating, to inspect the damage and destruction caused by the floods and to have a briefing from the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mr Mackenroth, who remained on the scene throughout the week. Together with them, I talked to representatives of the local community, including representatives of the business community. I stated that the disaster was of such a scale that it needed more than the normal financial assistance measures.

Last week, State Cabinet approved an expanded flood relief package for the townspeople of western Queensland. It relaxed eligibility criteria for flood victims applying for financial assistance by removing the means test on personal hardship subsistence grants. That special supplementary assistance scheme, costing an extra \$12m, also provides for more grants and loans for housing repairs to allow people to make their homes secure and habitable.

Today, I pay the highest tribute to the flood recovery and relief teams that have worked virtually non-stop in Charleville and in other towns over the last two weeks. The evacuation itself was a massive operation. The establishment and running of the tent city at Charleville was a massive operation. The clean-up, which is nearing the end of its first stage, is a massive operation. Attention will now concentrate further on other affected towns, particularly Alpha, at which a major effort is under way at present. All who have taken part in the relief work deserve our thanks and praise. Many have worked to the stage of exhaustion.

I give special recognition to the army, the Royal Australian Air Force, the State Emergency Service, the police and the medical teams, whose efforts and expertise have been equal to the task confronting them. I pay tribute also to the public, to the volunteers and to the community groups for their wholehearted response to the plight of flood victims. They have willingly donated goods and services. They have readily given their time and effort.

There has also been a tremendous response to the western Queensland flood appeal. Clem Jones advises that the appeal total is now in the vicinity of \$3m. The money raised is already being distributed in the form of cash vouchers to residents of Charleville, Alpha, Jericho, Augathella and Blackall. Today, Mr Jones flies to Charleville to discuss with shop-owners the distribution of goods to be purchased through the appeal fund.

Plainly, no Government and no single organisation can cover the cost of the damage caused by these floods or make good the damage and the personal hardship sustained. The flood appeal, to which the people of Queensland and people throughout Australia have responded with great willingness and generosity, will help residents to replace many of the items for which they might not otherwise have had the money.

The two other main groups that have suffered major loss are the business communities of the flooded towns and the primary producers of the region. Assistance under existing natural disaster relief arrangements is available in the form of concessional loans. The State Government is currently examining what additional assistance can be provided. Last week—and I emphasise only last week—the Government received the report of the loss adjusters, who assessed the minimum business losses in Charleville at \$6.3 million. I have forwarded details of these losses to the Federal Treasurer and the Federal Government.

Following discussions this week between members of the Cabinet committee established to oversee the flood relief measures and representatives of the Charleville business community, it is hoped that the Government will soon be in a position to announce the details of financial assistance to be provided to businesses affected by the floods. This morning State Cabinet discussed financial assistance for primary producers, and further discussions will be held with the Federal Government on natural disaster relief arrangements to address that particular situation.

In conclusion, I reiterate the commitment of this Government to ensuring that all reasonable levels of assistance are provided to the people of Western Queensland who have suffered so greatly from the western floods. It is our challenge and our responsibility to be both responsive and responsible; responsive to the needs of the people hit by the floods and responsible to members of the whole community—the taxpayers—who must bear the cost both now and in the future as a result of any precedent that may be established. I believe that the Government is being both responsive and responsible.

Only those who experienced the floods can know of their full destructive force. We have all seen the graphic evidence in our newspapers and on television. However, to get the full picture, one certainly had to be there. As a Government, we stand by the people of western Queensland and will assist them over what I expect will be a long period of time to recover from the trauma, financial and otherwise, of these ruinous floods.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT **Flood Damage, Western Queensland**

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (10.18 a.m.), by leave: Today, I want to thank publicly the thousands of people who have been involved in helping western Queensland cope with the worst floods in its history.

The response to this natural disaster directly involved Queensland's emergency service organisations—the SES, police, fire and ambulance brigades—the Federal Government and its defence forces, local councils, as well as numerous voluntary groups and individual volunteers.

The response of the State Government to the flood disaster encompassed almost every Government department. As soon as the scope of the disaster became apparent,

the Premier's Department immediately began coordinating with the Federal Government on the implementation of Federal/State natural disaster relief arrangements. The Premier also initiated the establishment of the Western Queensland Flood Appeal under the chairmanship of former Brisbane Lord Mayor Clem Jones. My own department—Police and Emergency Services—and the agencies operating within its area of responsibility also swung into action.

Mr FitzGerald interjected.

Mr MACKENROTH: The real problem with the people opposite is that they do not care about the people in the west. That has been made obvious by some of the stupid statements they have made over the last couple of weeks. The Leader of the Opposition wanted to commandeer an SES helicopter while it was being used to try to rescue people. That is what I saw happen.

Mr FitzGerald: You want to check the ashtrays before you get in one.

Mr MACKENROTH: The honourable member should not start talking.

The Leader of the Opposition forgets that he is now in Opposition and that he is not the Premier or the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. He rang the director of the SES and said, "I want to get a helicopter when I go out to Charleville." That is totally inappropriate.

Mr Borbidge: He went out there at his own expense and you know it.

Mr MACKENROTH: Members of the Opposition should not talk about our reaction to the floods—

Mr Littleproud: Get on with your statement.

Mr MACKENROTH: I will get on with it in a minute.

As I was saying, members opposite should not talk about the reaction of the Government when the Leader of the Opposition went out to Charleville and told the people who were suffering out there that the only thing that this Government was going to do for them was to make a quarter-of-a-million dollar donation to a public appeal.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr MACKENROTH: If members of the Opposition keep interjecting, I will keep going.

Mr COOPER: I rise to a point of order. The remark that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services made is false. It is untrue. I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Minister to withdraw.

Mr MACKENROTH: I will withdraw. That is not what I was told by somebody else, though.

The major response to the disaster was coordinated through the operations centre of the State Emergency Service. A shuttle service to and from Charleville using the Government Air Wing was established, as well as the provision of helicopter support and other aviation support. Flights by the Government Air Wing have now been scaled back to normal. The SES also coordinated defence force assistance through the natural disasters organisation in Canberra and was also responsible for the provision of emergency communications.

Additional fire services equipment and staff and additional ambulances, ambulance officers and equipment were sent to affected areas from Brisbane and nearby central and western Queensland centres. Police strength in Charleville was increased from 17 to 68 officers and 117 police trainees were brought in to help with general clean-up work. These extra officers and trainees plus specialist police radio and electronics technicians left the Charleville area last Friday and policing in the district has returned to normal.

To cope with inevitable public health problems, the Health Department despatched a team of senior Health Department officers to oversee disease prevention and control. Teams of medical and nursing staff were also sent to Charleville to provide medical services and to support the local hospital staff. The Health Department also arranged the airlifting of urgent medical supplies to flood-affected centres and arranged crisis counselling and welfare assistance.

The floods have also been a major blow to primary producers in western Queensland. The Minister for Primary Industries, Ed Casey, visited the west again during the long weekend to assess the losses incurred and to talk with industry. This morning State Cabinet considered his report on the plight of rural industries affected by the floods, and he will be making a statement at an appropriate time. The Department of Primary Industries also established a toll-free hot line to provide advice to producers on potential animal disease problems; in conjunction with the SES coordinated fodder drops to isolated stock; and administered freight concessions on the movement of fodder, stock and essential equipment.

The Department of Administrative Services has played a major role in flood relief efforts. One of its earliest actions was the purchase through State Stores and the transport to flood-ravaged areas of literally tonnes of food to feed thousands of homeless people. The department also provided emergency equipment such as bedding, generators, rescue craft, clothing and cleaning equipment, and even provided television sets, video recorders, and books and games for children's entertainment. Departmental inspectors assessed structural damage to homes and other buildings in the Charleville, Alpha and Jericho areas.

The department has also been coordinating hundreds of volunteer tradespeople as well as carrying out repairs to the many public buildings that were damaged by the floods. In conjunction with Charleville's *Western Times* and Brisbane's *Courier-Mail*, the department's public relations and media office has produced a special local newspaper to fill the information gap while the local newspaper has been out of print.

The Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs has also played a key role in helping western communities cope with the tragic flood by establishing a relief centre at Charleville to provide subsistence relief payments, crisis counselling, information and advice to flood victims. The department offered similar services and advice in other affected western centres. As well, a flood relief centre was set up in Brisbane to assist evacuees with information, emergency help and counselling as well as contact information to enable flood victims to communicate with family members throughout Australia.

A range of other State Government departments have assisted flood-affected western communities. The Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations has made available six workplace inspectors to help during the immediate post-flood repair period and is helping to mobilise trades people from TAFE colleges, as well as apprentices, who have volunteered their services to help in repair work.

The Department of Resource Industries helped to restore power supplies to devastated communities and properties and provided 100 extra inspectors and tradespeople in western centres to check the wiring circuits in flood-damaged homes and buildings.

The Transport Department has been monitoring road conditions to open roads with local restrictions as soon as possible. The department has already announced the provision of a pro rata refund on vehicle registration fees for flood-affected cars and trucks. It has also provided free transport on Queensland railways for emergency items such as clothing, foodstuffs, blankets and household goods that have been donated to flood victims.

The Department of Housing and Local Government has negotiated with banking and building society groups a deferral of home loan repayments for flood-affected home-buyers and has been assisting in the clean-up of and repairs to Housing Commission properties.

The Department of Justice and Corrective Services provided over 100 minimum security prisoners under supervision to help in the clean-up and repair work.

The Attorney-General's Department arranged for the provision of free legal advice to flood victims on insurance and other issues.

Although many schools were affected by flood waters, the Education Department made available school facilities at a number of centres for use as emergency relief centres. The department also organised a seminar to provide counselling for teachers from flood-affected areas confined to Brisbane, including instruction in meeting the immediate and long-term needs of flood victims of school age.

I thank the thousands of State Government employees who were directly involved in responding to the floods and the subsequent relief and clean-up efforts. Special thanks must go to the members of the State Emergency Service, the Police Service, and fire and ambulance brigades. Their quick and professional response to the disaster ensured that loss of life was kept remarkably low, given the scope and nature of the flooding. The Federal Government and its defence force personnel, namely, the army and the Royal Australian Air Force, also deserve the thanks of all Queenslanders for the magnificent job that they are continuing to perform.

Special gratitude is owed to the thousands of volunteers and organisations such as the Salvation Army who have come forward to lend a hand to the west in its efforts to clean up and rebuild. On behalf of the State Government I thank the many thousands of Australian families and individuals, as well as the business sector, for the tremendous response so far to the Western Queensland Flood Appeal. That appeal, under the chairmanship of Clem Jones, will supplement the many millions of dollars in State and Federal relief funds that will flow to the west.

I thank also the reporters and management of the media outlets who helped to show the full disaster of the floods and who have continued to help by promoting the flood appeal and other avenues for voluntary assistance.

Finally, I pay tribute to the victims of the floods themselves, namely, the people of western Queensland. The response to the floods in the west has been truly a community effort. This Government will do all that it can to help put the west back on its feet. The spirit that has been evident in all western communities over the past few weeks proves that that aim will be achieved.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr COOPER (Roma—Leader of the Opposition) (10.28 a.m.), by leave: I refer to a couple of remarks by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Firstly, he stated that when I was Premier and Minister for Police I used to whistle up helicopters to go here, there and everywhere. Secondly, I refer to disparaging remarks about the Government's contribution to the western Queensland relief fund.

Mr Speaker, as you would realise, in Opposition it is necessary to make one's own travel arrangements.

Mr Mackenroth: You rang the director of the SES and asked him for a helicopter. Tell us!

Mr COOPER: I did not ring the director of the SES and ask for a helicopter.

Mr Mackenroth: Your staff did.

Mr COOPER: My staff said that if there was an opportunity to go out there, I should do so; and so it should be.

Mr Mackenroth: You've forgotten you are in Opposition, my friend.

Mr COOPER: As Leader of the Opposition I have just as important a role to represent those people as I did as Premier.

I will not take up much of the time of the House because I do not want this to degenerate into a political squabble over the effects of, and the trauma that has been caused by, those floods in western Queensland. I am perfectly prepared to work with this Government to make sure that those people in the west receive adequate assistance in the short, medium and long term. Here and now I make the offer that we do work together.

As to the allegation about my receiving travel assistance—on at least two occasions I travelled to the affected areas at my own expense. Frankly, I was quite happy to do so, because at least I could bring back a message to the Government. On occasions, without any political connotations, I rang the Premier's office and mentioned that I thought he should be out there. I know that he was making arrangements to get out there. I mentioned also that I thought it would be a good idea if the Acting Prime Minister could get out there, and thankfully he did. I was pleased to see that.

I have also suggested the establishment of an all-party parliamentary committee that could possibly look at events that occurred before, during and after the flooding, because I believe that there is a need—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I suggest to the Leader of the Opposition that he sticks to speaking about how he has been personally misrepresented or misunderstood, or personally affected.

Mr COOPER: Thank you, Mr Speaker. As I have already indicated to you, and I indicate again now, I would like to have some time tomorrow—and I will make these arrangements through you—so that I, too, in an apolitical sense, can put my case in relation to the flood victims.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

1. **Employment Conditions of Mr R. Persson and Ms V. Milligan**

Mr BORBIDGE asked the Deputy Premier and Minister for Housing and Local Government—

"With reference to the employment of the Acting Director-General of Housing, Mr Richard Persson and Ms Vivienne Milligan within his department—

- (1) When did they begin employment with his department?
- (2) On what contract or classification levels were they appointed and what salary levels do these represent, or were any consultancy agreements involved and, if so, what rate and over what term?
- (3) Has the Government been meeting the accommodation costs of these officers at the Gateway Hotel and, if so, what is the total cost to date for each of them?
- (4) Has the Government been meeting costs of weekly interstate return airfares for these two officers to enable them to return home at weekends and, if so, what is the total cost to date for each officer?
- (5) How long does he expect this unusual arrangement will continue and what does he estimate will be the total cost to Queensland taxpayers of flying in and accommodating this southern-based duo?"

Mr BURNS: (1 to 5) I thank the honourable member for his question because it provides me with an opportunity to set the record straight about Mr Persson's appointment and the claims being made by the Opposition.

In Opposition, the Goss Government made it very clear that it was not happy with the Queensland Housing Commission. It was not alone in this regard. For example, the Queensland heads of churches report slammed its performance. On coming to office, the Government offered Mr Persson the position of Acting Director-General of the new Department of Housing and Local Government. The arrangements were negotiated by the Director-General of the Premier's Department.

Mr Persson had just completed an 18-month review of housing policy for the Federal Government. Before that, for many years he had worked as a public servant as the Deputy Chief Executive of Housing in New South Wales. He is a most experienced public servant with an excellent reputation throughout Australia and overseas. In agreeing to come to Queensland to help sort out the mess created by the previous Government, he declined a very attractive offer by the Canadian Government to work in Canada. I remind honourable members opposite that the Canadian Government is a conservative Government.

During his time in New South Wales, Mr Persson was involved in many fine initiatives, including the quadrupling of home ownership programs, the introduction of special policies for people with disabilities, for Aboriginal people, for single people, for older people and for women in crisis, innovative joint ventures with the private sector, the establishment of a housing advisory service, a multicultural program, the introduction of a private rental housing trust, an independent appeals tribunal and a tenant participation program. That list of achievements, of course, covers almost all of the things that did not occur under 32 years of National Party and coalition Governments and which have left us with, among other things, the lowest rate of home ownership of any State.

In his short time here, Mr Persson has already made a strong impression with his willingness to go out and talk to community groups and with his understanding of housing issues generally. Both the Premier and I have received numerous positive messages about his performance from a wide range of people including bishops, businessmen, community group leaders and local government officials. Mr Persson agreed to come to Queensland at very short notice.

Mr FitzGerald: Three, four and five.

Mr BURNS: The honourable member will get the answers.

As I said, Mr Persson agreed to come to Queensland at very short notice. His family was unable to just up and leave on such short notice. It is not at all unusual to cover travel costs for a period of time when head hunting high quality chief executives. I can cite some instances that occurred under the honourable member's Government.

Mr Persson's family moved to Brisbane at Easter. His travel and expenses up until that time were exactly the same as those applying to other senior public servants working away from their homes. He did not travel first-class, although he was entitled to. The honourable member would know that it is the usual practice of Governments—and certainly it was the practice of the previous Government—to pay for the air fares and accommodation costs of employees and consultants hired from interstate.

I understand that the previous Government regularly hired interstate consultants, and I have had my attention drawn to a consultant who was paid \$1,300 a day and who had provided accommodation and weekly first-class air fares between Brisbane and a southern capital. In that case, millions of dollars were spent on a report that was not acted upon. Our Government is acting upon Mr Persson's report's and it will make the Queensland Housing and Local Government Department Australia's finest.

In comparison with that unused report costing more than \$2m, from early December to Easter, Dick Persson's travel costs and allowances were \$14,852, and those of Vivienne Milligan were \$12,079. The previous Government spent \$2m on a report that it did not use. In five months I have spent \$26,000 on a report that will change the shape of the Queensland Housing Commission.

Vivienne Milligan is also a highly qualified public servant and housing expert with extensive experience in policy development and program administration. She was engaged to carry out a review of all Housing Commission policies. Up until Easter she was on an arrangement which covered her travel costs. Her salary was the same as her previous salary as head of housing policy and planning in New South Wales, plus the usual loading to cover holidays, sick leave, superannuation, etc. She is now Acting General

Manager, Housing Services, a Band 2 position which does not include any travel costs. All top positions in the new Department of Housing and Local Government have been advertised and applicants will be subject to merit panel selection processes in the very near future.

Queensland is lucky to have been able to secure the services of these two highly qualified and highly experienced public servants. The Opposition's attack on them is outrageous and totally unwarranted. The Opposition's major criticism of Mr Persson is that he worked for the Wran, Unsworth and Hawke Governments. If working for a Labor Government as a public servant is a disqualification, the Opposition obviously suggests that we should sack everyone who worked for Bjelke-Petersen, Ahern, Cooper or Fraser. It is also worth pointing out that many persons appointed by the previous Government——

Mr Gunn interjected.

Mr BURNS: Mr Persson is not my girlfriend and he is not my former private secretary.

But it is worth pointing out that many persons appointed by the previous Government to senior departmental positions had no senior management experience at all. Many had little public service experience at all. In more than one case, the only qualification was having worked as a private secretary to a National Party Minister. One can read the list of Joh Bjelke-Petersen's appointments in that way, and some of those made by the previous Government as well.

The Opposition's personal and snide attacks on these fine public servants refer continually to the fact that they come from "down south". While I am totally committed to a Queensland State of Origin victory, these two are not footballers or cricketers from down south, they are Australians with a lot to contribute to the improvement of housing opportunities for Queenslanders.

In conclusion, I would like to advise the House that senior members of the Opposition are regularly harassing public servants in the Housing Commission, pressuring them to leak information for political use.

Mr FitzGerald: Name them.

Mr BURNS: The Leader of the Opposition. Mr Gunn also has rung them.

Mr COOPER: I rise to a point of order. It is obvious that the remark just made is false and derogatory, and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr BURNS: I withdraw the remark, but I think that the Opposition ought to bring Mike Ahern back.

Many of the commission's officers have reported to the director-general of my department such approaches. Those officers telephoned senior officers of my department to say that Mr Cooper and Mr Gunn telephoned them asking them to leak from the department——

Mr GUNN: Mr Speaker, I object. Since leaving Government, I have not telephoned any officer of that department. I find those remarks offensive, and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr BURNS: I withdraw those remarks.

Those public servants are angry at the tactics of the Opposition and view them as a slur on their integrity and impartiality. Pressuring public servants to breach the trust placed in them is totally unacceptable. It clearly shows that the members of the National Party have not learnt the lesson that the voters gave them on 2 December.

The people of Queensland voted for a change of Government and it is about time that the members of the Opposition respected their decision. It was the arrogance of the

members of the National Party that saw them thrown out of Government and it is that type of arrogance that will see that they never return.

2. Assaults on Officers in Correctional Institutions

Mr GILMORE asked the Minister for Justice and Corrective Services—

"With reference to numerous reports of violent assaults on custodial officers in Queensland correctional institutions—

- (1) How many such assaults have occurred in the past three months?
- (2) What charges have been laid as a result of these assaults?
- (3) What penalties, including prisoner transfers, have resulted from charges laid?
- (4) What measures have been taken to minimise assaults on correctional officers?"

Mr MILLINER: (1) I am advised that the External Investigation Unit has on record, from 1 January 1990 to 18 April 1990, 21 reports of violent assaults on custodial correctional officers, involving 20 prisoners out of a daily prisoner rate of approximately 2 300.

(2) To date, 17 charges have been laid under the Corrective Services Act. These are as follows—

Common assault (one prisoner had two charges)	7
Assault on a prison official	5
Assault occasioning bodily harm	3
Serious assault	1
Minor assault	1

The investigation of three cases is still proceeding and, in the other case, the prisoner involved was referred to the John Oxley Memorial Hospital for assessment.

(3) I am advised that 16 of the charges were laid before the Magistrates Court and, to date, seven have been finalised. All cases resulted in increases to the length of the term of imprisonment of the prisoners concerned.

Two prisoners have subsequently been transferred from the correctional centre in which the assaults occurred in order to provide for their better management. One prisoner has been charged with a breach of discipline, which was handled by internal processes as prescribed under the Corrective Services Act.

(4) The level of assaults is monitored on a weekly basis by the head of the External Investigation Unit and the Deputy Director-General of the Queensland Corrective Services Commission.

The Queensland Corrective Services Commission is currently undertaking a major review of its management of violent offenders, with specific emphasis upon the need for—

- training for staff in reducing tension levels;
- additional training for staff in the use of minimum force techniques of self-protection;
- special programs for selected violent prisoners; and
- the development of Moreton Correctional Centre as a special care centre to improve the management of selected violent prisoners.

3. Arson of Government Property, Maryborough

Mr DOLLIN asked the Minister for Administrative Services—

"Is he aware of an arson problem in Maryborough which has destroyed Government property and, if so, what action has the Government taken to overcome the problem?"

Mr McLEAN: I thank the honourable member for Maryborough for his question. As the honourable member knows, arson has been a severe problem in the Maryborough area over the past year.

In the financial year 1988-89, the costs of arson in Maryborough were \$907,462, and for the period ending 31 March 1990, the cost was a further \$12,586. This is distressing to the students, the families and the teaching staff who are the unfortunate victims of this destruction.

Following concerns raised by the Maryborough community and the active representations of the member for Maryborough, 13 intruder alarm systems costing \$80,000 have been provided to schools throughout the city. This action is designed to protect not only modern school buildings and equipment but also is aimed at providing for the historic school buildings in Maryborough that form part of our State's heritage.

The alarm systems were designed and their installation supervised by officers of my department. They are linked by rapid communication to the State Government control centre in Brisbane, where alarms can be monitored 24 hours a day. The Maryborough police respond quickly to any incident.

Arson, breaking and entering and vandalism of schools are a costly drain on the State's financial resources. In 1986-87, the full cost was \$1.02m; in 1987-88 it was \$3.16m; and in 1988-89 \$3.24m. In this financial year up to 31 March, the figure is already \$2.38m.

My department is actively attacking the problem and a number of areas have been trialled with intruder alarms; for example, the Logan area, involving 20 centres, at a cost of \$50,000, and the Inala/Richlands area, involving 16 centres, at a cost of \$40,000. A number of other sites throughout Brisbane have been selected. The Logan trial has shown a decrease in the number of incidents by 25 per cent and a similar trend is evident in Inala and Richlands.

I wish to stress that the alarm system is not a complete cure-all for vandalism problems. My department will continue the program to help reduce the staggering costs of vandalism to our society.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Superannuation Pay-out for Sacked SEQEB Workers

Mr COOPER: In asking a question of the Premier, I refer to the Government's decision to pay the sacked SEQEB workers their superannuation, and I ask: firstly, will he also compensate the thousands of small-business operators who suffered major setbacks, if not loss of livelihood, as a result of the withdrawal of power by SEQEB workers during that dispute? Secondly, will he explain details of the precedent he is establishing by his decision to pay superannuation funds to workers who have already received their own contributions? Thirdly, will he explain how these funds were reportedly salted away, so that the people of Queensland can be informed of what action has been taken with regard to these funds? Fourthly, will he refer that matter to the Parliamentary Committee of Public Accounts?

Mr W. K. GOSS: In relation to the last part of the question, the answer is "No."

Mr Littleproud: Why not?

Mr W. K. GOSS: The answer is "No" because the Government has made a decision. Members of the House will get the legislation very shortly, and the matter will proceed.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr W. K. GOSS: I have got all day.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr W. K. GOSS: The situation is that the funds are in the Electricity Employees Superannuation Scheme. They have been there frozen since 1985. They belong to the workers concerned and they are going to be restored to them.

I must confess that I was not personally aware, until after the election, that those funds to which those employees were entitled but for their sacking during that particular dispute had been frozen and were maintained there as separate moneys, when I was approached by the person who is in charge of the scheme—I think his name is Mr Wyatt. He is well known to many of us. He came to me and volunteered the information that he had done the right thing with the funds and that they had been set aside and were available. I said, "Thank you very much."

I then had a talk to some of my colleagues, including the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, the Minister for Resource Industries and the Treasurer. Our view was that, if there was an actuarially sound course of action that could be pursued to restore the funds that were due to these workers and one which accorded with the justice of the situation, we would adopt that course. The Minister for Employment has been working for some months to put together such a package. It will now be reviewed by the Government Superannuation Committee, which is a long-standing mechanism in terms of reviewing these matters, to make sure that all calculations are accurate. Considerable investigation and research have been undertaken by the Minister in consultation with the relevant superannuation authorities. That confirmed the soundness of the approach in terms of principle and, we believe, in terms of what is actuarially sound.

The workers' rights were to receive their superannuation entitlement at the age of 55 years. Some of the people concerned have reached that age and will be eligible upon the passing of the legislation. The others will receive their entitlement over a period of up to 20 years or so when they attain that particular age. This is something that we repeatedly undertook to do when we were in Opposition, that is, to review the plight of these people with a view to giving them some justice, and we are doing so. No public money is involved. No money is being taken from the education budget or from anywhere else. The funds are there and they will be distributed.

Anybody in the community who is fair-minded and objective would look at the example on the front page of this morning's *Courier-Mail*. It is a not unusual example of a worker who had been employed and worked as a competent and conscientious employee in the electricity industry for many years. Some employees had worked for 40 years and had never participated in an industrial dispute but were sacked by the Bjelke-Petersen Government for political reasons. Let us face it: these people lost their jobs, their livelihood and their homes and they suffered considerable personal trauma. They cannot be compensated for any of that. But at least this Government can do something fair and just, and it will do it. The funds are there. They are set aside and will be distributed to the people who are entitled to them.

Review of Crown Leasehold Land Policy and Administration

Mr COOPER: I ask the Minister for Land Management: will he give a commitment to a continuation of the previous Government's policy of encouraging the conversion from leasehold to freehold tenure of family farms? As a major review is currently being undertaken into land matters, will the Minister further extend the deadline for submissions to the land inquiry to ensure that members of that inquiry tour the State to hold public meetings and to give ordinary land-holders and primary producer organisations a better opportunity to express their views? I am aware that further meetings are to take place but I believe that they will be after the expiration of the deadline. I ask in the public interest that the inquiry be extended because of its importance. It is of major consequence and I ask sincerely that it be extended for a reasonable time.

Mr EATON: In answer to the part of the question dealing with the freeholding policy as it relates to family farms, I point out that it has always been Labor Party

policy to develop this State. That policy applies to the family farm, irrespective of whether it is used for grazing, grain-growing or anything else. The proper land development of this State and nation is based on the family farm unit.

Mr Stephan: Freehold?

Mr EATON: Some were freeholded and some were not. Some third and fourth generation farmers still have leasehold land.

We are waiting on the report and the recommendations to come from the review. We have appointed three very able, competent and experienced persons who are independent of the Government. We will be fine-lining our policy on the recommendations that come back. As well, there will be consultation with Cabinet. I feel it is unfair, at this stage, to predict what our final policy on freeholding will be.

Freeholding is part of this party's policy. Opposition members have been jumping on their egotistical high horse, wearing their hootenanny boots and high hats, and running round the countryside bellowing like motherless calves that the new Government will take land from these people. They have a paper-thin, see-through policy which they could not sell to the public, and that is why they are sitting in Opposition.

We have already extended the review once. I repeat that the review is independent of the Government. We want to work in with it as much as possible and we will take heed of any requests coming from it. The committee came to us and asked for an extension of time and we granted the request. If the committee comes back with another request, it will be looked at in the proper light to help it do the job that we have asked it to do.

Mr Littleproud: Why don't you suggest an extension to them?

Mr EATON: We are working with that committee. Other than helping the members of the committee, the Government is totally isolating itself from the committee. It is an independent committee. The Government would like the Opposition to work with it instead of making criticisms.

The members of the committee had made arrangements to go to Charleville, Cunnamulla and Longreach, but—and the Opposition must agree—they could not predict the floods. I am sure that the committee will visit those regions and carry out the review in the best possible way. I have full confidence in the three members of the committee to carry out this task and, if the Opposition wants to be constructive and make a contribution to the formation of a proper land management Act in Queensland, it should participate by making submissions to the committee for consideration by its three members before it comes back to the Government with its recommendations.

Western Queensland Floods, Damage to Primary Industries

Mr PREST: In directing my first question to the Minister for Primary Industries, I refer to the Minister's recent inspection of the flood damage to primary industries in western Queensland, and I ask: can he inform the House of the results of his visits to western areas and of any assistance measures approved by Cabinet for primary industries in western Queensland?

Mr CASEY: As indicated by the Premier, this morning Cabinet considered a preliminary report from me concerning the state of primary industries in western Queensland. I am sure that all members of the House would be most interested to know the current position. Unfortunately, detailed and final assessments are not yet available because a number of properties are still under a considerable depth of water. For instance, the Cooper channel region has experienced its biggest flood in Queensland's history and the water is still moving down through those channels.

Unfortunately, south-western Queensland has only a single industry; it is totally reliant on the pastoral industry. The best thing that this Government can do—with the

assistance of the Opposition, as promised by its leader this morning—is to do what it can to get the industry back on its feet, so that it in turn can then improve the economy of the region, employ people and get small businesses running.

During my previous visit and my major tour of the whole of the south-western area over the long weekend, I had discussions with representatives of banks and pastoral houses and people in my own department who are all doing a tremendous job in getting the necessary information together to show the extent of the flood damage in the area. It is possible that the figures may not measure up to some of the damage resulting from cyclones or other disasters in the State of Queensland, but the flood was a major disaster for this region. The dropping of fodder has now almost ceased. There was a major effort in the dropping of fodder out of St George and Cunnamulla to flooded properties, where sheep in particular were left starving on islands or even in water. I wish to express the thanks of the Government to those people who were major donors of fodder. The response for fodder from the farming community was tremendous. Of the 4 500 bales of fodder that were dropped out of the St George area into Dirranbandi and other places down the Balonne and across into the Warrego system all but 1 000 bales were donated. A total of 3 500 bales of fodder were donated, and in many cases transport was also donated by the same people. This was an excellent contribution from that sector of the community to the people in the grazing industry.

I have some details of the assessments that have been made so far on all the river systems in the region, from the Balonne, Warrego, Paroo, Bulloo, Cooper Creek channel, Thompson and Barcoo systems to the Belyando system. A major flood still going down the Belyando system is affecting a large number of cattle properties in the region. In total, approximately 360 properties were affected. On those properties approximately 67 homes were flooded. Flooding to homes occurred mainly between Wyandra and Charleville, although some homes were flooded at Cunnamulla, in the Paroo region and a couple of places out near Cheepie near Quilpie received record flooding. The area north of Charleville back up towards Tambo was also badly affected. As indicated by the Premier, the means test to determine personal hardship has been lifted to assist those who have suffered personally. Managers and permanent employees on these properties will qualify for assistance in the same way as townspeople.

Stock losses assessed to date indicate that in south-western Queensland upwards of 300 000 sheep could have been lost. This is a major disaster for the region and, as time goes on, this number may increase, because sheep that have been in water for up to three days or more are suffering from disease. In many of the flocks, sheep that survived the flooding are starting to die. Nothing can be done to save them. The number of cattle lost is not as large and is estimated to be approximately 11 000 at the present time. That number may decrease because cattle have the ability to swim and some will be recovered later after mustering. In total, the cost of stock losses is approximately \$7.5m.

In addition, approximately 9 000 kilometres of fencing could have been affected by the flooding. As the floods recede, in areas where fencing would normally be lost it may be found that the water went over the top of the fencing and consequently it was only on the outer edges of the floods where the current was not quite as fast that much of the fencing has suffered damage and is not recoverable. The maximum suggested length of damaged fencing is 9 000 kilometres, which is nearly \$15m-worth of fencing. There was other property damage to dams, shearing sheds, quarters and machinery and the total cost of that damage could well be \$7m. In total, approximately \$30m-worth of property has been damaged or lost.

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

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Western Queensland Floods

Mr COOPER (Roma—Leader of the Opposition) (11 a.m.): I, too, wish to add my words of support for people affected by the disastrous floods that have hit western Queensland. At the outset, I commiserate with the Government because, very early in

its term, it has had to confront a major disaster. Of course, no-one would have wished those floods on any person or on any district, such as Charleville. The flood was an act of God, and no-one could have predicted the enormity of the disaster that occurred.

Because the new Government has obviously not had a great deal of experience in dealing with disasters, it is beholden on members of this Parliament to be as bipartisan as possible. I believe that members of the Opposition have done so, even though at times we have had to bring matters to the Government's attention rather forcefully. I commend the Government for its rapid action and for its support on a number of fronts when the enormity of the disaster became known.

The rapidity and force of the floods that hit Charleville in the first instance caught people unawares. It was quite evident from the number of cars that went under water and the number of people who had to get out of their homes without having any chance of gathering their possessions that there was no time to issue a warning. The Opposition recognises the limited time that was available and commends the Government also for the liberalisation of the means test. I point out that the guidelines and schemes for disaster relief were put in place by previous agreement between all State Governments—not just the present Queensland Government—and the Commonwealth Government, and rules were laid down. However, when a disaster that is of a once-in-a-century magnitude occurs, it is time to assess the damage and extent of the disaster and, if need be, put aside the rule book. The Opposition recommended that that be done with the means test, and it certainly was done. The Government's action certainly helped families in the initial period when the disaster occurred, and that was vitally important.

Other issues of vital importance remain unresolved. I acknowledge that today indications of the extent of the damage were given by the Premier, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Minister for Primary Industries. At this point, because the ongoing factors involved in this enormous disaster will affect the long-term financial position of businesspeople and townspeople who may need personal loans, there would be no way in the world that anyone could know the actual extent of the damage. I point out also that the economic position of primary producers was not good when the disaster struck. I ask the Government to take all those matters into account when assessing relief, and that financial assistance be provided by the State and Federal Governments on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

A need for long-term financial relief certainly will become evident. Although Charleville attracted the major part of publicity that was given to affected areas—and rightly so, given that it was the major town in the flooded region—other towns such as Alpha, Blackall and to some extent Wyandra, Augathella and Cunnamulla were also affected badly. I inform the House today that I was able to travel at my own expense—which I was perfectly happy to bear—to Charleville and Quilpie on 21 April at the height of the evacuation procedure, and I was able to see the SES, the police and the army in action. Those organisations performed very well and deserve the Opposition's commendation for the work that was carried out at that time. The Opposition extends its commendation to all the bodies that were involved in the evacuation. The victims were certainly in a state of shock and trauma, which is only to be expected, but they, too, rose to the occasion and certainly deserve the highest commendations of members of this Parliament.

I commend the Flood Relief Appeal to all Australians, who already have a reputation for contributing very generously to disaster relief funds. The fact that the funds are being distributed presently is evidence of the quick response, and that has given the flood victims a good deal of confidence. In times of trauma, I believe that people need to feel that somebody is with them and will support them. I inform the House that members of the Opposition undertook extensive travel throughout the affected areas. I personally visited for a second time areas such as Quilpie, Charleville, Isisford and Longreach to find out how the people were coping and to assess for myself the extent of the flood damage. I commend the member for Warrego, Howard Hobbs, and the member for Gregory, Vaughan Johnson, who spent a great deal of their time helping people in their

electorates. They willingly assessed the needs of the people they represent and responsibly translated their needs and requirements to the Government.

When disasters such as flooding occur, it often happens that governmental authorities tend, as soon as the floodwaters recede, to walk away from the affected areas. It has happened in the past that the immediate disaster is replaced by another. The tendency has been to forget people when the immediate crisis is over, in spite of the fact that they may need help in the subsequent period more than they ever had before. Now that the floodwaters have receded and the extent of the damage can be seen right across the board, it is time that all members of Parliament demonstrate a continuing interest in a substantial manner in the well-being of the victims. I want to ensure that the longer-term needs of the people are brought to the attention of this House.

Businesspeople and primary producers of the western districts have been frightfully affected by the floods. In the Charleville region, for a period of 20 years primary producers have been in a state of recession caused by the effects of a drought. A number of those businesses had only just begun to get on their feet when the recent flooding occurred, which was the last thing on earth that they needed. Earlier, I mentioned that the floods were an act of God, and they were; but they were also a disaster that primary producers did not take into account in rebuilding their businesses. The debt position of those businesspeople was already very high. They made it plain that their financial circumstances were such that there was no point in offering loans at a rate of interest as low as even one per cent because they would be unable to repay them.

I have asked each individual business to assess its own position so that, when the Government responds, it will have facts and figures relevant to its own operation to enable it to put forward a case based not merely on emotion but also on hard facts. The businessmen can do that while the disaster is fresh in their minds and they know the state of their affairs. When those figures are obtained, an assessment can be made of the assistance that they require. I believe that they will need their entire debt to be restructured and refinanced. It remains to be seen what form of assistance will enable them to begin business again as soon as possible.

A number of people have said to me that it is no use starting again, that the suppliers must be paid. If those people do not receive an indication that constructive assistance is on the way, they cannot start in business again. I advise the Government to provide as quickly as possible assistance that is constructive enough to allow those businesses to reach a point at which they can trade and not be snowed under by debt. If they were snowed under by debt, they would not be able to continue. It is pointless starting those businesses again if there is no chance of their continuing.

The Government must closely assess the position of those businesspeople and offer a realistic relief package. Most people in this nation would support that type of approach. I am not asking the Government to go out and wave a chequebook around and make rash promises. The National Party recognises that that would not be a responsible approach.

As the Minister for Primary Industries pointed out, it will be some time before the exact stock losses are known. Those losses will affect the economy of those vast regions of western Queensland, not to mention the economy of the State and of the national. When action is taken to provide assistance to those western areas, those factors should be taken into account.

Time expired.

Industrial Relations

Mr HEATH (Nundah) (11.10 a.m.): Today, I speak about matters raised in this House on 27 March by the member for Merthyr concerning industrial relations in Queensland. There has been a considerable lapse in time between the description of industrial relations philosophy according to the Liberal Party and my response to

it today. But I must say that no amount of time could assist in clarifying the ambiguities and tortuous logic on which the member based his speech.

Time, however—and just 10 minutes of it now—is all I need to assist the Liberal Party with its problem of adding matters of fact together to produce a more cogent, logical view of the Government's proposals in the industrial relations area. I wish to ensure that this corrected account of the situation is placed on record in this House.

It is a matter of fact that this Government's sensible and long-desired industrial relations agenda was a major platform on which the Queensland electorate voted on 2 December. It is a matter of fact that that agenda was never, and never needed to be, hidden from that voting public. The Labor Party's policy was, as indicated many times prior to the election—and still is—to base the system on the recommendations contained in the Hanger report. Indeed, that is the basis of what was announced yesterday. If the word "hidden" should apply at any point in the investigation of industrial relations in Queensland, it should be noted that the report was hidden from public scrutiny by that other bastion of workers' rights—the National Party.

I will link some facts together for the benefit of the Liberal Party, whose spokesperson could not manage to do it. Because the Labor Party's policy was freely available prior to the election, because Queenslanders voted into power the Goss Labor Government and because Queenslanders, with the exception perhaps of some Liberals, can count the numbers between 9 and 54, I argue therefore that on 2 December last the Government did indeed receive an overwhelming mandate for its industrial relations policies and agenda.

That number in this House—54—turns into pure fallacy the member for Merthyr's assertion that there is no mandate for the Government's industrial relations proposals. Our overwhelming mandate compares more than favourably with the Liberal representation in this House, which could be called underwhelming.

On 2 December 1989 the Queensland electorate gave the Labor Government a vote of supreme confidence and signified a belief in its ability to give the people of Queensland a fair go. The voters believed that, in a State in which for 32 years successive conservative Governments overtly and shamelessly flaunted their disregard for the working women and men of Queensland, the election of a Goss Labor Government was the only chance they had of receiving a fair go, and that it had the most capable and committed administrators of such a fair system.

Labor was equally overt and shameless in sticking by its pledge to cut out the rot and in bringing discussion and conciliation, instead of conflict and confrontation, into the industrial relations area.

A further point—one which I find somewhat bewildering—is that the member for Merthyr accused the Labor Party of hiding its industrial relations agenda and, then, to prove himself totally confused, he quoted media reports from the *Sun* newspaper and the ABC to support his claim. No doubt, the Liberal Party knows of much better places to hide information than in the pages of a daily newspaper, or on television screens across the State.

In an attempt to add logic to his argument, the member spent \$12 at the Australian Bureau of Statistics. I assume it was his own money, because the Liberal Party cannot afford to pay some of its bills. This time he quoted the numbers correctly, but he misquoted the context and he did not read the footnotes. The figures depicted trends in trade union membership in Australia and they were, he said, alarming. I contend that, when viewed objectively, those figures are not alarming—certainly not as alarming as those in the Liberal Party's bank book.

The honourable member said that in mid-June 1989, only 42 per cent of the Australian work-force belonged to the trade union movement, compared with 51 per cent in 1976. I must point out that those figures are based on data collected in August 1988 and can only refer to members of the work-force who were financial trade union members on the specific date of collection, which was August 1988, not June 1989.

Then, using figures illustrating his claim of a decline in union membership amongst the young, the member failed to take into account that the occupations sampled for the purposes of the ABS data were not all filled by people from the same age group. The ABS statistics also carried the footnote that all of those people possibly joined a union. It is, according to the bureau in its footnote, a matter of how one interprets the figures.

That takes me back to the word "hidden". What was hidden in this case were the parts which did not serve the illustration, or which might not fit the Liberals' iniquitous and divisive industrial relations philosophy. I, too, can quote naked figures from the ABS which, if they fell from the lips of members of the Liberal Party, would sound catastrophic for trade unionism in Queensland.

In 1976, 53 per cent of the Queensland work force were members of a trade union, compared with 39 per cent in 1988. However, I, like the ABS, took into account that this movement in figures was observed and collated after the impact of the SEQEB disputes, in which the National Party Government in this State presided over a bloody-minded, ruthless and far-reaching cull of workers who remained loyal to each other and to their cause. The ABS says that any figures collated after the SEQEB disputes must show a decline in union membership in Queensland. I maintain that such a decline was not just natural attrition but was achieved by ruthless manipulation. I am delighted that the balance has now been redressed to some extent with the restoration of those sacked workers' superannuation payments.

It is not the policies of this Government and the trade union movement that have pushed down trade union membership figures in Queensland; it was the belligerent attitude that conservative Governments displayed toward trade unions and the denial of trade unions' historic and legal rights to exist and perform as legitimate representatives of their members. It is an indication of the inherent strength of the Queensland trade union movement that it not only has survived such vicious attacks on its foundations but also now gathers strength in order to rebuild under this Government what had been chipped away, or sledge-hammered away, by conservative Governments in their attempts to break the will and destroy the security of Queensland workers.

Thankfully, Queensland is now in a period of recovery from that era of attack on the only real and fair support system available to employees in their attempts to negotiate and achieve better and more equitable working conditions and awards and good relations with employers. This Government is proud to support that, hand in hand with working to expand Queensland's economic and industrial base, built on private-enterprise investment and the security provided by Government.

The Labor Party is supportive of private enterprise. It is committed to achieving a better deal for all Queenslanders, including trade unionists. The Liberal Party also proudly claims to be a private-enterprise party, but it thinks in terms of laissez-faire policies which would deprive trade unionists of fair systems of arbitration. It cannot claim to be a party working for the benefit of all Queenslanders. I cannot resist saying again that the evidence is here in the numbers in this House.

I take issue also with the claim by the member for Merthyr that the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Commission's attitude of impartiality to applications that come before it has been compromised and politicised by the appointment of Ms Glenys Fisher as a commissioner. It should be noted that the commission is a legally based and not politically based body and that, as such, it is expected by employers, unions and the Government that the commission remain impartial. To suggest that any one commissioner will compromise this impartiality is ludicrous and, surely, if a balanced and fair result is expected to be obtained, there is a need to supply a balance among the commissioners.

I believe, as would the people of Queensland, that the attacks by the Liberal Party on Ms Fisher are insulting, both to her professional ethics and to the traditions and precedents within which the commission operates. Those cheap attacks show a lack of understanding of industrial processes in Queensland, and no-one in this State—not trade

unionists, not employers, not members of any political party—can be held to be, nor considered to be, above the principles of fairness embodied in those processes.

I suggest that it is time for the Liberal Party to consider the lack of fairness in its own industrial relations policies and certainly to accept, or admit, that on 2 December last the people of Queensland provided the Goss Government with its mandate for reform in all areas—and they provided it lock, stock and barrel.

Land Tax

Mr BORBIDGE (Surfers Paradise—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.20 a.m.): Land tax is emerging as the single most significant threat to the viability of business and commerce in Queensland. The Government must act quickly to limit land tax increases to a tolerable level. Any failure to do so will result in horrendous implications for the private sector.

The Government is set to reap a rich financial harvest from its collections of land tax this financial year; and yet, to date, it refuses to consider in any way the plight of the many businesspeople and land-holders who petition it every day on the matter. Like the little boy with his hand in the cookie jar, Government members see the short-term profits, and damn the long-term consequences. Many of the people from whom the Government will collect land tax this year will not be around to contribute next year. It is as serious as that.

The Government's collections of land tax are set to skyrocket on the back of massive increases in land valuations. if a balanced and fair result is expected to be obtained, To date, I have made a point of not being overly critical of the Government. However, massive increases have incurred in land valuations, especially in high growth areas such as the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, Cairns and the City of Brisbane.

Mr Hayward: What did you tell them when they came and saw you before the election?

Mr BORBIDGE: The honourable member should just listen.

Last year, land tax generated \$75.825m, while Budget estimates for this financial year allow for a \$99m collection. Although it was projected that land tax receipts for the financial year 1989-90 would be in the vicinity of \$99m, reliable sources from within the public service tell me that that figure may be underestimated by up to 50 per cent. This would result in a collection from land tax nearing \$150m for the current financial year.

I remind the House of the Premier's pre-election promise that State taxes would not increase beyond movements in the CPI, and I hope and trust that he will keep his word because what has happened is that the solution that the National Party Government implemented last year, which limited land tax increases and put a cap on the problem, has been blown out of the water by the massive increases in the valuation of property.

The burden of the tax falls heavily on groups of land-holders in the growth areas of this State. It has been carried by these people for a number of years. However, the real threat of the tax increase will be felt in this financial year. Within my electorate of Surfers Paradise there have been a number of reports of spiralling land tax collections. In one example this year's assessment is \$20,241 compared with \$11,985 the previous year.

Other examples of spiralling land tax collections include an increase from \$4,885 to \$8,023 for a cake shop in Cavill Mall. That is a lot of cake! Another outlet has experienced an increase in land tax from \$1,445 to \$2,015. All those examples relate to small-businesspeople. The list goes on and on. One does not have to look far to find more examples. Land tax is an unfair burden on the revenue-generating areas of this State.

As honourable members would be aware, in 1989 the previous Government recognised the effect of land tax valuations in the high-growth areas of Queensland. For that reason it passed legislation which provided for an averaging scheme and deferred what were considered to be excessive increases in land valuations which were used to calculate land tax. Honourable members will recall also that, when the new scheme was operational, the previous Government refunded money to land tax payers in this State.

My personal contact with the electorate at that time revealed that the legislation was helpful to many people who were struggling for survival. However, in 1990 their plight is a lot worse. The monetary and fiscal policies of the Federal Government and the downturn in the economy are having a disastrous effect on the business community of this State. The Federal Government is making business pay for its mistakes of the 1980s.

Not only has business been hit by high interest rates, which effectively means that its profits must increase to maintain equity with the previous year, but also, because the Federal Government is dampening demand, business is simply not getting the same turn-over as it did in the past. This leads to a two-pronged assault.

For example, a business that may have been turning over \$100,000 per month is now turning over \$75,000. However, it still has to service high interest rates. Business cannot escape from them, hide from them or run for cover. The payments still have to be made month in and month out. In the current economic climate, an extraordinary increase in land tax collections cannot be borne by the business community.

Another variable has affected business during the past year. Honourable members would be well aware of the effect of the airline dispute on the business community on the Gold Coast, in Cairns, throughout the other tourist areas of this State and on the Queensland economy in general. It has had an impact at the very roots of the small business community. It was not so much of a problem for the larger operators. Those with greater financial backing could to some extent at least defray the impact of the dispute. However, for the smaller operator whose business is highly capitalised, the fact that nobody is coming through the door poses a very significant problem. The dispute is far from over. Although the planes may be flying again, many business throughout the State of Queensland are still feeling the enormous impact of that prolonged dispute.

A large increase in land tax may very well be the straw that breaks the camel's back. The business community is not the only sector that is carrying the burden of the increase in land tax collections. The hurt filters through to the man in the street.

During the past couple of weeks, I have been contacted by numerous people who are all saying the same thing: "We simply cannot afford to pay this tax at this time." Those people are barely making a living from their businesses. In one case a lady is caring for sick children. I am not talking about high-flying entrepreneurs, I am talking about average Queenslanders who have been caught up in the interest rate spiral.

I accept that this Government has not been in office for very long and that it needs time to address the problem. However, the Treasurer has written to my constituents and said that he has no intention of reviewing land tax. Yet the people who are hurting are normal, everyday, working people. They have told me that they have contacted the Treasurer's office, but he is not interested, he does not care and he is trying to put the blame on the previous Government. The Labor Party is in Government in this State. It has the responsibility to act. The people of this State want to know when this Government is going to get on with the job of governing and stop passing the buck.

I have tried to be constructive and to make the Treasurer aware of the situation not only within my electorate but also within his own electorate of Cairns. I am yet to hear from him on that aspect. To be fair, I will reserve any further criticism until I receive a reply. However, I am concerned that the Treasurer has written to one constituent saying that at present it is not the Government's intention to further review land tax in the State of Queensland.

I am concerned that this Government will use the massive land tax windfall to help pay for its 32-year wish list—that pile of submissions from new and old members and from Trades Hall which, I understand, have strained the Treasurer's desk. Those 32 years of promises will have to be paid for out of revenue generated by the successful stewardship of the Queensland economy by the previous Government. Those 32 years of promises will be paid for partly out of extraordinary land tax collections. They will be paid for also by the business community in areas such as the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, Cairns and the other strong growth areas of the State. I wonder what the Treasurer's electorate of Cairns thinks of that.

The Trinity Beach ratepayers' association said that, because of spiralling land tax assessments, people in the Cairns district had been forced to sell up or go into liquidation. If the Treasurer needs evidence to justify a further review of land tax in the State of Queensland, he needs look no further than his own backyard. The Opposition calls on the Government to consider urgently the collections of land tax with a view to taking urgent action to limit them to tolerable levels. The collections would still be in the vicinity of the amount projected in the Budget papers. Therefore, Budget parity would be maintained. That must be done now because, as I indicated at the outset, land tax has re-emerged as the single major problem confronting the development of business and commerce and the sustaining of the small-business sector and those people on whom the Government relies to keep the economy going.

Time expired.

Honourable M. J. Ahern; Breach of Noise Ordinances by Brisbane City Council; Awarding of Honorary Doctorate to Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen; Gun Laws; Juvenile and Youth Crime

Mr BEATTIE (Brisbane Central) (11.30 a.m.): Before I begin my matter of public interest, I place on public record my appreciation of former Premier Mike Ahern for his assistance in the early stages in the establishment of the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee and in its work in particular in determining priorities between the committee and the commission. I trust that the National Party will ensure that he is replaced by a senior member who will work as hard as the committee has in fulfilling the aims and objectives of the Fitzgerald agenda. His assistance was invaluable. I set that appreciation clearly on the record today.

I would like to draw to the attention of the House a matter of grave concern involving a breach of the Brisbane City Council's noise ordinances over the Labor Day weekend by none other than the Lord Mayor, Sallyanne Atkinson, and the Brisbane City Council. Over the Labor Day weekend, the Lord Mayor, Sallyanne Atkinson, ordered council workers to work 24 hours a day to relocate water mains as part of the preparatory work for the overpass for the northern span of the inner north-west by-pass, that is, the extension of Hale Street.

This is a clear indication of just how callous the Lord Mayor has become. She has spent too much time in first-class compartments on overseas jets. The Lord Mayor ordered that bulldozers, jackhammers, blasters and riveters work all Friday night and Saturday, all Saturday night and Sunday and all Sunday night and Monday. That work did not cease until midnight last night. Sallyanne Atkinson would not like that racket and noise going on outside her home at Indooroopilly. The people in the Normanby area had their homes disrupted and their peace of mind harassed and annoyed. When they were not being annoyed by that noise, they were ringing me to complain.

Those residents near the work which was carried out in the area of Lower Clifton Terrace——

Mr Stephan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: There would not be any point in their ringing the honourable member. It would be a waste of time ringing him. There is no point in ringing a vacant space.

As I was saying, those residents near the work which was carried out in the area of Lower Clifton Terrace and Kelvin Grove Road and at the junction of Ithaca Street and Kelvin Grove Road got absolutely no peace at all over the long weekend. The Lord Mayor did not even bother to write and warn those residents in any individual way. No letters were sent and no letter-drops were made to them. There was one ad in Saturday morning's paper, 12 hours after the work started.

The interesting thing about all this is that, last Friday at City Hall, the Lord Mayor organised a substantial conference which was called a sustainable development conference. It was in fact an environment conference.

Mr FitzGerald interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: At that conference the Lord Mayor was talking about environmental issues, issues of some concern—issues of which the honourable member opposite would not have any appreciation at all. It was a conference dealing with green issues. What was it? It was a public relations exercise. It dealt with quality of life. When this public relations exercise finished on Friday afternoon, a little bit later that night the jackhammers started.

I believe it is important that there be some appreciation in the community of just how callous the Brisbane City Council has become when it is prepared to work through 24 hours a day in close proximity to residential houses without any regard whatsoever for the people who live there. This is absolutely typical of the Brisbane City Council's approach to quality of life issues such as the Hale Street ring-road. It is an example of just how much the Lord Mayor cares for the people of Brisbane.

Let me now refer to some other issues that are also matters of some concern. A short time ago the University of Queensland awarded an honorary Doctorate of Laws to none other than a former Premier, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. When the university awarded that honorary doctorate, it did so for a whole series of reasons, but there were three major reasons. It was awarded for his administrative service to education, democracy and the law. That is what the university said—for education, democracy and the law.

The University of Queensland is a very fine institution that has had some excellent graduates. In fact, on a couple of occasions, I have graduated from it myself and I know that many colleagues on my side of the House have graduated from there. Members on the other side of the House, including my friend Santo Santoro, have done so as well. This proud institution awarded this honorary Doctorate of Laws for Bjelke-Petersen's service to education, democracy and the law. I believe that, after the findings of and the evidence that came out before the Fitzgerald inquiry, it is now time for the senate of the University of Queensland to examine very closely whether in fact it should withdraw the honorary doctorate—

Mr FitzGerald: Who set up the Fitzgerald inquiry?

Mr BEATTIE: The honourable member would never get an honorary doctorate. He has trouble finding his way to Parliament House.

It is time that the senate of the University of Queensland reviewed this honorary doctorate. Quite frankly, I believe that after the completion of the Fitzgerald inquiry there is no sensible, objective person anywhere in Queensland or anywhere in Australia who would believe that Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen made any contribution of any note to education, democracy and the law. He was awarded a Doctorate of Laws. What a disgrace!

As for his service to education—those of us who have children at school and those of us who have been involved with the school system know that the previous administration starved Queensland schools of funds. I think it is long overdue for the University of Queensland to withdraw that honorary doctorate given to the former Premier and to remove what has become an academic embarrassment and an embarrassment generally to this State so that the confidence that that fine institution, the University of Queensland, deserves from the people of this State and interstate is restored.

Mr Stephan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: Let me turn to a couple of matters which relate to my rather noisy and empty colleagues on the other side of the Chamber—gun laws. Every member on this side of the House has received propaganda mail from those who support unlimited and uncontrolled gun laws. As Chairman of the Criminal Justice Committee I have certainly received my fair share. What tactics has the gun lobby now devised? It is now sending unstamped mail to honourable members of this House. As a result, in the long term, my constituents are expected to pay for expenses incurred by these people who are trying to oppose sensible gun laws. By members of the gun lobby sending mail without any postage, they are ensuring that each one of those letters carries a 96c penalty. As far as I am concerned, the people of Queensland ought to be aware that, in a democracy, those sorts of tactics are totally unacceptable. If people have a legitimate point to make to a member of this House, they have the right to write to that member and make that point, but to do it in such a cowardly and callous way so that constituents elsewhere are required to pay for their postage is totally unacceptable. I hope that those people in the community who are perpetrating this deliberate campaign—and it is a deliberate campaign—

Mr FitzGerald: Return it unopened.

Mr BEATTIE: They would not write to the honourable member. To do so would be a waste of time.

I hope that those people will rethink their tactics and act in a proper manner.

Mr Stephan interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: I can assure the honourable member that I simply will not be accepting any more of these letters and that they will be treated with the contempt that they deserve. I hope that the honourable member for Gympie, who has been very vocal in this House, will be aware that many of those letters originate in his area and that he will do something constructive about stopping them, because he certainly would not want to see this waste of public money.

Mr STEPHAN: I rise to a point of order. I have no idea how many of my constituents write to Mr Beattie and I certainly would not want to stop them. It is his right to accept the letters and it is his right to send them back.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Campbell): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr BEATTIE: I am not quite sure what Mr Stephan said.

I move on to the area of crime and say that many people in my electorate are concerned about youth gangs and the increasing level of crime, particularly involving juveniles. Those honourable members who saw the reports from the Parliamentary Committee for Criminal Justice at the weekend would be aware that that is one area in respect of which the Criminal Justice Commission is preparing a report.

Problems involving violence have occurred in the city mall and in suburbs such as Newmarket and Wilston. I am pleased to see that the commission is thoroughly examining those problems. A public meeting will be held on 28 May for the residents of the Newmarket/Windsor/Wilston area and the problems of juvenile and youth crime and gang crime will be discussed in an endeavour to work towards achieving a long-term solution.

It is important that a knee-jerk reaction is not adopted to overcome the problem. The problem is certainly world wide and it needs to be addressed in a sensitive way. I hope that in the future when members consider that report in this place and elsewhere they will do it in a sensible way. I hope that in the short term action, such as the provision of extra police patrols—the Government is considering providing such patrols in the mall and in other areas—will be taken and that consideration is given to finding long-term solutions to the problem.

Time expired.

Western Queensland Floods

Mr HOBBS (Warrego) (11.41 a.m.): It is with regret that I speak of the many days of horror faced by people in my electorate. I refer to the people of Charleville and of the surrounding districts of Blackall and Augathella and all points south from the 24th latitude to the New South Wales border who were devastated by the great floods of April 1990. I acknowledge the suffering of people in many other areas of Queensland, particularly the people in the electorate of Gregory just over the boundary from my electorate, who were greatly affected by the flood.

I now turn to the aftermath of this disaster, and one can look at it in various stages. The first stage involved the survival of the people. The second stage involved the care of the family and the clean-up. The third stage concerns the economy of the town and district.

I give credit to the members of the police force, the army and the State Emergency Service and the volunteers, as well as to the Queensland Government and the officers of its departments who assisted. Once the word was out, the initial response was excellent. I was very pleased with the effort of all of those people.

The magnitude of the disaster eluded many people. Records are made to be broken, but no-one in his wildest dreams would have believed that the 3-metre record would be broken by this flood. Water flowed into areas into which it was never considered it could possibly flow.

There are many lessons to be learnt, and the debriefing that follows will be very interesting and should be of benefit to all communities in the future.

The fact that only one life was lost is astounding. The torrent of water originated in the head-waters 1 000 feet above sea-level and during the night descended on Charleville and drove all the inhabitants of Charleville away, wearing only what they stood up in. They became refugees in their own domain. Honourable members often see on television the suffering of the inhabitants of Third World countries and hear of displaced people in other countries. Amongst ourselves we speak of the horror of those events but rarely do we ever experience at first hand the misery that I saw in Charleville.

The aged and crippled, the young and the fit climbed on to the rooftops of houses in a bid to survive. They were plucked off by squadrons of helicopters flown by both army and local pilots. I pay tribute to both the army and local pilots, in particular to Cam Russell and Dale Wilson. Those pilots airlifted up to 70 people off roofs at a time. The people jumped on board the helicopters as fast as they could and were flown away. The precision flying by those pilots on that day and night was unbelievable.

Many boats of dubious floating ability, trucks and four-wheel-drive vehicles were used to save many lives. The flood-waters reached unprecedented heights and never in the history of white settlement in Australia was it considered that the flood levels would rise as high as they did during this disaster.

In a bid to survive, many families were split up, sometimes for two and three days. Mothers and fathers could not find their children, and that was a horrifying aspect of the disaster. One does not realise what can happen in a small town so quickly.

Many rumours circulated about how many lives were lost. When a rumour circulated about a lost child, every mother thought it was her child because she had not seen her child for a couple of days. One can imagine the trauma that those families were experiencing.

A Royal Flying Doctor hangar at the Charleville airport was the home for approximately 3 000 people. Those people were lying on the cement. They were dirty but they were alive, and they were pleased about that. There were no ablution facilities. It was terrible to see little old ladies grabbing a piece of paper and heading out into the mulga.

That is the way it was. That is what happens in Third World countries. There were no cooking facilities, not even a barbecue. People could not even find a bucket to boil water. Initially, all efforts were concentrated on survival. Once that stage was reached, the second stage involving the care of the family and the clean-up came into play.

A problem not often realised by many people concerned pets such as dogs, cats and even kangaroos, which are so dearly loved. They created a problem and had to be looked after. Eventually it was solved when a local vet gave assistance.

I commend both the Australian army and particularly the Salvation Army which eventually took over the role of feeding the people. It was two days before they were fed properly but, once the army and the Salvation Army moved in, they did a great job. I had to keep reminding myself that I was still in Australia. Only people who were there could understand what the locals went through.

Communications in an area half the size of Victoria were completely knocked out. This made me wonder what would happen if Australia were attacked by a foreign nation. Certainly urgent discussions need to be held with Telecom concerning a good deal of its equipment.

Air travel was the only real method of transport. I was very fortunate in having my own aeroplane and being able to help evacuate people and do some surveillance work.

The clean-up is progressing well. The immediate response by local councils, fire brigades and graziers was fantastic. Fire brigades from as far away as the South Coast and councils from all over Queensland gave a tremendous response. The fire brigade plants were used to hose out houses. I pay a tribute to all of those people who worked for several days; in fact, some are still working.

The two-way network and the ABC at Longreach were the only means of communication. They gave constant reports to inform people what was going on. Those who were lucky enough to have a radio that worked were able to get that information.

The families and the needy have been cared for. Trainloads of clothing and furniture are arriving. I thank all of those who coordinated the effort and those who made donations.

The lifting of the means test to provide funds to enable people to start again was welcome. The guidelines were somewhat vague and something had to be done. I appreciate the Government's moving so swiftly in this regard. There are, of course, some people who are abusing the system. Some shearing contractors cannot find single men; they have picked up their money and run. They certainly have not turned up for work. People who had rented houses have moved out. The landlords cannot find them. Unfortunately, landlords are getting no assistance at this stage. Certainly accommodation will be of great importance in the town before much longer.

The recovery of the town and its economy are the most important matters at present. Coordination and cooperation are essential. People are pouring into my office every day of the week, including the weekend. I have had to put on extra staff to handle the workload. There needs to be a good, close working relationship between myself, the Government and the people. They come to see me all the time with their problems and I cannot turn them away. Later on, I will be talking with the Premier about a closer working relationship between the Government and the local member. It is not really sensible for a Minister to go to the area unless the people know he is there. The people of the area need assistance and I am prepared to work with the Government to make sure that they get the best available help.

Two things are necessary. The first is the will of the people, and only the people can provide that; and the second is incentive, and only the Government can provide that. The people out there are now suffering the second stage of depression. They are becoming very agitated and very angry. Possibly that is normal after such a disaster. There is no point in pouring millions of dollars into restoring homes and replacing the

personal possessions of the Charleville citizens without making a determined effort to restore businesses and ensure their future viability. Charleville is not a retirement village but it may as well be if the businesspeople are not given some sort of an aid package. This flood devastated 159 out of 160 business houses in Charleville and another 50 businesses that operated from private homes.

Time expired.

Western Queensland Floods; National Disaster Fund

Mr McGRADY (Mount Isa) (11.50 a.m.): I rise to endorse the remarks of other honourable members, particularly the honourable member for Warrego, who preceded me in this debate. It has been very pleasing to see how the members of this Parliament can speak with one voice when our colleagues in other parts of the State suffer such a tragic loss.

I place on record my thanks to the Premier, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Minister for Primary Industries and other honourable members who acted so quickly to assess the situation in Charleville and the other remote communities, and to take the action which certainly helped the people devastated by the floods.

I commend the Premier on the way in which he moved into the area to see for himself the tragic loss suffered by so many people and then take the action necessary to provide relief to those communities. We cannot ignore the work done by the individuals in some of the community groups in those remote, outback places, and the task they performed in passing information to people all round the State. I publicly pay tribute to the volunteers who manned the telephones and answered the thousands of inquiries from people wanting to know how their families and friends were doing.

The Mayor of Mount Isa, the local Federal member and I set up a local appeal. Within two days, we received over 10 000 items of quality clothing as well as offers of physical help and financial assistance.

I also acknowledge the generosity of MIM Holdings for its donation of \$100,000 and the generosity of the trade unionists in Mount Isa who organised a payroll deduction scheme which will assist those people who have lost everything. I place on record my thanks to the ladies of the Red Cross Society and to Mr John Seacombe of the Australian Workers Union who worked long and hard in sorting and packaging those 10 000 items of clothing. I place on record my thanks to Mr Ron McLean and the officers of his Department of Administrative Services for the provision of the vehicle which stood by ready to take those items of clothing to those places which so desperately needed them.

Today, members of this House have been discussing relief for those centres. People must start to discuss some form of reconstruction for towns such as Charleville which have suffered so much. In recent times a number of natural tragedies have occurred. If honourable members were to exercise their minds, they could recall the recent earthquake in Newcastle and the floods here in Queensland. People are sympathetic at the time when these disasters are making headlines, but they soon tend to forget what has happened and move on.

In the past I have suggested—and today I again suggest—that it is time that Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments gave serious consideration to the setting up of a national disaster fund that could be financed by a levy on all taxpayers in this country. The fund could be administered by one representative from each of the States and Territories and from the Commonwealth. The people I have in mind to administer this fund would be the Clem Joneses of this world; people who are divorced from practical politics, but who have a record of being able to get results. I hope that today and in the weeks ahead members of this House will give due consideration to such a proposition. Members of this House have been discussing relief, which is fine, but this plan would in fact guarantee the restructuring of those communities.

The Charlevilles of this world are vital to Queensland's development not only because they provide administration centres for grazing communities but also because

they assist the tourist industry. People travelling around Queensland need to stop in towns such as Charleville to secure accommodation, food and petrol. I urge the Premier of Queensland to take this proposal to the next Premiers Conference to try to secure universal support for it. I know that many arrangements already exist between the Commonwealth and the State, and I compliment the Acting Prime Minister, Mr Paul Keating, for the way in which he visited Charleville and other towns, assessed the position and then promised support from the Commonwealth Government.

Today I wish to stress that whenever public appeals are conducted, either at local, State or Federal level, the same generous people always come forward and make contributions, whether they be physical or financial contributions. This levy, which would be similar to the Medicare levy, would ensure that every taxpayer in the community would make a contribution to the restructuring of these communities. I urge members of this Parliament to commence a public debate in their local communities about the merits or otherwise of this proposition. Forgetting politics, Queensland—in particular, the remote parts of this State—has so much to gain from the imposition of such a levy and the establishment of such a fund. If honourable members cast their minds back to the 1974 floods in Brisbane, they will realise that they and everyone else in the State are likely to be affected by a natural disaster, whether it be a flood, famine or earthquake. This scheme would greatly help the people of our State.

Today we must forget our political differences and continue this debate about how best we can serve the people in the isolated parts of this great State. When this public debate commences, this proposition will receive widespread support throughout the community.

Licensing of Key-cutting

Mr PREST (Port Curtis) (11.59 a.m.): Some years ago in this House I urged people who were buying houses to change the locks on the doors of the houses because they did not know how many people possessed keys to those houses. Because of the number of break and enters that are occurring throughout this State, I make that appeal again.

For example, on the Gold Coast a person renting a unit or house can go to any number of places and have a key cut for that property. A large number of people could have keys to that property. It is possible for a person, whilst inside the unit or house, to make it secure by installing a chain or barrel bolt inside the door. Once that person leaves the unit and locks the door with the key, many other people could have a key to the property and could enter it. It becomes an open house for any crooks or other people who intend to commit a robbery.

The Government of the day should look at ways and means of licensing or controlling the cutting of keys, in relation not only to units and houses, but also to motor vehicles. Today it is far too easy to have keys cut.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Campbell): Order! The time allotted for the debate on Matters of Public Interest has now expired.

At 12 noon,

In accordance with the Sessional Order, the House proceeded with the debate on the Address in Reply.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Eighth Allotted Day

Debate resumed from 27 March (see p. 751) on Mr McGrady's motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply, to which Mr Cooper had moved an amendment.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Campbell): Order! I call the member for Mansfield and remind other honourable members that this is her maiden speech. I ask that it be heard in silence.

Ms POWER (Mansfield) (12 noon): Mr Deputy Speaker, on behalf of the Mansfield electorate, I offer you our sincere congratulations on your appointment as Chairman of Committees of this Parliament. Please convey to Mr Speaker my congratulations on his election. Having been borne in Greece—the home of democracy—he is an appropriate person to hold that high office at a time when democracy is being restored in this State. I know that he will strive to conduct the affairs of this House in a dignified and sensitive manner.

Today it is with much pleasure and pride that I stand in this Parliament as the elected representative for Mansfield. I wish to convey my thanks to the people of Mansfield for their support. I will do all in my power to be both responsive to their needs and to represent their interests, not only in this Chamber but also in the wider community.

The electorate of Mansfield was created in the 1971 redistribution and has been represented by male members of the National Party, Bill Kaus and Craig Sherrin, who were both well respected in the electorate. I trust that my contributions to the electorate and to the State will also earn the respect of the people of Mansfield. My electorate is located in the outer south-eastern metropolitan area of Brisbane and includes the suburbs of Mansfield, Wishart, Eight Mile Plains, Mackenzie and parts of Belmont, McGregor, Mount Gravatt, Upper Mount Gravatt and Rochedale. The electorate of Mansfield covers an area of approximately 70 square kilometres and has a population of approximately 33 000, with 21 500 registered voters living in 8 500 residences. Mansfield is characterised by its diversity: that is, densely populated housing areas and sprawling acreages; residences that include caravans, units and individual homes; and an abundance of small farming and light industrial sectors. It also contains a large population of youth and the elderly and a multicultural population, including a high proportion of Chinese, Indians and Creeks. Diversity makes Mansfield, in common with Queensland, great. Unlike the previous Government, which chose to either ignore or belittle those with differences, the policies of the Labor Government are designed to recognise and appreciate these differences.

Mr Deputy Speaker, when one reaches milestones in one's life, it is always useful to pause and reflect before proceeding. For me, in common with many of my colleagues in this Chamber, 2 December was a milestone. Since the election, I have reflected on who I am, where I am going and why I am here. Having spent 32 years of my life in the Queensland education system under, firstly, the coalition and, subsequently, the National Party Government, I am sure it would not be surprising to find that education is a key issue of mine. I am proud to be a member of a Government that rates education as its number one priority. I believe that it is through education that all Queenslanders will reach their full potential, learn to appreciate each other's differences and recognise each other's worth.

This Government's education blueprint is a comprehensive schools' policy which recognises that the injection of funds will improve the delivery of education in this State. It has also identified the need to change the structures that had previously accompanied the delivery process. There is a desperate need to analyse these structures and systematically begin to redress the inefficiencies of the past. This process should be undertaken through consultation with the major education stake-holders, namely, teachers, administrators, unions, and, where applicable, students.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would run out of time if I were to highlight all the areas of concern that need reform, so I will touch on some major areas only. The debate regarding teacher-training is an ongoing one. The need for three-year and four-year courses; the amount of time in schools, which is known as the practicum; the relationship between schools and the training institutions; and the balance between theory and practice need to be addressed in the context of education and society's needs, rather than being determined purely on economic grounds.

The solutions will not be easy but, as the major agent in the delivery of education, the State must enter this arena to ensure that the training provided to graduates is of

sufficient quality to enable them to meet the challenges that lie ahead. Implementation of the P-10 curriculum throughout Queensland has not been successful. Through its department, the previous Government failed to establish the collaborative structures in head office, regional offices and in schools to adequately oversee and monitor the implementation. As the chairperson of the Queensland Teachers Union's inservice committee, in 1987 I monitored the maths inservice trial. Even though most teachers and administrators were critical of that inservice delivery, it has continued with very little change. The Labor Government was elected on its platform for change. I believe that changes in the delivery of inservice will be achieved through consultation with the stake-holders.

If changes are to be effected, it would be remiss of me not to consider areas of curriculum that need to be highlighted. Today I will not elaborate on these areas, but simply raise them as studies that need to be included if total education is to be realised. I mention courses in human relationships, peace studies, the history of the labour movement and trade unions, environmental awareness, studies in the mechanics of Government and Parliament, recognition of women's role in history and society, and the heritage of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' culture. These need not be—nor should they be—taught as separate subjects, but rather should be integrated into existing areas.

The incentive transfer scheme has been on the agenda of the Queensland Teachers Union for nearly two decades. The announcement by the Minister for Education, Paul Braddy, of the establishment of a committee to implement such a scheme is welcomed by teachers, parents and students, especially in rural areas. The implementation of a transfer scheme that encourages teachers to stay longer in less favourable locations and encourages more experienced teachers to be transferred to those locations will improve the quality of education throughout the State.

By improving the status of teachers, the award restructuring that is presently taking place throughout Australia will do much to enhance the quality of education. This process needs to be an ongoing exercise that encompasses constant monitoring and reviewing to ensure that the value of teaching and viable career paths for teachers are maintained.

Mainstreaming—that is, integrating children who have disabilities into regular schools—is becoming an educational nightmare. While the theory behind mainstreaming is commendable, failure by the previous Government to adequately fund and monitor the process has taken its toll on teachers, parents and students. Labor's commitment to increase funding and appoint additional staff in that area will be welcomed by the schools not only in my electorate but also throughout the State.

Prior to the election, I was employed as a music-teacher in a primary school. The role of a specialist is both rewarding and demanding. In the last few years, the need for specialists in primary schools has grown considerably. The previous Government failed to address that problem, expecting specialists to service two or more schools and to teach in staff rooms and/or withdrawal rooms. Labor's commitment to providing adequate funds and additional staff will be well received by specialists and will ensure the improved delivery of specialist programs.

Last year, the previous Minister for Education visited an overcrowded school in the Brisbane south region. When questioned by a parent as to why her child was being taught in a withdrawal room and why music lessons were being conducted in the staff room, he replied, "That's the price you pay for living in a high-growth area." Such a statement provided cold comfort for parents and teachers alike. That clearly demonstrates the National Party Government's and, before it, the coalition's dismal failure to acquire adequate data on population projections. It has often been the role of the school principal to collect that data. As principals have neither the time nor the expertise to do justice to such an onerous task, that is quite inappropriate. Skilled statisticians need to be employed to ensure that correct information is gathered and interpreted accurately.

The Labor Government has already demonstrated its commitment to the employment of suitable and skilled personnel. In education, that will enable funding to be allocated to capital works programs, staffing and community initiatives based on needs, not as pork-barrelling exercises for re-election purposes, nor as a bandaid measure to solve the problems of poor planning. Because the contributions made by parents and citizens associations have often hidden the previous Government's shortcomings, the costs of that poor planning have not always been apparent. For many years, I have worked closely with those groups and have the utmost respect for their tireless efforts. I place on record my thanks to the voluntary work performed by parents in schools, in the class room, in the tuckshop, on sports days, at swimming clubs, at fetes, at school concerts--the list is endless. Education has been made richer by the sharing that has taken place. Under a Labor Government, that sharing will be strengthened.

The lack of non-contact time for non-secondary teachers must also be addressed. The complexities and demands of teaching are not restricted to secondary education. All teachers need time during the school day when they are not responsible for classes. In that time, they can conduct interviews, assess and prepare resources, participate in local in-service and liaise with other teachers at their school or elsewhere. Those are but a few of the alternatives that need to be considered. Those experiences will enhance the work in the class room.

In the early childhood area, much discussion has taken place with regard to the appropriate time for formal education to begin. Whichever direction education heads in, the importance of the pre-school years cannot be denied. The announcement by the Minister for Education, Mr Braddy, of more places in Queensland is welcomed in my electorate, where there are still schools without any pre-school facilities, and those that have facilities are full, with long waiting lists.

My preference is for less formal schooling to continue until children are at least seven years old. Research has shown that children acquire the skills of literacy and numeracy readily at that age. Although formalised learning may not be attempted, the readiness program should be comprehensive and creative. Assessment of the acquisition of skills must be a necessary component of the readiness program. Through a wide range of experiences—physical activity, sand play, cooking, jigsaws and so on—children would develop the fine and gross motor skills, the inquiring and creative mind and the desire for learning that they will need in the technical world of the twenty-first century.

Care for children is an issue for the whole community. Despite the National Party's rhetoric about support for the family, its policies have required low and middle-income families to combine work and caring for children without adequate community support. That reflects its assumption that there is only one type of family and that looking after children is a woman's job done in the home for little or no pay. Fortunately, with the election of the Labor Government, child-care needs will be addressed in a comprehensive way. It is important that Governments provide a variety of care options that will give parents the flexibility to manage work and family responsibilities. Those options should include day care, both centre-based and/or family day care; occasional care; respite care; before and after-school care; vacation care; and workplace care.

The Labor Government's policy is based on four major principles: access, affordability, choice and quality. Firstly, increasing the number of places in cooperation with the Federal Government will allow better access to better public child-care. The Government will then improve the contributions to operating costs and continue to monitor programs to ensure the affordability of good child-care. Choice will be given through the variety of care offered and through the monitoring of costs.

The quality of all forms of child-care must, and will be, the major consideration. That can only be achieved through consultation with all those involved. In that way, regulations covering child-care services will insist upon adequate building standards, training of staff and appropriate coverage for different forms of care. As well as that, staffing levels in the relevant department must be adequate to monitor the regulations. Award restructuring presently being pursued by child-care workers must be supported.

When the work of child-carers is recognised, valued and suitably remunerated, the quality of child-care will improve as a result of the workers' improved satisfaction and self-worth.

Good quality, affordable child-care is an essential element of any plan to increase choices for women. That is an economically sound principle that I commend to those who cannot accept the social or political arguments. Provision of child-care improves the opportunities for women to enter or return to the workplace. Because the skills and experience of many women will not be wasted, that has benefits for the whole economy.

Just as the issue of child-care is important, so too is public housing. In our schools we teach that shelter is a basic need for any family or individual. The family platforms of the previous Government appear very shallow on an examination of its record in providing housing for Queensland families. The growing concern, not only in Mansfield but also throughout Queensland and Australia, is the appalling number of citizens who are homeless or in desperate need of accommodation. High interest rates are not the main reason for the inability of Queenslanders to own their own home. The primary cause of the deplorable statistics that I will quote shortly has been the failure by the National Party to adequately plan and provide for public housing throughout the State.

Two major concerns have been raised with me, both prior to and after my election to this Parliament. The first concern is in regard to the way in which Housing Commission residents are clustered into certain areas or regions. This type of development restricts the choice of potential residents because it effectively inhibits people from seeking accommodation in areas in which they are not isolated from their work and their families. Similarly, a stigma has often been associated with Housing Commission developments, thereby having an adverse psychological effect on the people who reside in them. People making application to the Housing Commission should be given a wider range of choice with regard to the locations in which they wish to be placed and, where possible, provision should be made for such locations to be within the vicinity of their place of work, family and friends.

The second concern that was raised with me was the lack of diversity in the types of accommodation offered by such an institution. A number of groups are in desperate need of accommodation but, because of the policies of previous Governments, they have been unable to seek and gain assistance from the Housing Commission. Therefore, the overall objective of this Labor Government is to raise Queensland's spending on housing programs to at least the national average. This will ensure that Queenslanders are receiving comparable levels of funding and obtaining the same level of housing services as their fellow Australians. To achieve this objective, a range of policy solutions are needed. I am pleased to say that the Deputy Premier and Minister for Housing, Tom Burns, has wasted little time in putting some of these policies in place, including the option for pensioners to upgrade their unit accommodation, relief from high interest rates for private owners and, most importantly, the signing of an agreement with the Federal Government for increased funding for the public housing sector of Queensland.

The facts speak for themselves in Queensland, which has the lowest rate of home-ownership in Australia and the highest proportion of households in private rental accommodation. Compounding this situation is the appalling fact that Queensland also has the lowest proportion of households in the public housing sector. The figure is 2.8 per cent in Queensland, compared with the Australian average of 5.3 per cent. Queensland also has the highest proportion of households living in informal tenancies such as hostels, lodgings, mobile homes and caravans.

The legacy of the National Party is a public housing sector that is grossly underfunded, with housing finance markets being underdeveloped. The result has been that emergency housing is overburdened, with many of our young people, particularly students, having nowhere suitable to live. This is the shameful legacy of a party that supposedly cared for the family. I am proud to say that this Government will not be following in the footsteps of its predecessors but will be providing solutions to combat the years of neglect that the public housing sector has endured.

During the course of the election campaign I set about making myself more aware of the needs of my future constituency. I have already outlined some of the concerns and detailed the problems of public housing. However, another issue that figured prominently was transport. The Mansfield electorate is bounded by the South East Freeway and the Gateway Arterial—without doubt two of the busiest transport routes not only within this State but also within the whole of Australia. Naturally, the traffic flow is very heavy and consistent, with the result that Mansfield suffers from the associated problems of excessive speeding and a higher volume of traffic than many other electorates.

It is clear from my campaigning that the Government should respond to these problems by being in constant communication with the electorate, that is, by consulting with residents with regard to their needs and the likely effects that Government policies will have on their life-style. Surely no residents or schoolchildren going about their normal business should be placed in a position in which, in the course of exercising their duties, their safety and lives are at risk. Unfortunately, the residents of Mansfield, particularly those who live along Newnham Road and Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road, face this danger daily when having to negotiate the speeding traffic. Likewise, all levels of Government must show more empathy with those residents who live along major thoroughfares. Although the Main Roads Department may consider such a thoroughfare in precisely those terms, to the residents who live along these roads, it is their equivalent of a suburban street and any changes to that street impact greatly upon them. Given these circumstances, it is little wonder that they feel disenchantment and isolation when they are given inadequate notice of proposed changes to their street.

While not being the total remedy, better communication between Government departments and the community can alleviate some of the friction that has arisen in the past. It is for this reason that the residents of Mansfield welcome the recent announcement by the Minister for Transport of the South East Queensland Passenger Transport Study. This initiative is long overdue. I am particularly pleased to see words such as "economic efficiency", "environmental sensitivity", and "fairness and equity" being incorporated in the study's accompanying guidelines. Thankfully, these are not words designed to pay lip-service to residents but are words and commitments toward action.

I am proud to be a member of the new Government because it heralds the start of a new and dynamic period of Government administration in this State. What is most pleasing is the fact that I am one of the eight women who are part of the Goss Labor Government. This significant influx of talented women will change forever the type and nature of legislation that is introduced into this House. What I am, the way I am, the decisions that I make and the way that I relate to legislation will be predetermined by the fact that I am a woman who lived and survived through the whole 32 years of National Party and coalition Governments.

I am well aware of the neglect that has in the past been shown to women. The Labor Government recognises that women experience discrimination and sexism in their workplaces, in their unions and in their lives as citizens. This Government has made a commitment to eliminate those inequalities. Because women comprise more than 50 per cent of Queensland's population, it is disturbing to report that that segment of the community is rarely represented in its true proportions in the work-force or in the hierarchy. The exceptions are usually to be found in low-status, low-paid work or that which is deemed to be women's work. The practices and policies of this Government will lead to reform enabling women to no longer suffer discrimination in employment, housing or promotion or through any form of harassment.

Sexual harassment constitutes any verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which is unsolicited or unwelcome. Such behaviour creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment in which people are defined in terms of their sex or sexuality and in which their contribution and worth is denigrated or ignored. Although I acknowledge the possibility of men experiencing sexual harassment, the predominant situation has

the victim as a female and the harasser as a male. It is the responsibility of Government to provide an harassment-free environment to protect individual rights.

Other issues which affect the lives of women will be addressed by this Government to ensure that women can participate as equals. These issues include anti-discrimination legislation, fertility control, comprehensive child-care and recognition for child-bearing and child-rearing.

Of particular neglect has been the previous Government's attitude and response to domestic violence. The recent and well-produced report on domestic violence in Queensland revealed alarming statistics as to the nature and extent of violence that is perpetrated against women in their own homes. The results of the Domestic Violence Task Force phone-in survey of 1988 demonstrate that the reasons why women remain in violent relationships are both numerous and complex. Many women stay because of financial necessity; some stay because of their maternal responsibilities to their children; many remain because of the lack of suitable accommodation; and others are unwilling to leave because of an emotional attachment. Finally but most frightening, some women stay because of plain fear.

It is true to say that for too long women and children have been the victims of violent acts. Under this Government the chances of women falling victim to, and remaining in an environment that is conducive to, domestic violence will be greatly reduced. This Government has a program to address the problems associated with domestic violence, including the provision of well-resourced and trained police units, an advocacy service to provide direct legal assistance for victims, treatment programs for perpetrators and funding for improved counselling and support centres throughout the State. As well, this Government is committed to participating in joint Commonwealth/State programs for better support services and the integration of women's services in order to provide flexible funding to meet specific local needs and the expansion of community support services for women.

Because of the past practices of previous Governments, the past 32 years have seen minimal progress in the advancement of women's issues. Thankfully, the old Country Party ethic of keeping women in the kitchen can now be replaced with real progress and advancement. I am sure that all members would agree that this Government marks a change for the betterment of women and issues affecting them.

Another section of the community that has been the target of discrimination includes those who suffer from an intellectual disability. Because the issue of intellectual disability must take account of legal, moral and ethical points of view, it is one of the most complex matters for policy development. Unfortunately, the former Government was not supportive of persons with intellectual disabilities. The law on many of the more difficult ethical and moral issues is either silent or at best vague.

During 1989 I visited the Eight Mile Plains Special School, which caters for children aged 5 to 18 who have severe disabilities. I was impressed by the professionalism of the staff and found the visit both interesting and thought-provoking. During my visit I was confronted by two major concerns. The first deals with facilities for intellectually disabled students after they reach 18, and the second centres around the question of sterilisation for the intellectually disabled.

The first concern is the easier one to deal with, but it is not necessarily any easier to implement. For most people, turning 18 years of age opens the adult world to them. However, that is not necessarily the case for those who are disabled. Adults who are intellectually disabled are legally as free as any other adult. They are free to go where they please, when they please and with whom they please. The only exception would be if there is some guardianship order over them.

Naturally my concern lies with the lack of facilities that are available for those people once they turn 18. Through consultation with teachers and parents at schools it would and should be possible to develop a resident situation for the intellectually disabled for permanent, occasional and respite living. In this regard I recommend the publication

Rights in Residence published by the Intellectually Disabled Rights Service in conjunction with the Redfern Legal Centre in Sydney. That paper outlines the principles to be observed when providing residences for the intellectually disabled.

It is important that the community be confronted with the problems faced by disabled persons who are living in a modern society and that solutions be found to overcome those problems. A major step would be for the enactment of laws which provide key recognition of the rights of the disabled and assist them in leading fulfilled lives.

Disability does not rule out sexual feelings, sexual needs or, usually, sexual capabilities. I am concerned by the failure of the law to recognise the special needs of people with a disability and in particular the area of sexuality. Central to all of the controversies are those concerning medical treatment of the intellectually disabled, especially in regard to sterilisation. Sterilisation as a medical procedure occupies a special position for two major reasons—the procedure is rarely life-saving or performed under emergency conditions; it is an elective procedure; and, to all intents and purposes, it is irreversible. The issue is whether the person who gives consent to sterilisation is entitled to give consent on behalf of the intellectually disabled person and, further, whether non-therapeutic sterilisation is something to which consent can be given.

I do not have the answers to these vexing questions, but I do know that the issue deserves to be raised in the wider community. The only way in which the best solution can be found is through meaningful consultation and dialogue with all those concerned, thereby ensuring that laws can be designed to address this problem in a sensitive and positive manner. In this way the needs of the intellectually disabled will be met.

I would like to conclude by stating that the Australian Labor Party offers Queenslanders a real change—a change for the better. On 2 December last year, the people made their choice and elected a Labor Government, the first in 32 years. Many people throughout the State worked tirelessly for that victory. I would like to place on record my thanks to the many families, friends and supporters who assisted in my election campaign.

Firstly, I thank my grandmother for my determination and politics; my mother for my strength and education; and my teaching colleagues in the Queensland Teachers Union for my skills and personal development.

To the Australian Labor Party, I record my thanks for its guidance and advice. In particular, I pay thanks to the work of Norma Jones, who coordinated a very successful campaign south of the Brisbane River.

To the Premier and his Ministry, I place on record my admiration for a top team effort and look forward to working with them to implement policies of reform in Queensland. Special thanks must go to Tom Burns and Anne Warner for their valuable advice and assistance throughout the campaign.

I am both honoured and humbled by the trust placed in me by the electors of Mansfield and I thank them sincerely.

To the members of the ALP in Mansfield, especially my campaign team, I acknowledge their contributions over many years and express my gratitude for their support during the campaign. My sincere thanks also go to the previous women candidates who paved the way for my election in Mansfield—Barbara Robson, Norma Jones and Nicole Stehn. To the many women's organisations, especially Labor Women, their faith in me is acknowledged and appreciated.

I thank my family for their patience and support. In particular, I thank my nephews, who have had a phantom aunt for the past 18 months, and it will probably continue.

Finally, I thank most sincerely my campaign director, the new Federal member for Moreton, Garrie Gibson, for his dedication, hard work and friendship.

Mr RANDELL (Mirani) (12.34 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to speak in the Address in Reply debate. First of all, I congratulate the previous speaker for her well-thought-out address. I honestly think, though, that she must have had her tongue in her cheek when she made some of her statements about discrimination against women.

Mr Mackenroth: Be kind.

Mr RANDELL: I am being kind.

Mr Mackenroth: You had to make a maiden speech once, too, you know.

Mr RANDELL: She has made her maiden speech. I have congratulated her on a speech well thought out.

Mr Mackenroth interjected.

Mr RANDELL: We have been waiting for the honourable member for 10 years and he has not made much of an impression at all, but he is smiling.

The honourable member for Mansfield spoke about Queensland under 32 years of National Party Government. What has been seen in this State is progress that has never been seen anywhere else in Australia in 32 years. It has reached the stage at which we in the Opposition can point out with pride the great progress that National Party Governments have made in this State. Queensland is the envy of the rest of Australia. It has a strong economy.

I place on record my loyalty and that of my constituents in the electorate of Mirani to Her Majesty the Queen, through the Governor. This State is very fortunate that it has someone of the calibre of His Excellency, Sir Walter Campbell, and Lady Campbell. They have the ability to communicate with everyone who meets them in a very courteous and very practical manner. Since being in office, they have travelled Queensland and made themselves available to all people irrespective of colour, creed or politics. I know they are well respected and well liked by the people of Queensland. We wish them well.

To you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I offer my congratulations on your appointment as Chairman of Committees. I have been in this place with you for a number of years now and we have learned to respect one another. I would ask you to pass on to Mr Speaker my congratulations and best wishes. From sitting in the Speaker's chair, I know what a very difficult job it can be. However, I believe that if the occupant of the chair is hard, strict and fair, he will win the respect of the House. I know that in your case, Mr Deputy Speaker, that has occurred so far. I hope that it continues.

May I also offer my congratulations to the members who were re-elected to this House and a particular welcome to the new members. I am sure that once they have their maiden speeches out of the road they will be in for a very interesting and very exciting time. I will have more to say about that later on.

I would like to place on record my thanks to the many people who ensured that I was re-elected to this House. We are all justly proud that in the face of a roll against the Government in the election—and I make no apologies for that—the Mirani electorate was held by me for the National Party. I know it is not wise to mention names, but I would like to place on record the people who assisted me, the people who I am proud to have as very close and very loyal friends. Probably on top of the list are Pat and Doreen Young, who did so much work; Mr Christie George, my electorate chairman; Mr Charlie Brownlow, the secretary; Bevan De Costa, the treasurer; the De Costa family, the Cliffe family, Mrs Farry, the Shannon family, the Whitehead family, the Truman family, the Clarke family, the women's section, Mrs Beth MacDonald, the Young Nationals and all the branch members. They all worked very hard. Once again, I sincerely thank them. If I have left anyone out, it is unintentional. To everyone who assisted me, I offer my personal thanks. Last but not least, I would like to thank my own family, who put up with me and kept the home fires burning, ensuring that things ran smoothly at home and with our business.

I offer a special word of thanks to my electorate secretary, Mrs Sandra Taylor. She is a great worker for all people in my electorate. She acts as a member when I am not available. I know that Mr Prest appreciates the work that electorate secretaries do. They do a tremendous job. I believe that this Government could look at improving their lot. They do a great job. Their security of tenure is not very good. I know that, at the end

of its term in Parliament, the National Party Government was looking at improving the lot of electorate secretaries. I ask every member in the House to take cognisance of the work that electorate secretaries do. I hope that their pay and conditions can be improved.

Mr Mackenroth: Hear, hear!

Mr RANDELL: Does the Minister agree with me?

Mr Mackenroth: It's a pity you didn't do it when in Government.

Mr RANDELL: We were doing it, so I hope that this Government does not stop doing it.

Mr Mackenroth: You were there and you did nothing for them.

Mr RANDELL: Come on! The Minister has been in Government for five months but he has done nothing yet. The Government has 65 committees looking at different things.

I have fought and won four elections and I always got on very well with my opponents in the election campaigns. Those elections were always contested very strongly but very fairly. I have been friendly with my opponents and it was a case of the best man winning. I cannot say the same for the 1989 election. Some of the actions of certain people and some of the untruths told certainly were of no credit to the people concerned. It is the first time I have ever had signs smashed and defaced and had workers harassed at polling booths.

Normally in country electorates one can know one's opponent, buy him a soft drink and sit down together, but this last election was quite different. Women workers were harassed by male members of another party. That action was beyond a joke. I do hope that that will never occur again in my electorate or in any other electorate.

Today I wish to speak about a couple of issues affecting my electorate and then get on to more general matters, such as how I see the future of Queensland under a Labor Government. I can say now that it looks pretty bleak.

Many people would know that the Mirani electorate is the heart of the sugar industry in Australia. It accounts for well over 25 per cent of the total sugar production in Queensland. In the Mackay region, which includes Proserpine, during the last season in excess of one million tonnes of sugar that was worth in the vicinity of \$350 to \$400m was produced. That money flowed into the economy of the Mackay district. The sugar industry plays a major role in employment and the economy of many large and small businesses in the region and flows through to the State and Federal economy.

Townsville, Mackay, Sarina, Proserpine and many other small centres are dependent on the sugar industry. In recent years, Queensland has seen an historic move in the Pioneer Valley, where the cane-growers voted to merge six sugar-mills—Cattle Creek, Marian, North Eton, Pleystowe, Farleigh and Racecourse. The plan has been to upgrade the whole transport system and crush the cane in four upgraded mills. This has resulted in, I believe, more security to cane-growers, who have access to other mills to crush their sugarcane if one mill breaks down or its production is interrupted in any other way.

I say without doubt that the Mackay Sugar cooperative is the biggest single rural cooperative in Australia comprising 1 200 grower shareholders and over 1 000 permanent employees. It is second only to CSR in terms of sugar production in Australia. In fact, the farmers do not realise the extent and the power of their own organisation. As far as I am concerned, where they are concerned the sky is the limit.

As all people in the sugar industry know, it has just come through one of the worst economic recessions in its history in Queensland. It will only be the likes of the Mackay cooperative that will be able to withstand the downturns in markets and prices in the future and, as surely as the sun rises, they will occur again. I only hope that the dedicated work of years by men with vision to pull this whole scheme together is recognised

appropriately. Their actions must create a financially viable cooperative sugar milling sector that will maximise returns to growers and provide stability and security into the future.

I cannot speak too highly about the Chairman of Mackay Sugar, Mr Graham Davies. Without his tenacity and leadership, this venture would not have happened. Many other people worked hard, but Graham set the example with a firm but courteous manner. It is essential now that communications between board members and growers are kept open. Growers should be made aware of any proposed changes and the reasons for those changes. I know that it is a sad time for a lot of people when their mill is closed, because it has been part of the community and part of a tradition, but it has been done by a vote of the growers and it has to be accepted.

I do not have time to talk about the many other changes in the sugar industry, but one matter that has affected all growers and fills them with concern and trepidation about the future is the removal of the embargo on the import of sugar into Australia. This was done by the Federal ALP in a most underhanded way, without consultation or any communication at all with the then Queensland Government or the leaders of the industry.

When this country is crying out for exports to counter some of Australia's horrific overseas debts brought about by seven years of the Hawke/Keating/ACTU Government, it is inconceivable that any Government could allow subsidised sugar to come into this nation and threaten the livelihood of farmers, businesses and, most importantly, workers, who the ALP professes to represent.

It is tragic to realise that sugar that is highly subsidised by the Governments of the EC can be dumped into this country at a time of low world prices.

Mr Smith: There wouldn't be enough to sugar a cup of tea.

Mr RANDELL: The Minister would not know anything about sugar if he fell over it. I have been in the sugar industry all my life. The Minister would not have a clue. If he wants to talk about sugar, I will debate it with him at any time. I will meet the Minister outside and talk about it, but now I want to get on with my speech. The Minister will have his opportunity later. He does not know a thing about sugar.

I must hark back to those famous words of the then Acting Prime Minister, Lionel Bowen, several years ago when, speaking at the New South Wales conference of the Labor Party, he said something to the effect that, "It's about time the rural producers of this country woke up that if we decided to import wheat or import sugar, pineapple juice, citrus juice, we could do without the lot of them because we can get it cheaper elsewhere." The sugar industry has been deregulated. If Mr Smith is so concerned about the sugar industry, why has he not spoken about it?

I think he is saying, "To hell with rural industry, to hell with the farmers and to hell with those thousands of workers and businesses who owe their livelihood to the land." I wonder if it is a grand plan of the Federal ALP to wipe out the rural sector of Australia. I am sincere about that statement, given the way that the Federal Government is acting. I hesitate to make that statement, but rural people know that the Federal ALP actually does nothing to help the man on the land.

Organisations and individuals, myself included, appeared before the Senate committee of inquiry and pressed the case for the industry. Has Mr Smith appeared before that committee? Labor members of that committee were hell bent on deregulating the sugar industry, but when I suggested that the Federal Government could deregulate waterfront labour or the shipping industry, there was shock and horror.

If the sugar industry has to be deregulated, the Government should also look at deregulating the shipping industry and removing the tariffs on tractors and machinery parts that are imported into Australia that the sugar-growers have to purchase. Their returns are depressed by those tariffs, even though they have to compete with world markets. Surely to God the Federal ALP should be helping the sugar industry.

It was only after industry representations that the Federal Government relented to the extent that it was decided to impose a tariff on sugar of something like \$115 per tonne, progressively cutting down to \$70 per tonne by 1991, and after that there would be no tariff on sugar coming into Australia. So what the Federal Government is saying is that it will allow sugar to come into Australia with no tariff at all and that the industry has to compete with tariffs on its machinery and its tractors, try to keep its people employed and try to maintain a viable industry. That is the sort of thing that rural industries generally, and the sugar industry in particular, have to contend with.

In other words, the industry was to be thrown to the wolves after that date. All of this was done without one word of condemnation by the State ALP, which sits in this House as the Government. It was prepared to sit and watch the cane-growers of this nation go to the wall. I understand that, in the weeks prior to the election, Mr Hawke had been saying that he was prepared to have another look at not ending the tariff imposed on the entry of foreign sugar, but there have been so many broken promises over the last seven years that we have become wary of this sort of rhetoric.

I should like to deal with some of those promises. Prior to the 1983 election, Mr Hawke promised that there would be no new capital gains tax; on 19 September 1985, the Treasurer told the Parliament that the Government had decided to introduce a capital gains tax. In his election speech in 1987, Mr Hawke said that, by 1990, no Australian child would be living in poverty; the Human Rights Commission found, in its report on homeless youth, which was released on 22 February 1989, that between 20 000 and 25 000 young Australians were homeless, that the real figure could be as high as 70 000 and that 440 000 were living below the poverty line. On 27 October 1989, Mr Hawke conceded that the words used in the election campaign was unfortunate.

Mr Smith: Tell us what the National Party did in 32 years; it won't take long.

Mr RANDELL: Just keep quiet; you're insignificant over there.

Subsequently, Mr Keating said—

"This year our balance of payments deficit will be halved from its peak of just three years ago. Our foreign debt burden has already stabilised and begun to fall."

We all know what has happened since then. It has blown out of all proportion.

Mr Stephan: Mr Hawke made a lot of comments about interest rates, too.

Mr RANDELL: I could go on and on about broken promises. All I can do is to implore the Queensland Government to prevail upon the Federal Government to maintain some protection for this vital sugar industry, which employs so many people and adds so much to the economy of this State and nation.

It was announced recently that a working party had been set up to look into the continued viability of the sugar industry; to look at the formation of the Queensland Sugar Industry Authority to replace the Sugar Board, the Central Sugar Cane Prices Board, the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations and other bodies; and to look at any other matter relevant to the viability of the industry. I am pleased that the Minister for Primary Industries, Mr Casey, selected for that committee people who have an understanding of the industry. They are: Mr Fred Soper, a cane-grower and previous Chairman of the Queensland Cane Growers Council; Mr Don Watson, a highly respected cane-grower and director of Mossman mill; and Mr Fitzpatrick from Canberra. I am somewhat apprehensive about the last appointment because I do not know whether Mr Fitzpatrick really understands the practical problems confronting the cane-growing industry. These people can come up with far-reaching recommendations for the future of our industry, and it behoves everyone to take a keen interest in their findings.

One matter about which I am vitally concerned is acquisition. It is a matter of concern throughout the whole industry. I make no apologies for stating publicly that acquisition should be kept squarely in the hands of the Queensland Government, which guarantees the finances that are required. The place of acquisition should be the place

of manufacture. In no way should we allow a situation to develop in which millers and growers have to negotiate on suitable terms of payment. I am somewhat apprehensive that the academics in Canberra would like to see such a situation develop. The Minister for Manufacturing and Commerce would also be interested. We must retain the place of acquisition being the place of manufacture. It must not be allowed to go further than that. I think that the Minister for Primary Industries is sympathetic to that. I know that this is a matter for the Minister but I do hope he recognises that my proposition has the support of the cane-growers.

Another matter of concern is the proposed establishment by CSR of a sugar refinery in north Queensland. It is probably a good move. We have been talking about it for years. But it has to be researched properly. There are some concerns about tariffs and the acquisition of sugar. The Minister knows that we are concerned, so this matter has to be researched properly. There must be full discussion between CSR and the industry, particularly the cane-growers. If there is to be a sugar refinery in north Queensland, its establishment in the Mackay region must be considered. Mackay produces 25 per cent of Queensland's sugar and has everything going for it. There is great concern among the cane-growers about the establishment of that refinery in north Queensland

Mr Smith: Why wouldn't it be?

Mr RANDELL: The Minister knows as well as I do. If he is following it, he would know the concern. If he talked to the growers he would know more about it.

Another matter on which I wish to speak briefly is the effect that the airline pilots dispute has had on tourism. Before that strike, tourism played a major role in the Mackay region. No other area in Queensland has such beauty and so many interesting sites. It has beautiful sandy beaches, tropical islands and delightful towns. I can recommend to anyone visiting Sarina or Mackay a drive up the beautiful Pioneer Valley to the rainforest at Eungella. They would certainly acknowledge that Mackay has the best in Queensland. More and more people were coming to our area, but then came the disastrous airline pilots dispute.

There is no doubt in the minds of other people and myself that Mr Hawke and Sir Peter Abeles conspired to break the Australian Federation of Airline Pilots to prepare for deregulation of the industry. I am not saying whether the pilots were right or wrong, but it was the first time in the Australian history of unions that we saw the spectre of a Prime Minister paying the employers to keep the employees out. Some of the union people on the other side might take my words on board. In fact, the Government paid the employers \$100m. In addition, it brought in the air force to break the strike. We had never seen that before. It offered no help in arranging talks, even though that was suggested through Mr Hawke's ACTU mates. In my mind, talks could have been arranged and the dispute could have been settled in a decent, dignified manner, without all of the stress and the hardships experienced because of the strike. The strike was allowed to drag on. Anyone who went to north Queensland and saw the broken businesses and the despair and hopelessness of the businesspeople there would realise that Mr Hawke had no compassion at all for them and their families. Perhaps it could be said that the pilots were asking for too much, so I would like to quote the claims lodged by another union.

Mr Elder: Are you saying that the pilots were guiltless?

Mr RANDELL: I did not say that at all. I am not speaking about the rights or wrongs, or whether they were guiltless or not. But they were set up.

Mr McGrady interjected.

Mr RANDELL: The honourable member knows what happened in Mount Isa. He knows that they were set up in preparation for the deregulation of the industry.

The Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association was reported as follows—

"An ambit claim served on employers demands a \$1,500 minimum wage for a 30-hour week.

The union also wants a minimum of \$600 a week for 'extra payments', 'special rates' and 'industrial allowances'.

They also want 'rest pauses' of an hour each twice a day on the employers' time. Shift workers get an extra 45 minutes break.

Other perks for the workers include: treble time for all shift work and overtime; six weeks' annual leave all paid at double time; 20 days a year as paid holidays, including a union picnic day; first class travel and accommodation and \$200 a week spending money for working away from home . . . "

Mr Smyth: That's an ambit claim.

Mr RANDELL: I understand it. It is hitting hard now. The pilots started off with an ambit claim and they went out on strike.

The claim continues—

". . . quadruple time for working on weekends or holidays. It wants 20 days a year paid compassionate leave; paid leave for jury service, donating blood or other recognised community service."

I wonder what would happen to the trade union movement today if the Federal Government employed these tactics against the FEDFA? The ACTU would ensure that the whole nation would grind to a standstill. I know that Mr Hawke, the ACTU and members of the union movement are very worried because the courts awarded compensation to the airlines against the pilots for loss of revenue. It is a test case and many people are looking at it. After such a precedent has been set, I wonder what will happen in the future if employers decide to take unions to court for damages? The other matter of concern is what will happen to the other thousands of airline employees when deregulation takes place. I have spoken to many of those employees and they are very concerned. Will they go the same way as the pilots and will they have security of employment? If I worked there I do not think I would sleep too easily at night.

I turn now to the future of this Government. The Goss Government has been in power for approximately five months and must be reminded of what it has not achieved in that time. It has set up 65 committees to investigate matters—not make decisions—and has put out 12 Green Papers for consideration. There has not been one positive move made to ensure that the economy of the State will be ongoing and safeguarded. There is simply an air of getting square.

The first action of this Government was a purge of public servants. Anyone who was remotely connected with the previous Government was treated vindictively, outrageously and disgracefully. The treatment of these people was and still remains a disgrace that the ALP will have to wear into the future. It is about time that this Government forgot about the past, showed a little guts and prepared for the future. I know many of these people in the public service who worked for me whilst I was a Minister. They are people of integrity who were prepared to work long hours and were trustworthy. I would not have any idea at all of their politics. That question was never asked and the information never given.

A Government member interjected.

Mr RANDELL: It is no wonder that there is an air of despair amongst public servants today. They are down in the gutter and the Government will keep them there.

There is no doubt in my mind that these people would work in the same way for any employer and give their utmost. It is an absolute disgrace that several senior public servants, who have given great, long and distinguished service to this State have been dismissed in such an underhanded and disgraceful manner. There is a story going

around—and I believe it—that there is a hastily-renovated place in the city into which a number of these people were packed in the same way as the Gestapo packed in prisoners in Hitler's Germany. For over three months these public servants sat there at great expense to the taxpayer with nothing to do but shift paper clips or turn over pieces of paper. What a degrading experience! What a show of inhumanity to condemn these people in this manner because they had the audacity to work for the previous Government! Sometimes I have not been prepared to talk to some of them openly and publicly because no doubt they would be reported on and victimised further.

I was disappointed after the 2 December election, but I accept the will and voting power of the people. The Goss Government is a new Government and the Opposition is here to make sure that it works as a Government. The Government's actions in the last three months have been an absolute disgrace and certainly should bring no joy to it. No-one was prepared for the pent-up frustrations and vindictiveness, and the need for revenge on the part of many senior members of the Goss Government. If this does not stop, the Premier must let them go. He must make way for fresh people in his Ministry and get on with the job of running this great State.

I wish to take this opportunity to publicly thank those public servants who worked in my office and in the statutory bodies. Over many years they worked hard and for long hours and have given great service to this State, but they have been terribly and dreadfully treated by the Goss Government. We now know that many of the new public service positions are not being filled from the Queensland public service, but are being filled by escapees from the Labor Party in New South Wales and Canberra, or from the KGB at Griffith University. Queensland has many people with the expertise who are willing to work with integrity and trustworthiness for any Government, and I ask that these people be given a fair go. I often wonder how the independent analyst Dr Coaldrake got such a good job—and Dr Glynn Davis and Mr Roger Perssons.

Mr Welford: Because he's smarter than you, that's why.

Mr RANDELL: No, he did not. He got in because he knew the Government. Elizabeth Bourne from the environmental movement is another one who got a job.

I would like to mention briefly the need for the outdoor education centre at Kinchant Dam. I call upon the Government to get on with the job of providing these facilities. In November last year I received a letter from the Minister for Education at that time, Mr Brian Littleproud, in which he states—

"Dear Mr Randell

I refer to your ongoing personal representations concerning the establishment of an outdoor education centre at Kinchant Dam. The site as you have pointed out is ideal for educational and sporting purposes.

I am pleased, therefore, to advise that I have today given approval for my Department to accept the offer of the use of the Water Resources facilities at Kinchant Dam. I have asked the Director-General of Education, Mr Ian Matheson, to liaise with your office regarding the concept for the centre."

There is no doubt that such a centre would provide schoolstudents and staff with an ideally located outdoor learning environment that is within reach of all schools in the area. The outdoor education centre is ideally located close to Mackay airport and transport via sealed roads and its easy access will also be of benefit to schools outside the Mackay district. The Kinchant Dam is safe all year round because it is free from sharks, stingers and crocodiles. I wish to stress that provision should be made for church and youth groups to use the centre. Such a centre will be a great asset to young people, particularly those living in central Queensland, and I ask the Government to treat this matter with some urgency. I know that Mr Casey, the Minister for Primary Industries and member for Mackay, is right behind this project and I ask him to get it under way as quickly as possible.

Sitting suspended from 1 to 2.30 p.m.

Mr RANDELL: The other matter I wish to talk about today is the economy of this nation. At a later stage, I will refer to the economy of the State. As all honourable members would know, since Hawke came to power in 1983—and turned Australia over to the trade union movement that has dictated his every move and whipped him into line when he stepped out of line—when Australia had a gross foreign debt of \$35.891 billion, this nation's overseas debt has increased. At the end of December 1989, Australia owed \$148.075 billion, which reflects an increase of 313 per cent. For the benefit of honourable members present, I repeat that under the Hawke/Keating/ACTU alliance, in seven years Australia's overseas GFD has increased by 313 per cent.

Although members on the other side of the House can say that it is not of Hawke's making, let us get one thing fair and square. Hawke, Keating and the ACTU have been in charge of the Australian economy and their policies have been the guide for the future of this nation. They have made an unholy mess of it and have proved that they could not run a pie-cart, let alone a nation.

Mr Smyth: You made a good job of it, didn't you?

Mr RANDELL: If the member is not concerned about it, why is he not concerned about it? Is that not a "great" legacy to leave to our children? Is the honourable member not concerned about the future of this nation and the future of his children?

I point out that during the next hour, the overseas debt of this nation will have increased by \$2m. For every hour of the day, Australia goes further into hock at the rate of \$2m, yet the member for Bowen is not concerned about the future of this nation's children. If he is not concerned, then I am. Frankly, the extent of this nation's overseas debt terrifies me. I am terrified that in the future every man, woman and child in this country will have to pay \$8,315.69 each, simply to redeem Australia's foreign debt position. That is the mess that the Hawke Government has got Australia into, but the member for Bowen is not concerned about it. If the honourable member thinks that I have plucked those figures out of the air, I inform him that the source of my information is the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Will our children have to work and slave to satisfy the debt-collectors of other nations? Is Australia going to sink lower than the banana republic referred to by Keating? I do not rely solely on my figures for information. I also cite detailed research undertaken on the Australian economy by the Macquarie Bank's team of economists, led by the chief economist, Bill Shields. I think all honourable members would know him. The report states—

"Australia faces the likelihood of its foreign debt doubling to more than \$200 billion within the next five years. That would represent 44% of the nation's gross domestic product (GDP). By the year 2000, the debt could reach 59% of GDP (\$500 billion)."

Apparently, the member for Bowen is not concerned about that.

"There is little chance that Australia's export income would increase sufficiently to keep pace with the interest burden on a debt of that size. Australia would join the ranks of countries which cannot meet their debt servicing costs. Already, Australia's international debt rating has been downgraded twice in the last three years.

The level of debt, and where it is heading, should be a cause of widespread concern."

I am concerned about it—very concerned.

"The reason is simple: if the rest of the world loses confidence in Australia's economic capacity, a series of currency crises will ensue and the Australian dollar will weaken substantially. This in turn will lead to much higher inflation, even higher interest rates than at present and, therefore, lower standards of living."

I am concerned about Australians' standard of living, even if the member for Bowen is not.

"On our present course it is likely that by the year 2000 per capita income in Australia will have slid below those of several of our Asian neighbours, possibly to less than half that of Japan and significantly below those of the USA and the European Community."

Although I could cite much more information, I will mention just a little more—

"This level of debt, carrying potentially crippling interest obligations, has set us apart from most industrialised nations and condemned us to a comparison with the most heavily indebted developing countries, such as Argentina and Brazil."

That is what the Hawke Government has led this country into.

During Hawke's term of Government, interest rates have risen from 12.5 per cent to more than 17 per cent, and there is every indication that they will increase further. Six years ago, it took 19 per cent of household income to repay home loans but now it takes 30 per cent. A taxpayer with an average mortgage of \$50,000 over 20 years is now paying an additional \$41 a week, or \$165 a month, in repayments.

Mr McGrady: How about a consumption tax?

Mr RANDELL: I will talk to the honourable member later.

I am sure that all honourable members would be able to recall when Mr Hawke, in a deal to stop four banks raising interest rates, gave them \$200m. That \$200m was our money and could have been spent on upgrading roads or doing a great deal for education or water supply. Imagine Hawke giving \$200m to the banks! The ironic part about it—if the member for Mount Isa would care to listen—is that, immediately afterwards, the four banks announced an annual profit of approximately \$800m. Hawke had given the banks \$200m to keep interest rates down. What a great feat!

I am not an economist—and have never pretended to be—but it seems to me that if Australia is to compete against other trading nations in the world—and the world is becoming a very small place—Australians will have to export more and import less; yet the exact opposite is happening. I have already cited the lifting of the embargo on the sugar industry, which is lunacy if ever I have seen it. Then Hawke offered an election "bone" to the workers of a \$50 per week increase in wages and an imposition on employers of a 3 per cent superannuation scheme. In Queensland, with the election of a new Government, the unions have already jumped in. They are asking for a 38-hour week. How in Heaven's name can Australia compete against other nations—which it must do—to get its share of markets?

Recently, many small-business people have spoken to me and have said that if these promises come to fruition, they will go to the wall. There will be no ifs or buts about it; they will go to the wall. If that happens, the workers will not be employed and will therefore not be able to enjoy their increases of \$50 a week. Employers will not be able to afford to put workers on and this nation will go into the deepest depression that has ever been seen. It looks as though this nation is well down the track towards that position, and there can be no doubt about that.

I remind honourable members of what Senator Walsh has had to say recently. No doubt today the Labor Party will try to cut him off at the knees, but at least he is prepared to be honest about what is happening to this nation.

Mr Smyth: You don't take interjections.

Mr RANDELL: I take proper and sensible interjections, but not the inane things said by those on the opposite side.

To make way for new taxes and charges, the Treasurer, Mr De Lacy, tried to put over the story that this State had been badly managed and had been left in a serious financial debt situation. For weeks, everyone heard about a much-awaited economic

statement on the economy of Queensland. When it came, it was the biggest fizzer that this House had ever heard. The following day the Treasurer was bucketed by all the media in Brisbane—even by the *Courier-Mail*. The editorial stated that his statement was a damp squib and looked more like a cooked goose than a dead duck. Perhaps members have read an article by Mr Peter Morley, who is a senior political reporter and a man for whom I have the greatest respect. I wish to cite some extracts from his article. He stated—

"Journalists, in a lock-up where special briefings were provided, raced on through the speech, excited at the prospect of a good roort and newspaper and television headlines.

Words like cynical and calculated misrepresentation appeared as the now-nicknamed 'Donald De Lacy' titillated with promised exposure of half-truths and untruths—'lies' in unparliamentary language.

Then the reference to the State debt—the issue everyone was looking for—appeared. While the Nationals had created the illusion that Queensland owed a little more than \$4 billion, the figure was really a massive \$13.45 billion. Shock! Horror!

And if one was not prepared to take Mr De Lacy's word, he had commissioned—isn't the use of consultants supposed to be taboo?—one of the world's leading accountancy groups to confirm the situation."

The article contains much more detail, but I will merely quote the last part, which stated—

"Whatever the proper procedure, on a per capita basis Queensland's total stock of debt is still one of Australia's lowest."

The National Party has created a great State, and I am proud of it. Queensland was left in very good economic shape, unlike other States of Australia which have adopted ALP policies.

Mr Prest: Fitzgerald said so, too.

Mr RANDELL: The honourable member mentioned Fitzgerald. The National Party started the Fitzgerald inquiry, widened the terms of reference and kept it going.

Mr Prest: Forced into the Fitzgerald inquiry.

Mr RANDELL: The National Party had the guts to do it. What is the Labor Party going to do about the union inquiry?

Mr Prest: We will let it go.

Mr RANDELL: The Labor Party will let it go; all right. It has already set up 65 committees.

The National Party's borrowings, which Mr De Lacy seemed to find great difficulty in following in the last Budget, were made deliberately and only after sound financial advice. For that I pay tribute to Leo Heilscher, who enjoys a worldwide reputation as a sound, solid financial expert. His advice was followed year after year and resulted in the State of Queensland having the most sound financial position in Australia.

In questioning the Budget, the Treasurer cast a slur on Mr Heilscher and then, wonder of wonders, the Treasurer proceeded to take Mr Hielscher overseas in an advisory capacity for further financial dealings with other countries.

As I said, the National Party deliberately borrowed to invest in infrastructure in this State in order to create projects that earned wealth and generated income from exports for Australia. Those investments were made, and time has proved how wise those actions were.

New mines, new ports and new railway lines were opened. The honourable member for Bowen would not be here today had it not been for the action that the National Party took in creating the mines and facilities in the towns that he represents. The

National Party also provided rolling stock and electricity for coal companies. Those initiatives were implemented through agreements reached with the companies, who paid tariffs on rail and royalties on coal. They are ironclad agreements and they cover most of those undertakings. Those initiatives were undertaken in the interests of Queensland as a whole.

Most of the National Party Government's requirements for schools and hospitals were met from revenue earned from those new mines. In that area, the commitments were not overextended. But the difference between the former National Party Government and the present Government is that my Government made decisions—and decisions require statesmanship and courage. It is about time that the Government adopted a similar policy. Decisions must be made now, but they may not bear fruit for many years. However, those decisions require courage. I hope that Government members have the backbone to make those decisions. The ball is in their court and the future of Queensland in their hands. The alumina refinery at Cape York and the Gladstone refinery must go hand in hand with the spaceport. Decisions must be made, otherwise the spaceport project will be lost, which would mean the loss of thousands of jobs and millions of dollars that are so vital to this nation.

It is about time that the Government got into the business of governing. The honeymoon is almost over. The businesspeople are saying, "Forget about the vendettas. Don't appoint committees. You have 65 of them already to look into things. Look to the future. Start making some decisions. Put the union heavies back in their place. You have been elected to govern."

The Government should go out and do something. So far, the Government has only carried out initiatives that the National Party approved when it was in Government. The Government should get out of its Opposition syndrome and make a balanced judgment on the environment and approve some projects. The people of Queensland want jobs. The Government should not let this State slide down from its present high position to the financial levels of Western Australia and Victoria.

Mr Goss and his Government have inherited a State with a solid economic foundation and a worldwide reputation for its economic management. All I ask is that they get in, make some decisions and keep this State running in the interests of the people of Queensland.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Johnson): Order! I remind the House that the member for Redlands, Mr Briskey, is making his maiden speech. I trust that honourable members will extend him the courtesy of listening to it in silence.

Mr BRISKEY (Redlands) (2.42 p.m.): May I say at the outset how very proud and pleased I am to be able to speak for the first time in the Legislative Assembly of Queensland.

I congratulate Mr Speaker on his appointment and I also congratulate Mr Campbell on his appointment as Chairman of Committees. I look forward to working with both of them during the next three years. I am certain that they will undertake the duties and responsibilities of the offices they hold in a most professional manner.

My congratulations go to the Premier, not only for the outstanding victory of our party on 2 December, but also for bringing to Queensland the rational, open and honest Government which the electors so earnestly sought. I pledge my total support to the Goss Labor Government.

One motivation for my seeking election to this place is well expressed by the words used by Pope John Paul II when addressing an audience in Rome. He stated—

"Man is not at the service of social, economic, political and cultural systems. Rather the system must be for man. We must look with respect on the manifold programs and activities, at times reforming, of various tendencies and systems. We must be aware at the same time that we are not concerned first of all about systems but about justice and man."

I have undertaken studies in education and social welfare. I chose those areas because I saw injustice in our society and I wanted to work towards building a better society. It was my belief in social justice which drew me inevitably to become a member of the Australian Labor Party. I saw within the Australian Labor Party a group of like-minded people, people who are concerned about the eradication of all forms of prejudice and discrimination, and people who are concerned about the removal of inequity and poverty from our society.

My sincere thanks go to the electors of Redlands for the confidence they have placed in me by electing me as their representative. I assure them that I will represent them to the best of my ability and that the interests of all who form the electorate are my prime responsibility.

Equally, I thank the members of the Australian Labor Party in Redlands for their continued support and the many hours of work they put into my campaign. They worked tirelessly on campaign after campaign in Redlands, and I know how happy they were on the evening of 2 December to see that we had won the seat of Redlands and Government. Their efforts over the past years will ensure that the seat of Redlands will be held by the Australian Labor Party for many years to come. I thank them for their efforts and I look forward to working with them in the many years ahead. I would like to thank especially my campaign manager, Mr Ken Hughes, for his support, hard work and advice during the campaign. I thank also the union movement and Young Labor for their help and support.

This speech gives me the opportunity to thank the Federal member for Bowman, the Honourable Con Sciacca, for his encouragement, support and direction. Con has worked tirelessly for the electors of Bowman over the last three years. His hard work in his electorate was brought to my attention time and time again when I was door-knocking during my campaign. He has been a credit to the Australian Labor Party and an excellent representative for the electors of Bowman. I congratulate Con on his re-election as the member for Bowman and his elevation to the position of Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Security.

I would also like to thank my family and many friends, who worked so hard to get me elected. I thank especially my wife, Cathy, who is in the public gallery, and my children, Joanna and Kathleen, who put up with a candidate for a husband and father for over 12 months. Cathy went back into the work force for six months so that I could take six months' leave without pay to campaign. During that time Cathy not only worked to support the family but also worked on my campaign and helped me keep my sanity.

This occasion also gives me the opportunity to thank my parents, Bob and Bev Briskey, and parents-in-law, Les and Gwen Winkle, for baby-sitting our young children for many hours and for the other work that they did during my campaign. I especially thank my father—and I am very proud that he is in the public gallery today—who has been an inspiration to me during his long career as the State secretary of the Australian Postal and Telecommunications Union and who, during the campaign, gave up the greater percentage of his leisure-time to come to my home and look after our children, answer the phone and perform myriad other campaign-related jobs.

The electorate of Redlands is extremely diverse. It has within it residential, farming and bushland areas, and it is situated on Moreton Bay. The electorate includes Wellington Point, Ormiston, Cleveland, Thornlands, Victoria Point, Redland Bay, Mount Cotton, Sheldon, Burbank and parts of Capalaba and Rochedale. It also includes North Stradbroke, Coochiemudlo, Russell, Karragarra, Lamb and Macleay Islands. The greater percentage of the electorate lies within the Redland Shire. The shire is one of the top four fastest-growing areas in Australia. This rapid growth has brought with it many needs. These are especially evident in the areas of education, police and health. These needs were known to the previous member and his Government but they did little by way of forward planning to fix them.

The Redlands has a great community spirit, which is evidenced by the fact that there are more than 200 community groups and organisations operating in the electorate.

Their number and diversity are indicators of Redlanders' concern and caring for their fellow residents and their environment. The Redlands, of course, is known for its excellent soil for farming and is especially famous as a strawberry and flower growing area. I take this opportunity to invite all members to the annual Strawberry Festival which will be held in September, where they will be able to taste the best strawberries in Australia.

Rapid population growth has changed the Redlands from being predominantly a farming area to a mixture of farming and residential. The residential growth has occurred especially in Wellington Point, Cleveland, Ormiston, Thornlands and Victoria Point. This growth is due to the natural beauty of the Redlands and the fact that it has so much to offer. Its potential for tourism is unlimited. The fact that the Redlands is on Moreton Bay has meant that it is a place where many have chosen to retire and hence it has a large and ever-increasing retired population.

I wish to pay a special tribute to the homes for the aged, retirement villages and senior citizens groups in the Redlands for their marvellous work. They enjoy an excellent reputation. Of course, along with these groups go hand in hand the many services which are provided for the aged. I acknowledge the work of the Meals on Wheels groups and the various nursing services and thank them on behalf of the residents of Redlands.

Another population group which is ever-increasing in the Redlands is that of families with young children. As a former teacher in the Redlands, I am well aware of the problems associated with this rapid population growth. There has been much ado about tertiary entrance and how that is determined. Of far greater importance is the curriculum for the whole of the school population. The curriculum is more than what appears in the school syllabus; it is the whole set of experiences a child encounters while at school.

Of prime importance is the quality of the buildings in which learning takes place. If image is of importance for corporations, it is equally important for students. If the "right address" is important for lawyers, accountants and so on, how much more important for the esteem of the education process is the quality of the school environment. How can we expect students to respect our commitment to their education when we house them in the sparse surroundings of a demountable building. The years of neglect in terms of education funding in Queensland have meant that schoolchildren in Redlands have had to endure substandard education.

Teachers and teacher aids in Redlands are an extremely hard-working, professional and dedicated group. I have never encountered a more hard-working and dedicated group of parents than those whom I have met in Redlands. They have had to put up with inadequate education funding and a scarcity of resources, which has made their jobs all that much harder.

I have and will continue to work for the schools within my electorate to ensure that they receive adequate funding and that their building requirements are met. I have already had the Minister for Administrative Services visit schools in the electorate. This is an indication of our Government's commitment to the provision of quality education facilities for Queensland children.

As my electorate has only two State high schools, I have made representation to the Minister for Education for the provision of a State high school at Victoria Point. I believe that it is essential that a State high school be provided for the southern part of my electorate to cater for the growth in that area and to provide a high school that is closer to the children from the bay islands.

It gives me great pleasure to state that in its first term of office our Government is committed to raising the level of education funding to that of the national average. The members on the Opposition benches should hang their heads in shame at their neglect and lack of concern for the children of Queensland. That they could spend millions and millions of dollars for paid political advertising whilst children in our schools had to go without vital resources is an indictment on the former National Party and coalition Governments.

I turn now to the beautiful environment of Redlands. Its protection is high on my list of priorities. Moreton Bay must be protected not only for our enjoyment but also for future generations. Protection of our bay environment was rightly one of the major issues in the election campaign. Electors saw a previous member and a previous Government allow development after development along the shores of Moreton Bay. The past three years have evidenced the people of Redlands exerting their power in opposing overdevelopment of the bay.

The beauty of the bay, which is the very reason for the rapid population growth, has been destroyed at a frightening rate. The previous member and his Government supported a large canal development at Toondah harbour. That development would have reclaimed land about 2 kilometres out into the bay. Only after 12 000 signatures were collected on a petition was the development halted. I was proud to be part of a group which organised that petition. I congratulate STIR—Secure Toondah's Invaluable Resources—for its work. That multimillion-dollar plan was opposed by conservationists, fishermen and local residents. I am proud to say that the Honourable Wayne Goss and our Federal member for Bowman, the Honourable Con Sciacca, also opposed it.

Large areas of mangroves, seagrass beds and mudflats still remain, although significant areas have been progressively destroyed since the 1970s. Those mangroves, seagrass beds and mudflats provide an essential source of food and shelter for fish, crustaceans and birds. It is our duty to ensure that those wetland areas survive. It is important that the bay be preserved for human use as well.

There is evidence that, 20 000 years ago, Aborigines of North Stradbroke Island were using the bay. Midden sites on the island indicate that Aborigines were dependent on the bay and its rich marine life for food. People now use the bay for recreational and commercial fishing. Studies have shown that the bay is an extremely important nursery area for young fish, which is another reason for its continued protection. This is especially so for prawns, which spawn in the bay and require the shallow, protected area of the bay for maturing.

Moreton Bay is the most important recreational fishing area on the east coast of Australia. The bay's value as a recreational, educational and natural heritage area cannot be underestimated. It also has great value to the economy of Queensland.

A study undertaken by the Griffith University School of Environmental Studies revealed that in 1985-86 commercial fishermen within the Brisbane region caught in excess of \$66m worth of product. That was the retail value of the catch. The summary of the flow-on effects shows that the catch sector stimulated a further \$33m in indirect economic activity which, in turn, indirectly stimulated a further 1 108 jobs. Moreton Bay needs to be protected to ensure the continued success of the commercial fishing industry.

No Australian estimates are available on the economic value of the wetlands. However, according to Thawbourg 1986, the United Nations environmental program has placed a value of \$US87,000 per acre on mangroves. The previous Government ignored both the economic and environmental value of our precious wetland areas. Our Government realises the importance of protecting those areas.

Another important environmental issue in Redlands is the protection of the large koala population. I am proud to say that groups in Redlands are working towards that end. They are endeavouring to protect the koala habitat areas and are working towards the provision of koala corridors in Redlands.

We must not forget that ultimately the environment sustains all life. If we do not act quickly to protect it, our quality of life will deteriorate and, eventually, continued environmental destruction will mean an end to humanity. We owe it to our children to protect and to learn to live in harmony with our environment. We must all work together to leave a better world for them.

I shall speak briefly about the islands in the bay which are within my electorate. I pay special tribute to the residents of those islands because of the way that they work

together for the betterment of their communities. North Stradbroke Island is the largest of the islands within my electorate. Recently I have had discussions with the Environment Minister with respect to having approximately 50 per cent of the island proclaimed as national park. The island's many beaches, historical sites, freshwater lakes and other areas of natural beauty lure thousands of tourists to the island each year. The island's European history began when Captain Cook named Point Lookout. The Aboriginal population has a much stronger link to the island. More than 120 Aboriginal sites have been identified, and some middens date back 20 000 years.

In the 1800s Moreton Bay Aborigines were transferred to North Stradbroke Island. The Noonuccal tribe was the traditional owner of the island. I acknowledge Oodgeroo Noonuccal, who was formally known as Kath Walker, and admire her for her poetry and her work for the Aboriginal and white people on North Stradbroke Island.

The Aboriginal and Islander housing cooperative of North Stradbroke Island is doing an excellent job. I wish Oodgeroo and the cooperative every success in their endeavours for the residents of North Stradbroke Island. I sincerely hope that those collective endeavours are successful to ensure the culture and spirit of the Aboriginal people is not lost.

There are many women in the Redlands who have given much to the community. I recommend to all members of this House a book titled *Women of the Redlands*, edited by Roberta Bonnin, which outlines many of their achievements.

I turn now to the matter of policing in the Redlands and the ever-increasing crime rate, which is a result of the shortage of police. Let me say at the outset that the police officers at the only mainland police station in the Redlands at Cleveland are a hard-working and dedicated group of people. They work long hours under extremely trying conditions that few others in the community would tolerate. The conditions at the Cleveland Police Station are disgraceful. The previous Government's lack of spending in this area is to be deplored. I congratulate the police in Redlands for their work under extremely trying circumstances. I am proud to say that, in its first term, our Government will increase police strength by 1 200 officers.

It is obvious that a greater police presence in the Redlands would reduce the rate of crime. There is a great need for extra police, especially in the vicinity of the Cleveland shopping centre and in the southern part of the electorate, as well as on the bay islands. Members on the opposite side of the House had 32 years to get it right, and still they could not. The protection of families and property must be a priority of any Government, and I will work towards that goal.

I would like to comment upon the lack of public housing in the Redlands. It is and should be a matter of concern that in Queensland more than 17 000 people are on the waiting list for Housing Commission accommodation. This figure is only an estimate, as the correct figure is in fact much greater. In this area, as in other areas, Queensland lags far behind other States. The fact that 11 per cent of housing in South Australia is public housing and that the Queensland figure is below 3 per cent is a further indictment on the previous Queensland Government and its total lack of concern for the people of Queensland.

I am proud that by 1993 our Government will be injecting an additional \$174m into public housing. The present situation is abysmal. In part, it results from an unwillingness on the part of the previous State Government to work with the Federal Government. I am happy to say that our Government will not be following in the footsteps of previous National Party and coalition Governments and that it has signed a Commonwealth and State housing agreement that will inject funds into public housing. I have made representations to the Minister for increased public housing in the Redlands, especially for women faced with domestic violence situations and for the many homeless youth in Redlands. I am happy to report that today I received notification from the Minister that a detached home will be purchased at Cleveland for crisis accommodation.

I turn now to talk about the Redlands Hospital. I wish to congratulate Dr Keneally and his staff for the excellent work that they are doing. They are to be commended for the outstanding service that they provide to the people of Redlands. The hospital auxiliary is to be commended for the amount of money that it and other service clubs have raised to purchase hospital equipment. To date, the value of this equipment is in excess of \$58,000. Much of this equipment should have been provided by the Government. However, because the Redlands Hospital was merely a long-standing election promise that was finally honoured, it was not being given the support it deserved by the previous Government. The hospital has been provided with an outstanding staff but little else.

The population of the Redland Shire is in excess of 80 000 and yet the capacity of the hospital is only 36 acute beds and four observation beds. It is still necessary to transfer patients to other hospitals when staff would prefer to care for them at their hospital.

The many needs of the hospital, including maternity, radiological, surgical and geriatric services, should have been provided. A social worker should also have been provided to the hospital to help patients and the general community. There are many other needs, and these have been outlined in a submission by me to the Minister for Health. The needs outlined indicate clearly that the hospital was not a high priority of the previous Government.

I wish now to speak on matters relating to local government. Apart from the overdevelopment of the bay, one major area of concern is the provision of water. In the past, many restrictions have been placed on water usage. The council has stated that the problem is not that there is not enough water but that the council's system is not adequate to supply enough water to the residents of the Redlands. Late last year, thousands of homes in Victoria Point, Redland Bay and Coochiemudlo Island ran out of water. This would not have occurred in a shire that had planned properly for its increase in population.

Another matter of concern is that of residents objecting to rezoning applications. Currently, if they object to the rezoning and the council approves the application, the next step is to go to the Local Government Court. However, because of the costs involved, this course of action is impossible.

It has been a long-standing commitment of mine to work towards the provision of some other body to adjudicate on matters relating to objections to land rezonings, so that residents can put their case without the need for high legal fees. At present, developers can undertake expensive court cases, thus precluding most residents from having a say because of the costs involved.

In conclusion, let me say how proud I am to be a member of this historic Labor Government, a Government which will, for many years ahead, work towards building a better society for all Queenslanders.

Mr VEIVERS (Southport) (3.07 p.m.): Firstly, I wish to swear my allegiance to the Governor as the Queen's representative. I also congratulate the new Speaker, Mr Jim Fouras, who is a former Southport lad—he went to the Southport School—and who, in the old days, at Mick Theodore's cafe, used to serve me fish and chips.

Mr Comben: When did you go to school?

Mr VEIVERS: Just a little before your time.

The people of Queensland have now had six months of this Government and this House is still dealing with the Address in Reply. That says something about what has happened in Queensland. It has come to a grinding halt. Nothing of any consequence is happening and a great deal of what has happened has been a series of delays, inquiries and investigations—you name it—anything to avoid taking or making a decision. Yes, Mr Stephan?

Mr Stephan interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Campbell): Order! The honourable member for Gympie will interject from his correct seat.

Mr VEIVERS: Those inquiries, committees and other mechanisms for putting off decisions now number over 60. At one stage those committees were running at one every two days. I guess one could call that decisiveness of sorts—"Let's have another inquiry."

The public has been pretty tolerant so far, but those people who really need to know on a day-to-day basis what the actions and the intentions of the Government are going to be are crying out for some movement, some display of life. Those comments apply particularly to members of the business community who, in reality, are tearing out their hair.

To date, what has Queensland been served? First came one of the most bloody-minded purges this State has ever seen from any incoming Government in this country. Some of the most senior public servants in this State were publicly humiliated and packed off to broom cupboards—I think it is called the "Gulag", and a Gulag it was.

Mr Beattie: It is in my electorate.

Mr VEIVERS: The honourable member has increased his constituents.

That was one of the earliest actions of this Government. It is interesting now to consider that, as a result of the Government's most recent actions—I refer to the decision to pay full superannuation entitlements to the SEQEB workers sacked in 1985—in the near future the Government may well be hearing more from some of those people.

When the Government finally settled with most of those former chief executives it did not want but refused to sack, it arrived at some extraordinary deals that puts the SEQEB position in a very interesting light. All of those chief executives who were packed off to the "Gulag" have now left the Queensland public service and have done so in a pretty extraordinary manner. They have accepted deals which provided them with much less than that provided for in the contracts which they had signed in good faith with the previous Government.

Those officers were also forced to sign declarations indicating that they would not disclose details of their pay-out. That sort of declaration is quite a normal thing in private enterprise but highly unusual, possibly unique, in an Australian public service because what is being dealt with is the public purse. Amounts paid to former chief executives are secret—or they are supposed to be. Public money has been paid out, and the Government wants to keep that a secret. So much for the brave new world of accountability! Secret deals—doesn't that sound familiar? That is very interesting. I have another point to make about the deals that those people received and the deal that the SEQEB workers are now getting from this Government. Although those chief executives had to take less, the SEQEB workers are now going to get more. It is rather strange.

Ordinarily, when an employee is sacked, all he receives from his superannuation fund is his contributions, plus a very small amount of interest. It is a different thing, of course, if he resigns. Upon resignation, an employee can either opt for the return of his contributions, plus a small amount of interest, or he can preserve his benefit so that when he reaches the age of 55 he will pick up the normal entitlement for the period for which he was employed—his own contributions, his employer's contributions, plus the interest.

What is now being planned for the SEQEB workers is some special legislation to give them rights based on a resignation rather than a sacking. That is ridiculous.

What about the poor workers who were sent to the wall during the SEQEB strike? What about the businessmen who had their stock destroyed and who could not obtain an insurance pay-out? They are not going to receive anything. They never will. They are gone forever.

This deal is not a bad one for those sacked SEQEB workers, particularly given the complication that they have already been paid their own contributions. That is a particularly interesting deal when compared with the fate of those former chief executives.

In this brave new world of accountability and honesty—some violins, please—and Westminster, etc., there is one rule for the boss and one rule for the worker.

Before leaving the public service, I refer to another recent action that also shows up the hypocrisy of this Government. Honourable members might remember that one of the first actions of this Government was to appoint, by Star Chamber methods, some six new acting departmental heads. Those appointments were made to replace the people who had been carted off to the Gulag.

Considering the Government's promise of a brave new world of accountability, it is interesting that not a single advertisement was placed for those jobs. Those chief executive positions were filled by the inner chamber—something Mr Beattie would know or would hope to know—the little group of people around the Premier who were making all the decisions in those days. Maybe Mr Beattie was not part of that group.

The point is that while out of one side of their mouths the members of the Labor Party were saying "Westminster", out of the other side of their mouths they were indulging in the sort of expediency and kangaroo-court style of Government that they claimed they were against.

Last Friday, it was interesting to see the gaggle of advertisements in the *Australian Financial Review* for six departmental heads and a new Under Treasurer. Finally the Government is getting it right. The Government is starting to do it by the book at last, but the way the Government was going in January only serves to highlight its hypocrisy.

In closing, might I say—

Mr Beattie: Wait a minute. What about daylight-saving? Do you think that you are going to come in here without talking about daylight-saving?

Mr VEIVERS: Thank you.

Mr Beattie: You have 33 minutes to deal with daylight-saving.

Mr VEIVERS: I think that daylight-saving is a tremendous thing for this State, and I will stand up in any place and say that. As for getting the New South Wales border and turning it vertically along the 151st meridian—I think that is ridiculous. It will create more problems than we will want to know about. I am in favour of daylight-saving and I am unashamedly in favour of daylight-saving because of the business and commerce that will be affected if it is not implemented next summer.

Returning to the other matter—it is very nice of Government members to support me. It is not often that members on this side of the House are supported by Mr Beattie and the other types on the Government side.

I now wish to say something about VEAs. I think that Government members are crazy if they knock this system. I think we would have to say that the workers at JPower Brewing Co Ltd are very happy. They have told everybody that they are. They have said so on television and in the press. They are getting a great deal. Again, their VEAs were negotiated. The workers negotiated their own rights and are thrilled pink about it. To think that Government members will pull that away from them and say that they have to do it through their unions! They have rocks in their heads. Some Government members—not all of them—have stood up for productivity or an increase in productivity so that this State could forge ahead. But if they start to cancel VEAs, they will fall to their knees.

Mr Prest interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: Mr Prest is interjecting from other than his usual seat. He would know about those things. I am sorry; I should have referred to him as the honourable member for Port Curtis. I recall that he endeavoured to emulate the honourable member

for Peak Downs, Mr Vince Lester, in walking backwards. I cannot remember when it was that he was handing out trophies for the Brisbane to Gladstone yacht race—he cannot interject because he is not in his usual seat—and he decided to copy what Mr Lester did. Mr Lester walked 300 miles whereas the honourable member for Port Curtis took seven steps backwards when he was standing on a tabletop truck, and he was carted off. So he should not start that nonsense with me. Those things happen. It is unfortunate that he did that. I hope that he was trying to do the right thing.

Mr Prest: Honestly.

Mr VEIVERS: Yes, honestly, which is a bit of a difference for him.

Unfortunately, this is the first time I have been on my feet during this session. I have been waiting and waiting to make a speech in this debate. I have done enough research for two speeches, but the Government is so far out of date that I have not bothered mentioning any of those matters.

Mr Beattie: All your speeches are like that.

Mr VEIVERS: If I started talking about the State of Origin match Government members would all start kowtowing.

I am disappointed with the way the ALP Government has started off after 32 years. I thought it would be much more positive and gallant than it has been. To say that I am disappointed with it and to say that it is starting to rule by committee would be the understatement of the year.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Campbell): Order! I call the honourable member for Albert. As this is the honourable member's maiden speech I ask that he be extended the usual courtesies.

Mr SZCZERBANIK (Albert) (3.18 p.m.): I am honoured to be able to rise in this House for the first time and to speak as the representative for Albert. I am proud and privileged to be the first Labor member for Albert for 15 years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I congratulate you on your appointment as Chairman of Committees and ask you to pass on my congratulations to Mr Speaker on his election to that high office. I know myself the difficulty of coming from a migrant family, the difficulty experienced in growing up in a new country and, as a child, the pain of being called names of ethnic origin and the stigma attaching to those names, when I was only trying to do my best to build a future for myself and my family. One learns to ignore the jibes and to persevere to attain one's goal. With strong application and dedication, one can become a member of Parliament in this great country.

It was with extreme honour and great personal satisfaction that I was part of such a historic occasion as the Opening of Parliament in the presence of such an esteemed elder statesman as the former Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, and his partner, Mrs Whitlam. I am sure it gave Mr and Mrs Whitlam pleasure to personally witness democracy in action as demonstrated by the people of Queensland.

I am privileged to be the Labor member for Albert after 15 years of conservative rule in this electorate and I am honoured to be in this House with the former Labor member for Albert, Mr D'Arcy, who is now the honourable member for Woodridge.

I congratulate the Liberal Party candidate, Mrs Kay Elson. She was a worthy combatant and ran an excellent campaign.

The electorate of Albert is a dynamic, growing area. A diverse spectrum of people live within its borders, ranging from those who travel by public transport to those who travel in Rolls Royces. No matter what their background or social standing was, on 2 December 1989, they were certain that they wanted a change, as did the whole of Queensland. There is no doubt they wanted a change for the better—a Goss Labor Government.

The electorate of Albert has changed dramatically over the last 15 years. Previously, Albert ran from Kingston and Slacks Creek in the north to Southport and Nerang in the south. Today, the rate of population growth is enormous. The annual rate of increase in the electorate is in excess of 13 per cent compared with the Queensland average of 3.2 per cent. Today, Albert's borders are Runaway Bay in the south and half of Beenleigh in the north. The Premier, the Honorable Wayne Goss, was quoted as describing the northern boundary as very creative. I feel that that is a perfect description.

The corruption exposed by Mr Tony Fitzgerald was not restricted to former National Party members. The tentacles of that corruption extend into local authorities. The stench of alleged corruption taints the local authorities within my own electorate—the Albert Shire Council and the Gold Coast City Council. I will pursue those allegations of corruption with tenacity and with all the resources available to me. I invite concerned constituents within my own electorate to make available to my office any documented evidence that they may have in their possession in order to assist me in my endeavours. One allegation involves tendering to the Gold Coast City Council. I have been told that in one case a tender did not contain a price but that, after all the tenders were opened, the price was written in and it became the lowest tender. One can only blame past members of those local authorities who later achieved high office.

In reply to media comments by the member for Surfers Paradise, firstly, because my electorate office was never situated at Runaway Bay I could not close it down and, secondly, I did not require an office the size of a football field. The bulk of my constituents are situated in the northern end of the electorate. They include the people of Beenleigh and surrounding areas, who have been neglected for the past 15 years.

One of the major problems faced by my constituents is that of uncontrolled town-planning applications. Currently, Queensland has poorly contrived and structured legislation that places the burden of proof as to the suitability of development upon objectors rather than the applicant. Many applications have been approved by local authorities with the minimal possible amount of supporting information and with no regard to the consequences of the projects for the environment or the local population. In my opinion, town-planning should not divorce itself from the social context in which it is conceived, since it is this very context that provides the framework for the orderly structuring of objectives.

1. An increased awareness of environmental and heritage issues; secondly,
2. The enormous development pressures on non-urban lands—and therefore growing conflict between urban expansion and the protection of the environment;
3. The increasing criticism of State Government involvement in local area planning;
4. The streamlining of approval processes; and
5. The provision of increased opportunity for public involvement and participation in environmental planning and assessment.

These ideas have been passed on to the Minister for consideration when framing future legislation, and I am pleased that environmental legislation is already in the planning stages.

Another issue affecting my electorate is that of the environment. At this time Albert has easily accessible and untouched natural waterways and islands within only one hour's drive from Brisbane. This is an area worthy of preserving for future generations to enjoy and utilise. I am pleased to be a part of the Minister's advisory committee on the Moreton Bay plan. This plan will give greater emphasis to conservation issues, but will still incorporate the management of all bay uses, including the following—

1. Conservation and recreation.
2. Commercial and recreational fishing.
3. Transport and port development.
4. Extractive industries.
5. Tourism and public foreshore usage.

The Minister for Environment and Heritage, Mr Comben, has announced the declaration of six islands in the southern Moreton Bay area as having national park or environmental park status. Most of these islands are in my electorate. People within my

electorate were delighted with this announcement because it means no more Sovereign Island type of developments in the bay. This area contains such untouched waterways as the Pimpama River, with its undisturbed mangrove ecology, large areas of seagrass beds and an abundant diversity of animal species which depend on this region for their existence. The largest island in this region is South Stradbroke Island, which is a scant barrier between the Pacific Ocean and the Broadwater. It is fragile and highly vulnerable to erosion. During the 1974 storms and floods the island was almost severed. This island supposedly became separated from North Stradbroke Island in 1896 as a result of the disturbance to the dunes caused by people who were drawn to the wreck of the *Cambus Wallace*. The landscape has been modified by other natural and induced events such as the Jumpinpin Bar changes, the Gold Coast Seaway construction, grazing, sand-mining and recreational activities. Fortunately, the island remains largely undeveloped and predominantly natural. Cabbage palm swamps and the golden Stradbroke wallaby are outstanding natural features of the island. Its unspoilt long ocean frontage offers a character that is long-lost on the Gold Coast. It is an area worthy of preservation that is only a short distance from the heavily populated coastal region. Surf gutters on the island, which are often very rewarding for fishermen, are backed by beach spinifex-topped sand dunes and hind dunes feature scrublands of wattle, oaks and banksias and more robust woodlands of bloodwoods and corkwoods in the interior. Flowering eucalyptus, which are often alive with lorikeets, grow on the stable Broadwater foreshores of the island, and in many parts give way to tea-tree swamps draining to biologically rich littoral zones of marine couch flats, mangrove forests and broad mud and sand flats with oysters. The flats are feeding grounds for many fish at high tide, including bream, whiting and flathead, and for many seabirds at low tide. Moreton Bay is of international significance for migratory waders that wing through from the northern hemisphere. Jumpinpin's sandflats attract large flocks of crested terns, curlews, godwits and sandpipers, along with pelicans, silver gulls, kites and oystercatchers.

I am proud that Albert, being so close to Brisbane, has a viable primary industry. The sugar industry has established a long history within the borders of my electorate. It was commenced in the region by Captain Louis Hope in 1867 on the Delta Islands at the mouth of the Coomera River—later to become known as Hope Island and even later still to become known as Sanctuary Cove. From those early beginnings, Albert appears to have developed the most cost-efficient sugarcane-growing area within the State. In the region, 104 families rely on the sugar industry for their livelihoods. The gross area assigned to cane is 5 462 hectares. In 1989, the quantity of cane crushed was 372 384 tonnes. In 1990, owing to the better-than-average weather conditions, an increase of 5 per cent is expected in the quantity of cane crushed.

The sugar industry plays a vital role in Albert's economy. In 1989, direct income from that industry was approximately \$19m. The total contribution to the local community from the sugar industry would have to be between \$45m and \$50m. I know that certain sectors of the community would rather see the sugar industry fold, but with the benefit of more effective improvements in the future, I can only see the industry growing. For example, in 1990, major capital works for the Rocky Point sugar-mill include 85 new 24-tonne cane containers; completion of a turbo alternator worth \$450,000; and installation of a new mudflat filter worth \$150,000. Direct employment at the Rocky Point sugar-mill accounts for 65 permanent workers and 32 seasonal workers, and the annual payroll is in excess of \$2m. The green space provided by the cane fields provides a buffer zone between Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

I am also honoured to be the first registered nurse in this Parliament and even more than delighted that the Goss Labor Government has given a commitment to the establishment of a ministerial nursing consultative and advisory structure in Queensland. For too long, because of the actions of past Governments, the nurses of this State have felt that they were used as slave-labour. At times, they were pushed to the outer limits of human endurance. Many nurses are leaving this State to pursue a career in other States.

The Government's commitment to nursing recognises nurses as professionals and the need to include participative nursing input into the planning and delivery of health and community structures in Queensland. It also recognises the expertise within the nursing profession and its commitment to the provision of safe, efficient and cost-effective health care in this State. Nursing and nurses play a major and vital role in the delivery of health services throughout Queensland. Nurses work in a dynamic and often complex health and community services sector—a sector in which technological and science advancements, consumer and professional expectations and the availability of physical and financial resources are often in conflict.

Nursing is also undergoing major structural and educational changes, which will have a significant impact on the health and community services sector. It is therefore opportune that the Queensland Government establish a nursing consultative and advisory committee in its promotion of genuine and participative consultation. I welcome the establishment of that committee. Perhaps it could include a secretariat to service the objectives, obligations and programs of the committee. I look forward to working with the Minister to achieve those goals which will provide long-term benefit for nurses throughout the State.

In conclusion, I express my thanks to my wife, Linda, for her patience, hard work and tolerance of the interruptions to our family life, and for her dedicated support. Today is her twenty-ninth birthday. As all honourable members would know, political life is not easy for the family unit. I also thank my children, Christopher and Shayne, for putting up with me.

I also wish to thank the Albert Valley Progress Association—otherwise known as the citizens committee against Wolffdene dam—with which I have had the privilege to be associated since January 1988. The dedication of its members to the cause of honest and open government has won them the respect of the community.

I must also thank members and supporters of the Australian Labor Party. To the people of Albert, I say, "Thank you for putting your trust in me." I can say "Thank you" also to the staff and residents of the Tweed Heads Nursing Centre for the support shown to me during my employment there prior to the election. I must also thank Australia Post. Finally, I say "Thank you" to my secretary, Di Stewart, who was my campaign director. I look forward to working as part of the Goss Labor Government, to representing the people of Albert, and to looking after the people of Queensland.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Campbell): Order! I now call the member for Nicklin. As this is the honourable member's maiden speech, I wish it to be heard in silence.

Mr KING (Nicklin) (3.36 p.m.): In rising to speak to the amendment to the motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply, today it is my privilege and honour to stand before you, Mr Deputy Speaker, in this historic House of Parliament and to deliver my maiden speech. In so doing, I indicate my most important priorities and, hopefully, record most of the matters of importance to me and to my electorate.

At the outset, I acknowledge and assert my commitment to the same God as this Parliament acknowledges and by whose will I and each member of the House are able to stand in this place and represent the people of our electorates. I reaffirm my loyalty to this wonderful nation of Australia—in particular, the State of Queensland—and to the Queen and her representatives at both national and State level. I am also sure that the vast majority of the good people of my electorate join me in this expression of loyalty.

For the people of Nicklin who elected me to represent them, I reconfirm my commitment to always endeavour to place their best interests first and foremost, and to try never to forget that I am their servant who has been elected by them to come to Parliament and carry out their wishes. To my lovely wife, Helene, who was born in the heart of the Nicklin electorate in the town of Nambour, I say a very sincere "Thank you" for all her love and support in my election campaign. I thank her also for being in the gallery today, sharing with me yet another important event in our life together.

I thank her also for putting up with all the hard work, long hours, difficulties, disappointment and heartaches that, as every honourable member of this House knows, are unfortunately part of most election campaigns.

To my wonderful children, Bob, Brett, Ben, Caroline, Anna and Alison—I also say a real thank you for their continuing love, loyalty and help during and after the campaign and election. The lives of the family of elected members of Government are not easy, and the price paid by those family members is a matter that is generally not understood or appreciated by most of the general community.

To my good friend and campaign manager, Graham Chapman, and all my other wonderful friends and supporters, many former members of other political parties, and many never a member of any party; people who have helped me through two previous local government elections and who loyally put in a massive amount of time, effort and talent yet again in this State election—thank you sincerely.

To the loyal and dedicated members of the Liberal Party in Nicklin and the Liberal parliamentary members who gave so unselfishly of their time during the campaign—thank you for showing the real meaning of team spirit, party loyalty and support, and true friendship within politics.

To the voters of Nicklin from all political parties through the preferential voting system who showed that they would no longer tolerate having outsiders forced on them as their political representative—thank you for your ballot-box support. I promise to serve each one of you, irrespective of your party political beliefs, to the best of my ability.

At my age in life, I feel that I have come to a state of mind in which I have my priorities and desires properly sorted out. No matter how long one lives, life is short. In the active years that may lie ahead of me, I wish to do something worth while with what talents have been given me. Because of my efforts, I want to leave this wonderful country and State which I love a little better for my children and fellow man.

I have lived long enough to adequately study, experience and compare the different political philosophies of our nation and to determine that I am without hesitation or doubt a committed conservative. It concerns me immensely, for the sake of my children and fellow man, that in recent years Australians have lethargically been allowing themselves to be led down the path of socialism. The dramatically reduced standard of living, and the many downgraded changes to our traditional values and way of life that we have today, prove how foolish and unthinking we have been.

Our national debt outrivals many banana republics, and still we continue to reduce our working hours, provide ourselves with better working conditions and follow wasteful and inefficient work practices as we pander to the demands of the self-interested trade unions. Taxes are increased unfairly and incentive is killed, and "profit" is often regarded as a dirty word. If we are ever going to be able to hand on to our grandchildren the wonderful inheritance our forefathers worked so hard to give us, there is an obvious need for a change of attitude back to hard work.

While the people of Europe are finally admitting that socialism does not work, because it runs contrary to the nature of man, and are angrily throwing it out and joyfully embracing democracy, at present in Australia we continue to allow it to control our lives.

One of America's greatest statesmen said the following words, which I believe hold much wisdom for our nation at this point in time—

"You cannot bring about prosperity by destroying thrift;
You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong;
You cannot help small men by tearing down big men;
You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich;
You cannot lift the wage-earner by pulling down the wage-payer;

You cannot keep out of trouble by spending more than your income;
You cannot further brotherhood of man by inciting class hatred;
You cannot build character and courage by taking a man's initiative;
You cannot really help men by having Government tax them to do for them what they can and should do for themselves."

The wise author of those words was Abraham Lincoln.

Our nation is desperately crying out for strong leaders; men and women who are prepared to put the real interests of Australia first, ahead of their parties and ahead of themselves. But, unfortunately, our country cries out in vain!

Will it take a war or another Great Depression to drag us out of this blind and selfish path of self-destruction? I hope not. Perhaps even today within this Queensland Parliament the seed or seeds of salvation for our country may lie. Certainly, at least, it is within the capability of each one of us, if we only have and exercise that fibre of moral courage within us to make a conscientious effort each time the opportunity presents itself within and outside this Parliament to secretly ask ourselves, "Is this decision truly the best for our country?" and then, "Do I have the courage to make it irrespective of anyone or anything else which tends to influence me?" Honourable members, that is the truly hard decision that lies before each of us.

We new members of this Legislative Assembly probably all come here full of enthusiasm and high ideals, with noble intentions to achieve many worthwhile goals. How many times have the people of Queensland seen that happen, only to then see, unfortunately, those good intentions overcome by the system and their representative forced back into the mould of the typical politician by such things as peer pressure, party pressure and self-interest, and the desire for political survival? That is the picture of the typical politician that has been seen repeatedly by the public in recent years, and it is not a pretty one.

For those members of the public who have had the misfortune to personally watch Parliament in session, the picture is vividly reinforced, particularly if they have witnessed question-time. In my short time in this House, I have often looked up to the public gallery, particularly during question-time, to watch the expressions on the faces of those watching the scene below. Those expressions vary from surprised and incredulous disbelief, to the excited interest shown by spectators watching a brawl in a State of Origin match, to disgust, and to sadness at the level to which their "honourable" parliamentary representatives can sink. That sorry state of affairs becomes particularly depressing when the audience is a group of school students—yet another generation of Queenslanders to reinforce the adverse reputation of parliamentarians. Our Federal Parliament is known as "the circus on the hill" and our Queensland Parliament is known as "the George Street circus".

We all have a free will and, within the walls of this House, a parliamentary privilege as well to speak almost without limitation. It is, therefore, very easy to be overly critical, abusive and rabble-like. Anyone can easily slip into such a mode. It is surely harder and requires more self-discipline to act to the contrary, and not to respond to an insult can take more courage than to respond in the same vein.

People see us as spending too much time picking fault with one another and too little time working for their benefit—the reason they put us here. Is it any wonder that politicians are generally regarded as being almost the lowest of opinion categories of all professions and occupations?

I congratulate Mr Speaker and the Chairman of Committees on their elevation to their high and honourable offices. However, their responsibility in controlling debate is a most onerous and difficult one. I strongly sympathise with and support them in their positions.

Prior to the start of this Parliament, the Leader of the House, the Honourable Terry Mackenroth, called publicly for decorum and better behaviour by members in the House.

He said he would "like to see the Parliament become an institution which the people of Queensland can respect and look up to". I say to the Minister that I agree with his words and fully support them. Unfortunately, I have seen little evidence of their effect, from either side of the House, since Parliament started sitting. Even the decorum of the swearing-in of members was robbed of its rightful dignity by the scene set earlier by the "experienced" members of the House as they threw abuse back and forth.

I am not so naive or inexperienced in the ways of life, human nature and politics to believe that effective decision-making can always be achieved without very vigorous debate. I accept that in various ways occasional personal interjections often add to the quality of debate and decision-making. What I do not accept is the need for the all-too-often verbal slanging matches we see involving dozens of members all shouting at the one time, as they tear down what shreds of respect the people currently hold for Parliament, and waste the time that the people want, and pay us, to spend working constructively for them.

To all those newly elected members like myself, from all three parties, I say that we have a great challenge and a great opportunity before us. If we believe that the picture I have just painted is truly representative of the wishes of the people we serve, then let us agree to combine in our efforts to reform the practices of this Parliament. If we join the large numbers that we have with the few Ministers and senior members from both sides of the House who stand out prominently because they normally refrain from rabble-like behaviour, we can in time bring about the reform that the people want and from which the people and the politicians will jointly benefit.

It is a well accepted political fact that, to a very large degree, political parties lose Government more so than Opposition parties win Government. There is absolutely no doubt that this element was very much present in the recent State election. The reasons are well known to us all, and there is no need for me to reiterate them again now. However, I do wish to congratulate the Labor Government on its convincing win. The people have given it the power to clean up the Government and provide for the good management of this State, plus the fair and equal treatment of all that it promised. I will gladly welcome any Labor Minister who comes into the seat of Nicklin with the intention of assessing the many needs of its people and helping to overcome their problems.

I was recently very pleased to welcome the Honourable Paul Braddy, Minister for Education, and the Honourable Ken McElligott, Minister for Health, when they officiated at different opening functions within the electorate. Such functions are an excellent opportunity for people to express their concerns and for Ministers to gain better appreciation of local needs. I also wish to state at this point that I will gladly support any initiative of this Government which I believe is definitely in the best interests of the majority of the people of Nicklin. I am absolutely convinced that all people are sick and tired of parties and individual politicians who continually knock the ideas of their opponents simply and for no better reason than that those ideas come from a party political opponent. Queensland cannot afford to have good ideas wasted, irrespective of their source, and I certainly hope that the Labor Government, with its majority of voting power in this House, also believes this and is big enough to act accordingly.

The seat of Nicklin, which I am honoured to represent, is the best and nicest place in Australia and, indeed, the world, in which to live. It is conveniently located only just over one hour's drive north of our State capital of Brisbane. Nicklin is bounded by some of the best beaches in Australia, by good rivers, which have always been used for commerce and recreation, and by the most beautiful foothills of the Blackall Range. Interesting hilly country and some flat sugarcane lands are usually lush and green, thanks to our plentiful rainfall. The climate is moderate and regular and gentle sea breezes blow throughout most of the year. The natural beauty of the area has not yet been spoiled by the development that has taken place so far.

Under those circumstances, it is easy to understand why this area has such great appeal. I selected it 16 years ago as the best place in Australia in which to live and raise

my children. In recent years, many thousands of others have done the same, giving the area one of the highest population growth rates in the country, and the prediction is for the present population to double within 10 years. It is this pressure of increasing population which poses the main problem in the coming years for all three spheres of Government as the people look to us to adequately plan and provide for their needs.

We people of Nicklin are unashamedly parochial and proud of the beautiful environment in which we live and the life-style we are able to lead. Our area is unique and proven very desirable by new residents and visitors. We do not want to be a copy of any other place. What quality of life we have must be protected, while adequate and sensitive planning is carried out by Governments to provide our infrastructure, services and employment for the fast-increasing population attracted to our area.

The electorate of Nicklin was only created in 1986 owing to the big population increase in the area, which was previously part of the electorates of Cooroora and Landsborough. It was named in honour of one of its famous sons, a long-term resident of the area, parliamentary representative and former Premier of Queensland, Sir Francis Nicklin. He was a good and capable man and is still kindly remembered and respected by many of the local people who knew him personally. I believe that in Parliament he was also a man respected by all parties. For the first time, in accordance with the usual historical practice elsewhere of traditional representation, the people of Nicklin—a predominantly conservative seat—have been able to elect a suitable local person from within their own population to represent them.

I would now like to pay a tribute to all those wonderful pioneers of our area, who started settling the district well over a century ago. They arrived mainly by ship in the early days, settling first near the rivers, then soon moving inland to the fertile red soil areas, where agriculture was established. Timber-getting was one of the primary sources of employment and wealth for the district, and many a good red cedar log and other valuable hardwoods came from the area. Very few people who come to our district these days ever leave, and that was the case in those early days as well. As a result, many good citizens in our district can proudly trace back their ancestors to the early days. As well, they have done much towards the establishment of our community and the setting of high standards in all walks of life.

This year the Maroochy Shire Council celebrates its 100th anniversary of established local government. Nicklin is composed of a variety of different sized towns and areas, each of which has its own particular characteristics. The blending of those different areas gives the electorate so much appeal to such a wide range of residents and visitors.

Nambour, which has traditionally been the administrative and commercial centre for the whole coast, was originally built around the district's only sugarcane-crushing mill. That mill still exists and is worth approximately \$80m a year to the district's economy. It has always been the mainstay of the district. However, in recent years it has been exceeded in worth by the tourism industry. Nevertheless, it is still extremely important, but it is under threat because of the diminishing areas of suitable cane-growing land as increasing demands are made on land usage by increasing population and tourism growth. Unless some State Government control of future land availability is introduced, it would seem inevitable that that longstanding industry is in real danger of closure.

The Maroochy Shire Council, the Sunshine Coast base hospital, the fire brigade headquarters and many State and national offices are also based in Nambour. The Bruce Highway and the railway line connecting the rest of Queensland's coastal towns to the capital in the south both pass through Nambour.

Maroochydore and Alexandra Headland, which are two of the beautiful beachfront areas of Nicklin, have grown enormously in recent years. They now have a population which is far in excess of the traditional business centre of Nambour. Beautiful, white-sandy beaches and attractive rocky headlands are lapped by a normally good surf. The appeal of those beaches is attested to by the large crowds of locals and visitors who

enjoy them throughout the year. A very efficient and respected surf life-saving movement in conjunction with the excellent helicopter rescue service give a rescue service that is second to none.

A sprinkling of high-rise units which were approved prior to the past six years or so serves the tourism industry. However, those units are not so great in number or too close to the beach to cause serious aesthetic or shadow problems as have been experienced in other comparable seaside areas.

Maroochydore and Alexandra Headland were originally small, beach holiday sites for low-cost holiday houses owned mainly by Nambour families. However, with the passing of time, the improvement in services and the discovery of the area by visitors, the area has mushroomed. Good shopping centres, hotels, restaurants and entertainment facilities have attracted many permanent residents to the area. Without doubt, tourism is the major income-earner.

Studies by the local tourism promotion board have shown that the casual, underdeveloped and laid-back style of that coastal area appeals very much to the tourists who are mainly from south-east Queensland and are flocking to the area in increasing numbers.

Situated just a couple of kilometres behind Maroochydore is the beautiful mountain-top area of Buderim. For a long time the magnificent views of ocean beaches, rivers, green valleys and mountains have made that area one of the most sought-after residential areas on the coast. Rich, red, volcanic soil and ample rainfall have made the home gardens a picture. Many historic and beautiful old Queenslander-style homes are still to be found there. Residents are often from the higher income bracket, and it is a very popular retirement area for people from both Queensland and the southern States.

Motor vehicle traffic density in the area is a real problem with traffic from Brisbane taking a direct route over Buderim to the coast. The problem was expected to be lessened considerably by the new motorway. However, with the reintroduction of tolls many drivers avoid the motorway and travel again through the single-lane roads of Buderim.

The establishment of a local police station would be greatly welcomed by most residents. Land has already been allocated for that purpose. In common with other areas in the electorate, an ever-increasing need exists for a police presence as the population of residents and tourists expands quickly.

Buderim has attracted many excellent artists. Local galleries tend to attract tourists and locals alike who can spend a pleasant day browsing through the town and dining in one of the many fine restaurants.

The small country towns of Woombye and Palmwoods lie to the west of Buderim and south of Nambour. Both towns are very pleasant. For the people living in them and on their outskirts, those towns offer a way of life which many old and new residents find very appealing. Originally, those towns were located on the historic Cobb and Co. stagecoach route, and a depot was located in the district. Then came the railway on its way north, and a siding was established in both towns.

The district has been the traditional centre of a fruit-growing area. For a long time good crops of citrus fruit, pineapples and other fruits have produced an excellent income. In recent times real problems have been caused by Federal Government changes of policies on the importation of tinned fruits, particularly pineapples from South East Asia. In recent years, avocados and other more exotic fruits have been produced successfully as the struggle to remain economically viable becomes harder and farmers look to alternatives to keep up with changing market conditions.

Because the country areas of Nicklin have such a strong life-style appeal to incoming new residents, thousands of smaller acreage blocks, many of which are interspersed throughout the farming areas, have been subdivided and built on in the past 10 to 15 years. In some cases that has produced very real problems in relation to agricultural chemical spray drift. The farmer naturally feels that he has a right and certainly a need

to continue to spray his crops in order to stay economically viable and to support his family. The resident who sometimes has his home and family covered with toxic chemicals feels equally adamant that he has the right not to have his life and the lives of his loved ones put at risk.

Approximately two years ago the Maroochy Shire Council, of which I have been deputy chairman for the past five years, was forced by the then Government's inaction to introduce a by-law that is the first of its kind in Australia to try to resolve the problem, which the shire council openly believed to be a State responsibility. The Government refused to gazette the by-law. Despite saying that it would do something about it itself, time showed that the Government lacked the resolve and did nothing. As a result, the problem still exists but fortunately in a reduced form. Because of the publicity of council's intended action and the establishment by council of a council/farmer/resident action committee, much more care has been taken in spray applications and the complaint rate has dropped significantly.

However, on a Statewide basis the problem still needs to be addressed by parliamentary legislative changes. I have noted a recent media statement attributed to the Honourable Ed Casey, Minister for Primary Industries, that his Government intends to address the problem. I commend him for that and hope that his action will be soon; that it will be fair to all parties involved and, most importantly, will be effective. I also highly recommend to him that he look strongly at the aspects of education and research in relation to the problem as well.

Any region which has a big population, a high population growth rate and which is also subject to regular periodic influxes of a large number of tourists automatically has problems not experienced to the same degree by more static growth areas. This is the case with Nicklin. I would like now to briefly mention some of the more important ones.

Employment opportunities during the strong growth period of the past 20 years have not kept pace with the number of residents needing work. This situation has even resulted in a number of families having to sell their home and moving to other areas to obtain employment. Tremendous strain is also put on marriages when, in order to work, the husband has to live away from his wife and children. I have noted with agreement this Government's intention to set up offices throughout Queensland to promote regional economic growth. I would ask the Minister to look carefully at the many reasons which would justify the establishment of such an office in the Nicklin area.

Agriculture has traditionally supplied most of the jobs for this region, but in recent years tourism and the building industry have taken the lead. It is in the manufacturing industry that I believe our ability lies to produce new employment opportunities and in which a definite cooperative and joint role between the national, State and local governments exists, which is vital to success. This region is far too important to the overall future economic conditions of Queensland not to be given the emphasis and support that it warrants.

Hospital care, particularly the adequate staffing of hospitals, has been a major problem now for at least the last five years. The major base hospital for the Sunshine Coast is located in Nambour. Under the previous Government, several major upgradings of the hospital did take place, such decisions, of course, always coming prior to elections and never accompanied by a commitment to supply all the necessary staff to operate the extra wards. Everyone assumed that the extra staff necessary would naturally be included, but no—not so.

This deceptive political pork-barrelling trick was, of course, pulled on other areas in Queensland. I was the local government representative on the hospital board in 1986 when the then Premier arrived with the out-of-town member who was to be pushed onto the Nicklin electorate. We, the board members, were told that we were to be given a new hospital block for the elderly, despite our wanting instead, as our first priority, extra staff to operate a hospital that already had empty beds that could not be used,

despite a desperate demand, because of lack of staff. We told them this, but what did we get? We got the extra block—the bricks and mortar, the dollar value of which sounded much more impressive in the media prior to an election than just so many extra nurses.

Today, we still have the very same problem—more patients than we can properly handle and empty beds we would dearly love to be able to put those patients in but cannot because we do not have enough nurses and supporting staff. The problem we have with our hospital is typical of the reactive planning policy of the past and one which was experienced in most areas of Government responsibility as well.

Instead of recognising the projected rapid population growth of the region and planning now to meet those future needs, problems are allowed to develop first. Then, when community pressure builds up, a political decision is made to rectify, or partially rectify, the problem up to that date. This is reactive management and not the proactive management that good commonsense professional business firms of today need to use.

I am pleased to note that when the present Health Minister, the Honourable Ken McElligott, visited Nambour recently, he advised that he was aware of the problems of the Nambour Hospital and would soon be taking action to help solve the nursing staff problem. I would ask the Minister to carry out also an up-to-date appraisal of the future building, equipment and staffing needs of the hospital and then take adequate action to meet those needs by the time they eventuate—in other words, to display good, commonsense forward planning for a hospital that serves a very large region in south-east Queensland.

At the moment, roads are a very hot topic on the Sunshine Coast. For years now the Federal Government has slowly strangled us of adequate funds to maintain and upgrade our existing roads to cater for the greatly increased traffic of this high-growth tourist area. Unless significantly increased funds are regularly received in the coming years, there is absolutely no doubt that our internal road system, subjected to heavy traffic use and a high yearly rainfall as it is, will really disintegrate. Believe me, this is not an exaggerated statement; it is already starting to happen.

We Sunshine Coasters often compare our area with the Gold Coast and have certainly compared our road systems. We believed that in comparison we had been poorly treated and deserved to at least have a comparable main arterial road to take traffic through our area. Then the previous Government decided to give us one, but not on the same basis as that given to the Gold Coast. We were to pay for our road with a toll. That unfair recommendation was made by an out-of-touch, non-local representative and a party which took for granted once too often the good people of this traditionally conservative seat.

The Liberal Party, in touch with and listening to the people at grassroots level, immediately saw the injustice of the decision and condemned the idea of tolls. To this very day, it has consistently continued to do so. History shows that, under immense local pressure, the National Party withdrew the tolls and that, in pre-election mode, the Labor Party also openly and in writing promised no tolls and claimed that the costing for all such election promises had been verified by a reputable accounting firm.

It is a great pity for the Labor Party, however, that it then started out very poorly in Government by completely shooting to pieces its credibility with the people of the Sunshine Coast when it blatantly betrayed those people by undeniably breaking a very clear and important election promise in relation to tolls on the Sunshine Coast Motorway. There were no ifs or buts involved. Although the Premier, the Minister for Transport and others have since tried vainly to smear some traces of respectability on their current course of action, it really has been to no avail. The facts are very clear and in black and white. At least the Deputy Premier, the Honourable Tom Burns, was man enough to admit the broken promise and to apologise for it.

The people of the Sunshine Coast are incensed by this betrayal of their trust and will not soon forget it. Around the world, people are demanding that their politicians honour their election promises, hence the call for citizens' initiated recall and referendums. But the action of the Labor Party in this case only adds to the already mentioned poor

reputation of politicians in general. The people of Nicklin now wait to see whether Labor keeps its new promise that, with tolls operating, it can afford to adequately spend money on the balance of our road system. Time will tell.

Police requirements in manpower and equipment have not been properly assessed for several years and the assessment needs to be done immediately and made known to the public. I hereby ask the Minister for Police, the Honourable Terry Mackenroth, to do so as soon as possible. I personally extend an invitation to him to urgently visit the Sunshine Coast and inspect the police situation there. In recent years, break and entry and sex-related crimes, partially those related to a very serious drug problem, have increased considerably, yet police numbers are grossly inadequate, as is the basic equipment available.

There is also much discontent among police at the way in which changes are being introduced, or are proposed to be introduced, to the Queensland force, and unless the Minister is prepared to allow adequate input from the men and women who make up our police force, morale will continue to fall and resignations will increase. In the meantime, the people of the Nicklin electorate will continue to suffer.

If this nation is to ever compete successfully with the rest of the world in this age of high technology, education is so vitally important. Once again the Nicklin area is suffering from the reactive management, and this needs to be addressed now. It ranges from the need for basic maintenance, to new buildings, to brand new schools in new and growing areas. Fortunately, new private church school constructions are helping to partially ease the problem of meeting growing demand.

Our ex-TAFE college and campuses are doing a wonderful job but are hamstrung by a lack of funds. I congratulate the previous Government on its decision to effectively integrate the college with the community through a college council comprised of prominent members of various professions in the local community. This seems to have been a very worthwhile and successful move.

Probably a university is the greatest need in the sphere of education in our region. The heartaches, financial problems and emotional stresses involved in sending our young people away from the support of their homes and families to universities in Brisbane must be addressed. There are more than enough students within an acceptable catchment area to warrant a university.

The land has already been identified and it was set aside by the previous Government. Now all that is needed is the money and the will of the Federal and State Governments to proceed. I ask the new Minister for Education, the Honourable Paul Braddy, to investigate this genuine need for our region.

The building industry is of immense value to our area. I am very concerned about the number of small subcontractors who, following the traditional ups and downs with the economy, often get caught, either through their own fault or through the fault of the bigger developer. I believe that there is a need for a better practical business-type education of some sections within the industry to try to minimise the financial effects of the down-turns.

There is also a need for the smaller, labour only type pieceworker within the industry, which would have the benefit of producing more competitively priced buildings of better quality, while recognising the small taxation approved businessman.

Small businesses play a vital role in our economy and in particular within our major industry, the tourism industry. After many years of thought and search, trial and error, conflict and heartache, the Nicklin region seems to have agreed upon its image and destiny. Most tourists to the region are Australians and come from within a 1 000 kilometre radius. They are mostly families and a big percentage of them arrive in their own motor vehicles. They enjoy our beautiful beaches, lovely mountain ranges, laid-back life-style and not overly developed environment. These are also the things that the locals enjoy, in addition to the region's closeness to the City of Brisbane.

With the increase in population, most of the residents realistically expect to see changes take place and, in turn, to benefit from the creation of employment that accompanies those changes, but they are now far more vocal in demanding that progress be not overdone and that our environment be protected as much as possible.

I believe that the State Government should work in with local government in producing a satisfactory coastal development control and management plan. Such cooperation and encouragement should also produce a plan that is acceptable to the community for the treatment and disposal of sewage effluent and noxious wastes, rather than continue with the current secondary treatment and river and ocean outfall disposal.

Since the end of World War II, many changes in attitude have taken place in the average Australian's way of thinking and acting. Many of the old values and beliefs have been discarded as a wave of free thinking took over. We increasingly have come under the influence of imported movies and videos, censorship has become virtually non-existent, and family discipline and self-discipline is something of which many young people have no real understanding.

Drugs are now a tremendous problem and crime, including violent sex-related attacks, has dramatically increased. The economy is in tatters and employment is difficult to secure.

Against this background of pressures many families have collapsed and many residents in the Nicklin electorate are in much need of support. Low-cost accommodation is almost impossible to obtain. Public transport by bus is scarce and inconvenient for the young and the elderly.

Much can be done by State Governments to address many of these problems and a heavy and definite responsibility must surely rest upon each one of us in this regard.

I noted with much interest the stated policy of the present Government. In his Address, the Governor said:

"The basis of our society is the family and the values and policies of my Government will reflect that and ensure that Queensland families come first."

Those are noble words with which I fully agree. I sincerely hope that this Government will honour those noble words now with meaningful actions.

Fortunately, the Sunshine Coast has many good people who have become heavily involved in many community organisations that do a tremendous job in assisting their fellow residents in a variety of ways. I mention just a few examples: the strong RSL branches, the Red Cross, Meals On Wheels, the Blue Nursing Service, the CWA, the Endeavour Foundation, the St Vincent de Paul Society and the many active and caring Christian churches of the area which cater for both the spiritual and social needs of the people. While those organisations are good examples of people helping other people or of the community helping itself, some Government funding is involved in a lot of cases. What must be remembered, however, is that with an increasing population, and an increasing percentage of that population being in the aged category, the demand for help will increase very significantly in the coming years. Governments must be prepared to increase its help accordingly.

I conclude my maiden speech to this House with the following comments: most honourable members have surely come to this Parliament with the correct and noble intention of serving first and foremost the people who elected them, while at the same time remaining loyal to the principles that they personally hold dear. This is certainly the case for myself.

I am inflexibly committed to the principle that I must never vote for anything which I believe is not in the best interests of the majority of the people of Nicklin; nor is it my intention to abandon those principles which I hold precious.

I recognise that in the future there may be great pressure from many directions to conform on various issues, which may be contrary to what I have said, but to bow to

these pressures will be to betray my people and betray myself. I trust that I will have the moral courage and backbone to resist such pressures if and when they arise.

I am happy to belong to a party which acknowledges the importance of the above principles and allows its members to abide by their strongly held beliefs and act accordingly. Furthermore, I recognise and admire the strong moral stand taken by the Liberal Party in 1983 when it willingly sacrificed its position in Government over the issue of accountability. Such integrity, which was also proven correct by the events in recent years, has not been seen before or since, I believe, in this House.

I would prefer, naturally, to see a far greater number of Liberal parliamentarians in this House with me. I would also prefer, naturally, for our party to be in Government. However, I shall be content to accept the present situation, for I believe that the next three years and the next election in particular will see big changes in the government of this State. People want their Government, and will force their Governments of the future, to serve them properly—to govern with principle, honesty, fairness, accountability and integrity in a free-enterprise system.

No party, irrespective of its present numbers, can lay claim to these qualities more than the Liberal Party. From such an already well-founded base, and provided it stays with these principles, I believe that the Liberal Party will achieve greatly in the coming years as the public recognises the need for and insists on conformity with these qualities by future Governments.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, and all honourable members, who have paid me the courtesy of listening to my maiden speech.

Mr ARDILL (Salisbury) (4.17 p.m.): Firstly, may I congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your achievement of the high honour of occupying the Speaker's chair. It gives me great personal pleasure to see you there. I believe that you follow two distinguished Speakers who graced that chair in recent years after a very long drought. I believe that you will maintain the dignity of that office which has its roots in antiquity. The two previous Speakers certainly did a good job. The Speaker who preceded you was quite a surprise to me. After being the worst Minister for Education in living memory, he became probably the best Speaker in living memory. I believe, Mr Speaker, that you have already eclipsed him and I congratulate you.

The debate on the motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply comes at the beginning of a new era in Queensland's history. It heralds an era of optimism and hard work, and the speeches made by new members reflect that optimism and challenge. I congratulate the new members on this side of the House for the quality of their speeches, for their pride in being part of a new Labor Government and for their expressed determination to ensure that Queensland will be a better State when they leave this House than it is as they commence their careers in this historic Chamber.

The view from this side of the Chamber is much better than it was from the left side of the Speaker's chair, and the obvious quality of our Ministers is in stark contrast to that of those whom they have replaced. All is not easy on this side, however, as the people of Queensland are determined that change must occur rapidly after putting up with the shocking conditions of the last 20 years.

In fact, many people refuse to believe that I have no magic wand to cure all of the ills of society that they have suffered for so long. They expect policemen to be on hand immediately to put down the lawlessness that has infected suburban life for the past decade. They want an end to assaults, threats, break and enters, car-stealings and all of the violence that has erupted in and disrupted our suburban life since the police hierarchy embarked on a life of crime.

Members of the public are demanding that schoolteachers be provided instantly to reduce class sizes and that we replace the expert and remedial teachers who were transferred over the past decade. They want additional funds made available to provide standard equipment and paper, and even petrol for mowers, which the National Party denied them.

They want rental housing and community facilities, such as home help, which the Nationals took from them in recent times. They are demanding that the public sector be upgraded to a level which a civilised community expects. The fact that we have not yet brought down a Budget has to be explained as gently as possible.

What an incredible statement we heard from the former Minister and member for Springwood when he said that corruption did not affect the people. It destroyed the fabric of service in this State, and all of the things I have mentioned were taken away from the public because of the mismanagement of the National Party. After all, if a Government gives Citra a contract for \$5.5m above the estimate, Transfield a similar contract for \$5.5m above the estimate, hands out \$11m here and \$11 there to the paper-bag merchants, builds a road to nowhere on the way to Apis Creek, provides highway access to private commercial sites and generally hands contracts to anyone except the lowest tenderer, the money has to come from somewhere. And it came from reductions in community facilities.

Once the members of the public found out why they had suffered the worst services in Australia and saw why the restrictive regime had to keep a tight lid on public dissent, nothing could stop the pot from boiling over—not even the rise of honest Mike Ahern. But the silliest trick was replacing him. That shored up support in the pocket boroughs, which the Government had anyway, but it certainly deprived the Liberals of all of those National Party preferences in the urban areas.

This time last year, I prepared a speech in which I discussed the prospects of the parties in the election which was then just over the horizon. I said—

"The State election later this year which ostensibly is to elect a new member in 89 State electorates is, in fact, a campaign about the representation in only 34 seats. Of the State's 89 seats, because of the gerrymandered boundaries, 55 seats are entirely predictable, and most are rock solid for the present parties holding those seats. Of those 55 rock-solid seats, 26 are held by the National Party, 26 by the Labor Party and only 3 by the Liberals. From this it can be seen that the gerrymander works most heavily against the Liberals, who can never amount to a force in government until they have the courage to eliminate the present undemocratic electoral system. The National Party, in its 26 safe seats, has 23 in which no successful challenge can be mounted because of various situations: the farming population who vote no other way no matter what the circumstances are; or southern migration of conservative voters who believe that the National Party reflects their attitudes and aspirations (which is questionable). Many of these National Party seats are in fact pocket boroughs with very small populations which only have approximately one-third of many urban populations.

Of the 34 remaining seats which can change their representation, 23 are National, 7 are Liberal and 4 are Labor."

Of course, these figures were taken before the Merthyr by-election. I continued—

"Breaking this down further, 19 National Party and 2 Liberal could easily change, 20 of them to Labor and one to Liberal.

The remaining 13 seats, possible but not probable changes, are 4 each National and Labor, and 5 Liberal."

In fact, what happened was that out of the 23 National Party seats that were in danger, 17 seats went to the Labor Party and six to the Liberal Party. Seven Liberal Party seats were won by the Labor Party and four Labor Party seats which were in doubt remained with the Labor Party. The predictions were 100 per cent correct.

During the election campaign, a Liberal alderman asked me how many seats we expected to win. I told him that the Labor Party would win anything up to 56 seats and he laughed. However, the debacle was predictable. The gerrymander was beaten, and it was beaten by the outrage of the people, particularly those in Brisbane. It was a repeat of 1973 when the Liberal and National Parties tried to get rid of Clem Jones. We have witnessed the end of the National Party, brought about by its own excesses and arrogance.

It should never be forgotten that this only came to light because of the bravery—even heroism—of people such as Kev Hooper, Phil Dickie and a number of policemen. In addition, it would not have happened but for the honesty and altruism of Whitrod and others like him, and the sheer hard work of many more people, including our leader and Premier, Wayne Goss. In case cynicism overshadows these people and their acts, I believe that we should occasionally be reminded that there are always brave, honest and hard-working people in the community and in this very House. Members opposite cannot be allowed to think that the matter is dead and buried.

The system that allowed corruption to flourish was the National Party's perception of invincibility, which was engendered by the gerrymander. Anyone who says that there is no gerrymander in Queensland is either incompetent or a liar. If the total number of voters in Queensland is divided by the number of seats—that is 89—the quota for each seat would be 20 000. The only National Party member who received nearly 50 per cent of that quota in primary votes—and I was going to say "in this House", but he is no longer in this House—was Mike Ahern in Landsborough. In fact, only seven members of the National Party in this Parliament achieved even one-third of a quota. All members—except four of the present Labor Party members and 11 of its defeated candidates—did better than that. In fact, the top 60 vote-getters were all Labor Party candidates except Angus Innes, who came in thirtieth; Mike Ahern, who was thirty-fifth; Brian Littleproud, who was fifty-fifth; and Tony FitzGerald, who was fifty-seventh. The real victims of the gerrymander—other than the people of Queensland, of course—are the members of the Liberal Party. Any fair redistribution must mean the elimination of National Party pocket boroughs and their replacement with additional provincial city seats and four extra seats in the fast-growing Gold Coast/Sunshine Coast/Moreton area.

Just as importantly, the ridiculously gerrymandered seats of Gregory and Cook—whose classical gerrymandered shapes make them virtually impossible to service—should be reshaped to create lines of communication and community interest, which are totally lacking at the present time. There is no way that justification can be established for having Quilpie in the Gregory electorate, which is based on Longreach, when it is a short journey from Charleville, which is the headquarters of the Warrego electorate. At the same time, Blackall and Tambo, which are on the same national highway as Longreach and a few hours drive from that centre, are also in the seat of Warrego. The gerrymander is a classic one. Better public transport and an office base in approximately three towns, together with air charter for the member, would provide an infinitely better service to the public at much less cost than having the present National Party members representing 8 000 voters each and still being unavailable to those voters.

In a State the size of Queensland, with its uniquely decentralised population, public transport is of the utmost importance to the ordinary people and to the economy of the State. The Goss Government has recognised this by placing all forms and segments of transport—as envisaged in Labor's State policy—under one senior Minister, who also has responsibilities in other areas of economic planning. In contrast, the National and coalition Governments always treated transport as an unimportant area and, between the regimes of Gordon Chalk and Don Lane, gave it a low priority under incompetent or low-key Ministers. Neither of those two Ministers fit into that category, but the unlamented Don Lane virtually destroyed the Railway Department by totally politicising it from the top management down to the labourers at Mayne Junction. He destroyed morale and decimated services whilst setting up an outrageously top-heavy structure that has made all except bulk traffic too expensive to carry. Coal traffic has not only made the department rich, but also has hidden the true inefficiency of the operation. It has been severely overcapitalised in some areas, but has been outrageously undercapitalised in areas which would have made it competitive. This must be reversed if railway staff are to be gainfully employed, morale is to be restored and the public provided with the kind of public transport to which it is entitled.

Railway transport is the only means of providing safe and satisfactory overnight passenger services and this is an essential aspect of State Government activities because of Queensland's vast distances. New sleeping cars are needed for the Queenslander,

which will allow the older cars to provide other services. In the early 1950s Queensland led the way, being the first State to provide luxury air-conditioned sleeping cars. They were designed and built at Comeng in the Salisbury electorate, which, unfortunately is now only a memory due to lack of orders from an unsympathetic National Party Government. The original design of the Sunlander cars was used overseas and also provided a much-needed export industry in rolling stock. South Africa, India and other countries purchased that rolling stock, but now it has all gone.

At present, the fragmented public transport system is hopelessly unable to provide an adequate service. Timetables are confusing or non-existent, and most towns and villages are either unserved or so poorly serviced that public transport is treated by prospective users as the last resort. Even Queensland's most important train, the Sunlander, runs on three days a week only while the main western lines have only a biweekly service, leaving the trains idle for nearly half of each week. Air services away from the coast are even worse, as the member for Mount Isa would agree.

Bus services are fragmented and unsatisfactory. Deregulation has ensured that any company which tries to provide a good, safe service, with reasonable conditions for its drivers, will go broke. The last comprehensive public transport timetable for Queensland was issued in June 1986. Now nothing in it is correct. Individual train service timetables are often out of print and, with the exception of the seven air-conditioned trains and Kuranda, are never advertised. Bus timetables are useful only to those who are familiar with their proposed journey, if they are available at all.

The National Party system ensured that private transport was essential for those who could afford it. Isolation was compulsory for those who were unable to afford private transport and our roads were wrecked by the unnecessary rampaging of huge road trains. Underfunding of railways is not limited to Queensland; all State systems except Victoria's suffer from the same blight. What is not widely known is that railways have to pay the same fuel tax as do road-users, but receive virtually nothing back towards the provision of their iron road. Queensland is worse off than the other States because it receives nothing from the \$10m allocation for upgrading of interstate track. Queensland has only 100 kilometres of interstate track and 10 000 kilometres of intrastate track. This must change.

The Federal Government must accept its responsibility for upgrading track between Brisbane and Gladstone, and Mackay and Townsville, as well as the upgrading of track in other States. In the interests of Australia's economy, it is just as important as industry restructuring and the restructuring of industrial relations. It is far more important than upgrading the Pacific Highway in New South Wales—which is a duplication of the New England Highway, anyway—or building additional runways at Sydney and Brisbane airports. In the future, I look forward to an integrated transport service, with the long haul provided by rail and with coordinated bus services operating along every viable route and between every sizeable town in Queensland. Efficient management of our integrated transport department will facilitate a public transport industry in which the public can have confidence and in which the staff will have pride in their service.

Before leaving the subject of public transport, I must deplore, in the strongest terms, the transfer of railway stations away from town and city centres. This trend must be reversed. Freight services should be moved from city centres. Passenger services must be restored to them.

Consumer protection is an area which, in contrast to public transport, was heavily advertised; however, in spite of that, it has been similarly ineffective. There are more rip-off merchants to the square kilometre in Queensland than in all of the snake-oil territories of the United States. Misleading advertising and hyped-up selling techniques involving sheer dishonesty are becoming more widespread as Australia becomes more internationalised. This is a very serious matter and it will get worse. If the public is to be protected, much more detailed legislation will have to be considered and implemented.

As more and more people are displaced from their normal avenue of employment, they will have to look at other ways of earning a living. Already many are being trapped into commission-selling schemes which, in practice, provide them with no income at all until a victim can be found. With high-pressure motivation courses behind them, their savings dwindling, no money coming in, dependants to provide for, and no prospects of an income, it is understandable that these people feel forced to take part in a lying propaganda scheme. I feel sorry for them. I have no sympathy for those at the top of the pyramid, and I want to see the new Government provide ways of stripping these vicious animals of their funds and possessions. Already Russell Island is in the news again. There are many more scams and, with improved technology, they will become more common and more ruthlessly efficient.

Technology has its upside and downside, but it cannot be ignored. The Education Department has embraced it in philosophy, if not in funding considerations. There are many progressive people in the Education Department who have done magnificent work in overcoming the unbelievably disgraceful underfunding of education in Queensland. The underfunding was not solely the preserve of the Bjelke-Petersen years, of course, but its most startling manifestation was during those years. We cannot take the funding of these years as a yardstick for the future. That platform has to be ignored. Funds that are adequate for the task must be provided if we are not to be overrun or ignored in the next decade.

While businesspeople universally tell me that we must get back to basics, we must also continue to pioneer and innovate and also provide a grounding in simple tables and calculations and alphabet sounds.

Mr Littleproud: Queensland leads Australia in the use of computers.

Mr ARDILL: Teachers today must be capable of gaining and holding a student's interest and in teaching the relevance of a subject. Authority is no longer a substitute for skill. In saying that, I intend no criticism of teachers. Any good that can be found in the education system today is there because of the teachers and not because of the National Party and its past attitudes to funding.

Local schools in the Salisbury electorate serve as community centres and the two high schools provide the highest degree of service to their communities. Both Salisbury and Runcorn are extremely good schools. It is surprising that some parents continue to by-pass these schools and send their children to private schools. However, we now have an urgent need to provide a new high school for Sunnybank Hills on the 14 hectares purchased for the purpose some years ago—and, I might mention, at my instigation. Many of the primary schools in my area are bursting at the seams, indicating clearly that a start should be made on the new high school in the immediate future.

Technology is also an aid used in traffic control and road safety—or at least it should be. I applaud the decision to provide cameras at traffic lights to dissuade the many dangerous lunatics who insist on ignoring red lights. In recent weeks, I gained personal knowledge of that—to my cost. Unfortunately, over the last 15 years, the Queensland traffic authorities have shown an appalling reluctance to avail themselves of the latest technology in traffic control. For 15 years it has been possible to abolish the stop/go system of traffic lights, which encourages red-light running and speeding on major roads, by installing the Bliss system. This system was devised by a technology genius, Ken Pearce, of Brisbane in association with the Eagle Signal Co.

The system allows a two-way flow of traffic to keep moving in all but the heaviest traffic conditions. Even then, a one-way flow is obtained with occasional breaks in the reverse flow. Imagine the frustration that eliminates from the 85 per cent of prudent drivers, who can continue at a steady pace! Imagine the petrol it saves, the fumes it eliminates, and the wear and tear reduction on our cars! We exported the system to America and still use stop/go, which frustrates drivers and causes an untold number of accidents. Why do Australians export all their good ideas, their innovation and

inventiveness, and allow others to benefit? There is no good reason why we cannot reduce frustration and accidents by introducing the best technology.

During this debate, the honourable member for Lockyer, who was not a member of the Public Works Committee, made derogatory remarks about the minority report on Wolffdene dam. He probably aimed his shafts at the deputy chairperson, Mr Palaszczuk, who was in the Chamber at the time, hoping to take a rise out of him. Mr Palaszczuk knew that the report was properly researched and correct. The member for Lockyer failed to check his facts. Wolffdene was a Yes, *Minister* project, providing work for bureaucrats and consultants, and would have provided a huge bonus for the snake-oil salesmen of the Albert white-shoe brigade in a gift of free water from the people of Brisbane and Ipswich. I refer members to page 5 of the minority report, which went into much more detail than the majority report and examined all the facts available.

In discussing population growth, the member for Lockyer ignored the fact that the major growth is, and will be, in areas outside the Brisbane and Area Water Board, in the supply areas of the Hinze Dam and the Sunshine Coast. The latest document from Skinner at the Queensland University confirms that that is still the case. The figures reveal a 7.72 per cent increase in Moreton and a 2.59 per cent increase in Brisbane, which is projected to continue. The people who supported Wolffdene dam failed to recognise the difference between the supply area of Mount Crosby and the supply area of Moreton, where the major increase in population has been and is expected to be. Mount Crosby can adequately supply the Brisbane statistical division and its projected growth. It is up to the white-shoe brigade to provide and pay for its own water, just as Brisbane and the two coast communities do. Otherwise, there will be lopsided, cheap development in Albert, at the expense of the environment, with all the unearned profits flowing to the speculators. It is also absolutely essential that the 30 per cent of Brisbane water which flows into the Brisbane River via sewer outlets at the mouth of the river is recycled for use in the nearby industrial areas which, incidentally, also use 30 per cent of the Brisbane water supply from Mount Crosby.

Conservation is the name of the game. One of the most important changes brought about by the Goss Government has been the setting up of the Department of Environment and Heritage under the Honourable Pat Comben. No-one could be more suited to the position than Mr Comben. I am sure that most Queenslanders are ecstatic that he is in charge of that task, which can have such a major impact on the quality of life.

Despite the shocking neglect of services in Queensland under the Bjelke-Petersen dictatorship, thanks to the work of the dedicated activists in our community, life has still gone on. I am proud to be associated with so many selfless people who have contributed to life in the Salisbury electorate and in the State of Queensland.

While the self-important people congratulate themselves on their personal success and talk about being self-made men, the community manages to survive, and even improve, despite them and not because of them. All the while, the activists work on school committees, progress associations, family support schemes, mutual support groups, junior sporting bodies, youth groups and the multiplicity of local groups which keep our communities working.

During this term of the excellent Ministers of the Goss Government, many areas of government will be vastly improved. I am looking forward with enthusiasm to this new, exciting era in Queensland's history.

Mr PREST (Port Curtis) (4.43 p.m.): I am pleased to pledge my support to Her Majesty the Queen. I congratulate the Governor on his Opening Speech to this Parliament. In the years that I have been in Parliament, this year's address was the most enjoyable that I have heard from a Governor of this State.

Mr Lingard: Two speeches in the one day.

Mr PREST: I will be dealing with the honourable member for Fassifern shortly.

I congratulate the new members who have entered this Chamber. I advise them that they have been elected by the public to work in the interests of the public and not in their own interests. Honourable members have witnessed what occurred to the National Party Government on 2 December last year. The people of Queensland were not prepared to accept the conduct of the most corrupt and dishonest Government ever in Queensland. History will show—criminal history—that Ministers of the Crown were not working in the interests of the public but in their own interests by putting their fingers in the public purse. In the near future, they will be paying for their misdemeanours. Because of the behaviour of the previous National Party Government over a long period, the National Party in Queensland is at an all-time low.

I congratulate the Premier, Mr Goss, and his Ministers for the work that they have already undertaken to correct the wrongs that have been done and the injustices that the public have had to put up with for a long period in this State. People can be assured that the present Ministers will be working to ensure that justice is brought to bear. The people of Queensland will be able to go about in a democratic way, not afraid of being seen to have an opinion and not afraid of being arrested and thrown into a paddy-wagon and brought before the courts, as was the case under the previous Government.

I want to draw to the attention of the House that on 29 March the member for Fassifern, Mr Lingard, who is present in the Chamber, endeavoured to hoodwink or mislead the House into thinking that the Government is giving the Opposition a very hard time. I want to show that what has happened in this House under this Government is no different from anything that happened under the previous Government. In fact, the present Opposition is getting a far better go than the Labor Party ever got when it was in Opposition.

Mr Lingard endeavoured to say that there were 16 sitting days and that only 21 people had asked questions. That may have been 21 different people. It is the Opposition's own fault if it chooses to have the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the other front bench members of the Opposition asking questions. What has really happened? Mr Lingard's 16 days was not 16 single days; it was 16 double days. Never in the history of Queensland Parliament have there ever been two question-times in any 24-hour period. Mr Lingard endeavoured to mislead the House. There was less than one hour of question-time because of the Address in Reply debate—the allotted days—and because of the Matters of Public Interest debate on Tuesdays.

Hansard will show that members of the National/Liberal Party Opposition have had a very fair go in relation to question-time and the speaking-time allotted to them. It is unfortunate that during his speech on the Address in Reply, Mr Lingard endeavoured to link you, Mr Speaker, with an unfair process of this House because you allowed a member of the Liberal Party to ask a question. I think that for Mr Lingard—who is himself a former Speaker—to cast a reflection on the Chair, as he did against you, Mr Speaker, is reprehensible. He should have been called to order at that point and asked to withdraw that very unfair remark.

Nevertheless, members of the Government were not surprised by Mr Lingard's attempt to hoodwink the public because right throughout his career, right throughout his life-time, he has never been known for his honesty. What I am really concerned about is that this gentleman endeavoured to mislead the House in a very bad way.

I believe that this Labor Government has a very hard row to hoe. Many things should have been done in this State years ago but the Government never had the interests of the people at heart or the courage to do its duty. It was too interested in feathering its own nest and in using public funds for its own ends.

Another matter of concern to me is the shortage of police in this State. Earlier today I spoke about the number of break-ins on the Gold Coast. On 27 August 1985 I spoke in this House about this matter. I said—

"I refer to the big headline in today's *Daily Sun*, 'Burglary Boom Bite on Way'. The article reads—

'Insurance companies will vet prospective customers' security measures and raise policy excesses or premiums to deal with one of the State's boom industries—burglary.' "

At that time Queensland had a Government that believed that, when it came to addressing burglary and theft, it was virtually a case of dealing with blood brothers. It is a known fact that that Government just ignored the plight of those people. At that time I warned the public of Queensland that when they bought a house they should make certain that they had the locks changed because they could not know just how many keys were in the hands of real estate agents and so on. People could not be sure just who was going to walk into their house at any given time. An agent could come through the house with a prospective buyer when the owners were sitting in the lounge room. There are many people out there who, like members of the National Party, are thieves——

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I rise to a point of order. The statement by the honourable member for Port Curtis was completely abusive. I find it reprehensible and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr PREST: I withdraw and say, "members of the National Party who are thieves".

There are many members of the National Party—Ministers—who are before the courts because of theft——

Mr BORBIDGE: I rise to a point of order. Every time the honourable member is on his feet members of the Opposition are subjected to this sort of gutter language. My point of order is that I take offence at the comment that my colleagues and I are thieves. I find it offensive and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order because the comment was not addressed to the member personally. However, I warn the member for Port Curtis that judicial processes are in train, and I think that he should desist from speaking about those matters.

Mr PREST: I do so, Mr Speaker.

Mr Lingard: You won't get to South Africa tomorrow. Those backbenchers won't support you.

Mr PREST: I do not know what the Afghan from Fassifern is talking about in relation to my going to South Africa. He does not know much about what he is talking about.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr PREST: Fancy having one's child attend a school at which he was the principal. It is no wonder that he was known as "Arson".

During the weekend prior to 17 April 1990, thieves broke into 45 Gold Coast homes. The district police superintendent said that many of those homes were not locked securely. He said also that break-ins on the Gold Coast were increasing. In the six months to 31 December 1988, 1 149 break and enters occurred on the Gold Coast. In the same period in the following year, 1 510 homes were broken into. Police have urged the public to become more involved in looking after their property.

Something must be done about the time that police spend on investigating break and enter offences. Thousands of units and homes on the Gold Coast are available for rental and tenants can change on a weekly or monthly basis. A person who is renting one of those premises can have a key cut for it at any time. Although that person might hand back the key, he could still have a number of duplicate keys.

People renting those premises believe that their goods are secure if the doors are locked, but that is not so. Many other people in the community could have keys to those places. When people are at home they can put a chain across the door or use a barrel bolt to secure it. However, once they leave a premises and lock the door, there is no doubt that it can be subject to burglary. A person should not assume that his goods are safely under lock and key simply because he has secured his premises.

The Government must consider doing something about this very serious situation. I refer not only to keys for houses and units but also to keys for rented motor vehicles. At any time a person can have a key cut for a motor vehicle.

Mr FitzGerald: You have already referred to this in a previous speech today.

Mr PREST: There is no doubt that it is difficult to get the message through to the honourable member.

Mr FitzGerald: You raised this in MPI today.

Mr PREST: That is true. However, at that time I had only one minute in which to speak. I now have 27 minutes remaining, and I trust that Mr Fitzgerald will allow me to continue.

I thank the people of Port Curtis who elected me to this Chamber with an increased majority. I thank also my campaign director, Mr Leo Zussino, for his assistance, and the many Labor Party supporters who not only voted for me but worked for me throughout the election day. Those people, who have supported me for a long period, know that in supporting me they have had an ear to Government. They have had a wonderful representative.

I am concerned about the electoral boundaries that will be determined in the near future by the EARC. No doubt my replacement will contest the seat of Port Curtis on boundaries different from those on which I contested it. I hope that the new boundaries will be fairer and will include Tannum Sands, Boyne Island and Calliope as well as Gladstone city. Those areas have something in common with the city of Gladstone. I do work for the people there and they use my electorate office extensively. People in those centres claim that they have only a shadow member representing them; they never see her.

Mr Borbidge: All your electorate has got is a shadow.

Mr PREST: It is a good shadow.

I have a fair bit of time for Mrs McCauley. If I did not I would not be doing her work for her.

Mr FitzGerald: Stop crying.

Mr PREST: There is no way that I am crying. I am pleased to be able to provide the benefit of my knowledge and wisdom to the people of the Calliope, Tannum Sands and Boyne Island regions who have the respect for and faith in me to handle their affairs.

Mr Speaker, I congratulate you on your elevation to that position. I have been a member of this Parliament for 14 years, and there is no doubt that during that time you have brought the most dignity to the high position of Speaker, unlike the member for Fassifern who no doubt used this Chamber and this Parliament as his own political toy. Mr Speaker, I believe that you have put the parliamentary system back on the pedestal on which it belongs. I congratulate you. I look forward to your remaining in this high office for many years to come.

At 5 p.m., under Standing Order No.17—

Question—That the words proposed to be added to the Address be so added—put; and the House divided—

In division—

Mr INNES: I wish to raise a point of order. In relation to the calling of the division, was this division called by somebody now voting in favour of the motion?

Mr SPEAKER: No, it was called by a person voting "No".

DIVISION

Resolved in the negative.

Motion—That the Address in Reply be adopted—agreed to.

SUPPLY

Constitution of Committee

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (5.11 p.m.): I move—

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty."

Motion agreed to.

WAYS AND MEANS

Constitution of Committee

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (5.11 p.m.): I move—

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of Ways and Means for raising the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty."

Motion agreed to.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Presentation

Mr SPEAKER: I have to inform the House that I propose to present to His Excellency the Governor, at Government House, on Wednesday, 23 May, at 9.15 a.m., the Address in Reply to His Excellency's Opening Speech agreed to on 8 May, and I

shall be glad to be accompanied by the mover and the seconder and such other honourable members as care to be present.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—Leader of the House) (5.11 p.m.): I move—
"That the House do now adjourn."

Importation of Nickel Ore to Townsville

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (5.12 p.m.): The people of Townsville are owed a decision by this Government on whether the Greenvale nickel project will stay alive and whether the Government supports the processing of nickel ore in Townsville, a vital industry to that city.

At present a fight is going on between the Ministers in this Government and the advisers of the Federal Government over the method to be used for conveying to the treatment plant the nickel ore that is to be imported into Townsville from countries like Indonesia, New Caledonia and other countries in the Pacific region.

I totally support the people of Townsville who say that that nickel processing should be in the Townsville area. Whichever way the ore is imported there will be a slight environmental cost. However, it is extremely important that this industry continues and that this Government makes a decision. At present, it is envisaged that approximately 1 million wet tonnes per year will be imported from countries like Indonesia, New Caledonia and the Philippines, and the plan is to increase the imports to 4 million wet tonnes per year by the end of 1992.

The Yabulu nickel refinery requires this volume of ore to continue at its present employment level. I am advised that 860 people are already working at the Yabulu treatment plant and that all those workers will lose their jobs by 1992 unless one of the two proposed projects goes ahead. If neither project goes ahead, that decision will impact on the whole city of Townsville.

If the terminal is built at Halifax Bay, over the next two years 250 workers would be required for its construction. If the ore were to enter Australia through the port of Townsville, an extra 25 workers would be employed for four months at that facility.

However, this Government cannot make up its mind. Mr Goss makes statements such as, "We need more processing of our raw materials in Queensland. It is very, very important that we not only be exporters of raw materials but that we also process material." The previous Government had entered into negotiations but the stage has been reached when this Government has to make a decision. Unfortunately, it is very difficult for a new Government to make decisions because, no matter which way it turns, it will get some kick from those who believe it is making a mistake. I believe that that is the problem.

I also understand that Senator Richardson put his spoke in the wheel and said that, in the interests of the environment in the area, he was totally opposed to any bunkering taking place from a proposed pier in Halifax Bay. I can understand the sensitivity over the Great Barrier Reef marine park and I share with those people the need to ensure that, whatever method is used to convey the nickel ore from ship to shore, the environment is protected. However, a proper analysis of the proposed project needs to be undertaken to ensure that it goes ahead.

This Government has to decide whether it wants this project. The operations of the nickel treatment plant indirectly support between 1 100 and 1 500 permanent jobs in north Queensland and between 2 900 and 4 500 jobs throughout the whole of Queensland. Not only are those jobs important but also the project and the refinery must be kept going because this State has a stake in it. The Government has taken up

its option acquire further Dallhold Holdings shares in the project. I know that the matter of whether the Queensland Government had that right is presently before the courts. I understand that it had that right and it took up the option.

It must protect not only the jobs in Townsville but also the interest that the Queensland Government and the people of Queensland have in the project. I believe that it can be done provided the Government wakes up to itself, makes a decision, announces it and goes ahead with the project. I want a commitment from the Government that the scheme will go ahead at full steam. The Government has all of the facts available at its fingertips. However, all we hear from the various sectors is the argument that, for environmental reasons, the project cannot go ahead. Then we are told that the project must go ahead for the benefit of the economy of the whole area. The Government should conduct a proper survey, analyse all the material that is in front of it at present and get on with the project.

Time expired.

Death of the Honourable Justice Hartigan

Mr FOLEY (Yeronga) (4.16 p.m.): I rise to pay tribute to the passing of a great Australian—the Honourable Justice Trevor Hartigan, who died on 24 April 1990, aged 50 years. Trevor Hartigan was a good man and a fine lawyer. Our nation is the less for his going. The disadvantaged and the dispossessed have lost a zealous advocate.

Trevor Hartigan grew up in Brisbane and went to school at St Lawrence's College, South Brisbane. He was admitted to the bar in 1965 and appointed a Queen's Counsel in 1981. He served with distinction on the Committee of the Bar Association of Queensland for many years and became its president in 1987. Late in that year he was appointed a judge of the Federal Court.

At the same time, he was appointed president of the Commonwealth Administrative Appeals Tribunal. This is the largest tribunal in Australia. Each year, thousands of citizens come before the tribunal seeking review of the decisions of Commonwealth Government departments and agencies. Invalid pensioners, war veterans, supporting parents and freedom of information applicants all come before the tribunal seeking justice, appealing against Government decisions affecting them. Justice Hartigan brought to his role as president of the tribunal not only depth and subtlety in legal learning but also a profound empathy for the ordinary citizen. He was responsible for a dramatic reduction in the backlog of cases before the tribunal. His work in this regard is renowned throughout the Commonwealth.

Trevor Hartigan had a long-standing commitment to civil liberties. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, he was secretary of the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties. To be publicly identified as a civil libertarian in those days required courage. He withstood criticism, threats and a break-in of his chambers amidst a prevailing climate of ignorant prejudice against civil liberties.

He understood that freedom is one and indivisible and that the wrongful deprivation of liberty of any citizen diminishes us all. He stood fast for the rights of citizens in mental hospitals. He represented Mr Robert Andrew Somerville before the 1972 commission of inquiry which resulted in reforms to the detention and treatment of persons in the Wolston Park Psychiatric Hospital at Goodna. He was moved by the plight of unemployed youth and was, for a number of years, a committee member of the Inner City Community Youth Support Scheme.

I knew Trevor as a colleague at the bar, and had the honour of appearing as junior counsel with him in cases in the Supreme Court and the Local Government Court. His arguments were well researched and lucid. He had developed a formidable reputation in appellate work, particularly in the Court of Criminal Appeal. As a colleague at the bar, he was generous with his time, always accessible to junior counsel, like myself, who sought his guidance.

He was one of that rare breed of person who had achieved both vigour in action and a sense of philosophic calm. He had thought himself through as a Christian in the modern world. He always saw the law as a means of serving the people, and imbued this commitment in others.

He loved his wife and family profoundly. He is survived by his dear wife, Mrs Marie Hartigan, and his daughters, Kate and Fleur, to whom the deepest sympathies are extended.

In November 1986, he delivered a speech at the annual general meeting of the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties on the theme, Administrative Law Reform in Queensland. His words in that speech were prophetic. The recommendations of the Fitzgerald report delivered in July 1987 ushered in a new era of administrative law reform in Queensland along the very lines that Trevor Hartigan had foreshadowed—enhanced rights for the individual, and greater openness and accountability of Government.

With the death of Mr Justice Hartigan, we lost a man who was a champion of the rights of the ordinary citizen, and a wise judge. The legacy of his example and his work remains an inspiration to all Australians who care about justice and who care about the law and its reform.

Green Paper on Health Services

Mrs McCAULEY (Callide) (5.21 p.m.): I rise to protest in the strongest possible terms against the token gesture made by the Minister for Health, Mr McElligott, in the time that he has allowed for submissions on the *Green Paper on Organisational Arrangements for Queensland Public Sector Health Services*. The time-frame was less than six weeks for authorities that meet only once a month. Some of them did not get the Green Paper until three weeks before the submissions were due. The Banana Shire Council, of which I am a member, met on 27 April, and submissions closed on 30 April. The time-frame was just too short and, when I wrote to the Minister and asked for an extension of time, he said, "I am very sorry. I cannot do that because it does not fit the timetable." That excuse just does not wear. I feel very sorry for the people of Queensland who have been short-changed in this matter. The people in the flooded areas of Charleville, Alpha and Jericho will not have a chance to make submissions on the Green Paper. Anyway, the Green Paper has probably floated down the creek. For that reason alone, the time-frame should have been extended to at least two months. It is very unfortunate that Mr McElligott says that the time-frame does not permit him to extend the date. In his letter, he said—

"However, the issue of the Green Paper is only the first step in the consultative process."

He obviously will go nowhere if he keeps to time-frames that are unacceptable to country people and rural people who will be those most affected by this Green Paper and the proposals therein. It is most unfair, particularly at the moment when there are other reviews such as those dealing with fire boards, ambulance, land tenure, EARC and local government.

All of these reviews need time and effort from local authorities and organisations in country areas. They must be allowed to look at the proposals and say what they feel about them. The time-frame] for all of this is simply too short. A few weeks ago I received a list of 51 reviews that are currently under way. God knows what they will cost! The money is not the only consideration. The time-frame for submissions is so short that people cannot get their ideas to the Minister, which is most unfair.

A man who is very involved in the health arena wrote to me and stated—

"I am of the opinion that such a move affords an opportunity for investigation and debate on the possibility of placing some additional services under the control of the proposed Regional Boards over and above their normal function."

He is thinking that they are going to get this whether they like it or not and they may be able to make it work. They may be able to consider joining community health with hospitals boards and various other services to country people. He is not given time to do more than express the feeling that this could be a chance to do something within the health area, because the time-frame has been far too short.

Mr McElligott has a golden opportunity to have a good look at health services in Queensland. He stated that they have not been looked at for 30 years. He has the opportunity to do something concrete and very positive, but he is not taking that opportunity. It is a shame that he has decided to simply slide the Green Paper in. This Green Paper will probably rubber-stamp Labor Party policy, which is to get rid of hospitals boards. It is unfortunate that the Minister decided that a six-week time-frame was plenty of time for country people to have their say. In fact, it has left most of them without any say at all. Most of them are unaware of this Green Paper unless they are involved with a hospitals board. The Minister has stated that the hospitals boards will not be disbanded until the end of June 1991 anyway, and therefore I cannot understand the reason for this unseemly haste.

I was interested to read an article that referred to the Green Paper in a newsletter sent out by one of the health organisations. The article states—

"It is all just too rushed. Hope it doesn't fall off the rails!"

I think it is all just too rushed as well, and it is unfortunate that the Minister has not taken this golden opportunity to look at health services thoroughly, slowly and completely. Whether he wants to consider amalgamation, rationalisation or regionalisation, it is unfortunate that he has not grasped this opportunity with both hands. Queensland will be left with a health service that merely rubber-stamps Labor Party policy.

Basalt Quarry, Withcott

Dr FLYNN (Toowoomba North) (5.56 p.m.): If my experience over the last five months is generalised throughout Queensland, then I am sure that the Deputy Premier, Tom Burns, is the busiest man in Cabinet. I have already spoken in this House about the large number of representations that I receive from people who need adequate public housing. Various matters relating to local government are the second most common area of concern in my electorate. This is not surprising when one considers that local authority decisions impact so directly on the living environment of individuals. Also, unfortunately many Queenslanders think that local government elections are of little consequence and that some aspiring councillors have a narrow view of their responsibilities.

Everyone is aware of the major environmental battles that the Federal Labor Government and our Government have helped to win. This evening, I wish to highlight one of the many ongoing smaller environmental battles being fought throughout Queensland as a result of poor decision-making by local authorities, in this case by the Gatton Shire Council, whose area borders my electorate. In March 1988, the Gatton Shire Council gave permission to Kansas Properties (Brisbane) to mine and crush basalt from a 100-hectare site on the range escarpment near Withcott. It is planned to remove between 100 000 and 200 000 tonnes annually, but it was only when site preparation work began earlier this year that neighbouring residents became fully aware of the proposal. Advertisements were placed at the appropriate time, but potential objectors did not realise where the proposed site was because of the address given.

There is nothing that angers ratepayers more than when a council has a town or area plan and then proceeds to ignore it. I wish to quote from the Gatton Shire Council's development control plan relating to the range escarpment area that was in force in 1988. The implementation criteria state—

"(a) The steep and heavily vegetated escarpment is a well known and aesthetically pleasing characteristic of the area and is one of the major attractions of the western end of the shire and of Toowoomba City. Those areas of the escarpment which are

most commonly seen and in which the preservation of the natural appearance of the area is most important for aesthetic reasons have been identified on Sheet 1."

The proposed quarry is in that area. The implementation criteria continue—

"Every development project in the area of highest visual significance shown on Sheet 1 must be accompanied by a report prepared by an appropriately qualified person which details the likely visual effects of the proposed development. This report should accompany either the rezoning or the consent application, whichever is considered by Council as the most appropriate.

. . .

If Council considers that the aesthetic effect of the proposed development is significantly detrimental to the overall visual appearance of the area of highest visual significance, then this will provide sufficient grounds for the refusal of the application.

(b) The preservation of native trees is of particular significance . . . because of the de-stabilising effects the removal of vegetation could have on the unstable slopes that exist throughout the area and of the aesthetic importance of existing vegetation particularly in the area of highest visual significance."

The proposed quarry is in an area of the escarpment that is of the highest visual significance. Despite being in obvious conflict with the council's own strategic plan, permission was given for the quarry without much debate, and without the conduct of an environmental impact study, which at the time was not considered necessary. In defence of the decision, on 19 March Councillor Ruddock said in the *Chronicle* that this plan only applies to new residential approvals, presumably not to 100-hectare quarries.

The Gatton Shire Council has 12 councillors representing approximately 13 000 people. I think the residents should be disappointed that in 1988 not one councillor had the vision to see the trouble ahead and react appropriately at that time. The milk is now spilt and only the Gatton council can attempt to mop it up. I think that the council owes it to concerned residents to make every effort to do so. It should also seriously investigate the effects of rescinding the proposal.

As the 89 law-makers in Queensland for the next three years—particularly in this year when new local authority legislation is being considered—it behoves the members of this Parliament, when framing that Act, to give careful consideration to the importance of the environment.

Mr FitzGerald: What did Burns say?

Dr FLYNN: Mr Burns told the people that, basically, the council had complied with the letter of the law in relation to the provisions regulating the advertising of the quarry site, but not with the spirit of the law. In my opinion, the council has complied with the law, but not with the spirit of its own plan.

Department of Family Services Investigations

Mr CONNOR (Nerang) (5.31 p.m.): Most honourable members have a family and most put their families first, above everything else.

Mr Beattie: Tell us a couple of jokes.

Mr CONNOR: The honourable member was born dull, and he is becoming progressively worse.

If it were not for the support of their families, most honourable members would probably not be members of this Parliament. I believe that all honourable members will identify with the plight of one of my constituents who has had a major problem which has affected her family. The problem I will relate could easily have been encountered by the family of any honourable member and, indeed, by the families of all honourable

members. For the reason that the problem concerns Government interaction with families, honourable members must urgently consider it.

The Neilsen family of Carrara is an ordinary, everyday family. The parents are hard-working and care for their children. In common with most of us, until something goes wrong, they have little involvement with Government departments. A couple of months ago, something went terribly wrong. A representative of the Department of Family Services visited their home because they had been accused by a neighbour of mistreating their three children. As would most of us, they had given their children suitable chastisement but had never done anything that amounted to mistreatment or cruelty. The Neilsens were staggered by the visit. They asked themselves where they had gone wrong.

Department of Family Services officers carried out a full investigation. They spoke to many people, interacted with the family and discovered that the accusations were totally false. Members of the Neilsen family believed that a complaint had been made by a vindictive neighbour who had just wanted to cause trouble but, then again, it could have been a neighbour with good intentions. I believe that this problem could have been encountered by any one of us.

Now the Neilsen family wants to totally forget about the terrible ordeal. However, because they live under a cloud of suspicion, they cannot forget. The neighbours whisper, and the schoolteachers wonder, "Did they really mistreat their children?" Fortunately, Mrs Neilsen has decided—not just for herself, but for other families in the area—to fight back. She understands—as I am sure all honourable members would—that children must be protected from child abuse and that there must be investigations and that they must be thorough; but I believe that Mrs Neilsen is frightened by the lack of consideration shown by the department when she was cleared by the investigation. Families who have been the subject of proper investigations and have been shown to be above reproach should receive some indication that the investigation is completed. If nothing is found to be wrong when a family is investigated, nothing more is heard by the members of the family about the matter. They are left totally up in the air, not knowing whether or not there will be another knock on the door at any time. I do not believe that that is right.

If the reputation of an individual and of a family is at stake, the person concerned should know when the investigation is completed. Even if a person received a letter simply stating, "There will be no further action at this stage", that would be sufficient. I understand that, as a result of investigations, court actions often follow and that for that reason a person cannot be completely absolved. However, at least if a letter were sent, the family concerned would know that no further action would be taken, unless further complaints were made. Mrs Neilsen knows that it is unreasonable for her to be given the name of the complainant and that, if the position were otherwise, people would be too frightened to complain, but she believes that at least the complainant should be told that there is no further action contemplated by the department. In this way, if on the one hand the complaint was malicious, the complainant would know that the scheme did not work. On the other hand, if the complaint was the action of a well-meaning soul who was merely mistaken, then at least the course I have outlined would clear the family's name with that complainant.

I understand that the files on these matters are kept indefinitely, which certainly causes a problem. In relation to this type of investigation—I believe that three initiatives should be considered: inform the family that the investigation has been completed; inform the complainant that the investigation has been completed and that there is no further action contemplated; and have a definite life-span for family files that are not the subject of further complaints.

Bus Transport Service, Stafford Electorate

Mr WELFORD (Stafford) (5.36 p.m.): I wish to speak briefly about the problem of the provision of transport in the Stafford electorate. I am sure that the problems I outline are the same types of problems as are experienced in a number of electorates,

particularly throughout the Brisbane area. Stafford is not very well served by public transport. It is reliant entirely on bus transport. Because there is no rail service in that suburb, people have to travel outside the electorate if they wish to catch trains to railway stations such as Alderley or Newmarket or, for people who live at the Kedron end of the electorate, to Eagle Junction or Woolloowin. Buses are the only form of transport that actually operates throughout the electorate and, of course, bus transport is provided by the Brisbane City Council.

I am concerned about the manner in which the Brisbane City Council is managing bus transport, particularly in Stafford where bus transportation is being reduced. As recently as last Friday, the council held a seminar on sustainable development in Brisbane. During the seminar, a number of interesting issues arose. Discussions centred on population growth in the Brisbane area and the manner in which the city should develop. Suggestions were made to ensure that the city develops in an energy-efficient way and that fewer private motor vehicles are used in favour of the use of public transport. The consistent theme that emerged from the workshops at the seminar was that public transport in the City of Brisbane ought to be enhanced and that the number of single-occupant motor vehicles travelling into the city should be reduced.

But what do we see in terms of the policies of the Brisbane City Council? I am glad that the seminar was held. The Lord Mayor attended and would have had it drawn to her attention, had it not already been drawn to her attention—I hope that by now she will have got the message—that Brisbane needs a far more comprehensive system of bus transport in the city than exists currently. Instead of the council's cutting back on bus transport and bus routes, as is occurring in the Stafford electorate and other parts of Brisbane, bus transport routes ought to be expanded and a more comprehensive network of bus transport provided so that people can use buses to get to train stations and other places.

At the moment, at a time when more and more business is being encouraged to come into the city centre and more and more people are being encouraged to work in the city, Brisbane City Council bus transport services are being decreased. Transport access to the city centre of Brisbane is amongst the worst of any capital city in Australia. Recently, just prior to the election, the 504 bus route was withdrawn from the main pick-up points in the Stafford area, namely those around Wilgarning Street. The people in Wilgarning Street and the surrounding area will bear me out, because they were the people—many of them elderly and many who moved into that area for the precise reason that a Cityxpress ran through there—who had that bus taken away from them.

Where was the council? It was nowhere to be seen. It did not want to consult. A public meeting was called and 400 people came out to complain about the reduction in bus services in Stafford. As well, route 96, which runs through the Kedron area, has been cut back. Those people now get one bus every two hours. What an appalling reduction in service from a council that proclaims itself as one that wants people not to drive their cars into the city!

Occasionally, we hear members of the Opposition quibbling about the number of committees that are being set up by the State Government. However, one thing that the Government is doing that the Brisbane City Council continually fails to do is to consult the people who are affected by its policies and arrange for community consultation so that people who are affected by Government policy have an opportunity to have some input. That is not occurring in the Brisbane City Council. Without that consultation, services are being reduced accordingly.

I congratulate the Minister for Transport, Mr Hamill, on setting up a South East Queensland Transport Study. I hope that the results of that study will show that there needs to be a better coordination of bus transport in Brisbane City and more coordination between bus and rail transport so that people whom the Brisbane City Council is neglecting will be able to travel to the city or to other places where they work with far less inconvenience than they are suffering at the moment. We certainly need a much better coordinated service and a service that ensures that the elderly people who live in the inner city

and near inner city areas do not have to walk up hills to get to buses, which is what the council is forcing them to do at the moment.

Time expired.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 5.42 p.m.

TUESDAY, 8 MAY 1990

At 7.30 p.m.,

Mr SPEAKER (Hon. J. Fouras, Ashgrove) took the chair.

VACANCY IN SENATE OF COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
Nomination of William George O'Chee, vice John Owen Stone

Mr SPEAKER: Order! This meeting is resuming pursuant to the adjournment motion of 20 March last. There being a quorum present, the meeting is now constituted. I remind honourable members that the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly apply to this meeting. I now call for nominations. I would again point out that every nomination must be accompanied by a declaration by the nominee of qualification and consent to be nominated and to act if elected.

Mr COOPER (Roma—Leader of the Opposition) (7.31 p.m.): I nominate Mr William George O'Chee, businessman, of 30 Ironbark Street, Chapel Hill, Queensland, for election to hold the place in the Senate rendered vacant through the resignation of Senator John Owen Stone, and I produce William O'Chee's declaration of qualification and consent.

Whereupon the honourable member produced Mr O'Chee's declaration of qualification and consent.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Are there any further nominations? As there are no further nominations, I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Election of William George O'Chee

Mr COOPER (Roma—Leader of the Opposition) (7.32 p.m.): I move—

"That William George O'Chee be elected to hold the place in the Senate of the Parliament of the Commonwealth rendered vacant through the resignation of John Owen Stone."

The nomination of this brilliant young man is a red letter day for the Queensland National Party and, I believe more widely, a very good sign of things to come in Australian politics. He was very democratically elected as our nominee by the central council of the party, which met at Gympie on 28 April, in the manner that I always maintained would be our course throughout this sometimes controversial process of dealing with the issue of a replacement to fill John Stone's casual vacancy. He was chosen from a fine field of candidates, which eventually numbered 20, and he won the confidence of central councillors largely by his performance on the day, and through the extraordinary qualities that he brought before them.

Bill O'Chee is a brilliant young man; he is a brilliant young conservative. He is an honours law graduate from Oxford University and the Australian debating champion, ranked fourth in the world at the world debating championships in 1987, and Queensland public speaking champion in 1981. He has worked as a corporate finance lawyer in an investment bank, and his specialty within the law is insolvency—a handy skill to be taking to Canberra, where insolvency confronts the nation.

Bill O'Chee has been a member of the National Party since 1981, and during his period in Europe he was a member of the Conservative Party of the United Kingdom. He is secretary of the Nationals' Industry, Commerce and Economics Committee. He is a member of the Australia-Britain Society, and he is fluent in German. He is just the

sort of young man we need in the National Party because he is just the sort of young man we need in this country to help in the process of restoring a greater degree of credibility to politics and to politicians.

It is no secret that there is a very high level of disenchantment, affecting all parties, in Australia today with the political process. Politicians are generally held in very low esteem. Up to a point, that has always been the case. A bit of skepticism is obviously a healthy thing, but it has begun to get out of hand in this country, and we all share the responsibility for doing something about it. The degree of skepticism is now too great, and it was as evident at the Federal election in March, where it affected all major political parties, as it was in December when the National Party in Queensland felt the brunt.

Young men like Bill O'Chee have the potential to help change that view and rebuild the reputation of politics and politicians. He is young; he is intelligent and brilliantly educated; he is fresh; he is committed; and he is enthusiastic. His ethnic background is another aspect that makes him special. There have been many, many Senators in the past with some Irish in their background, but none whom I am aware of with a Chinese element—

Government members: Hear, hear!

Mr COOPER: There are a few in this place, too.

As I was saying, there are none whom I am aware of with a Chinese element, despite the importance and the scope of the Chinese involvement in this country over most of our existence, and I very much doubt that the combination has occurred before in any other Australian Parliament.

Bill is a single-handed, double-barrelled testimony to the great multicultural society that is being built in this country, and I think that his background will bring to the Senate a reflection of the great contributions to, and deep involvement in, Australia by people from Ireland, as well as people from China. I think that that is a very important aspect of his nomination.

Another is that, through Bill, I think the National Party has sent a very special and a very clear message to the people of Queensland and the country about its own direction. There is no doubt that Bill went before central councillors of the party at Gympie as an outsider for the nomination in a field composed of several experienced politicians and a host of other candidates in many cases better known in party circles. They were a good reflection of the underlying strength in the party. The fact that he came through that field is not only a great personal endorsement but also an endorsement of the willingness of the grassroots level of the party to meet the challenge of rebuilding the National Party.

Any of the candidates presented at Gympie would have been good Senators, but the investment in the future represented by the nomination of Bill O'Chee is a very clear indication that the National Party is determined to present to Queenslanders a fresh approach. As I said earlier, I think that the challenge of regaining faith with the people is a task confronting all political parties, not the National Party alone.

It is with great pride and certainly with the very best wishes of the National Party and, I sincerely hope, the best wishes of this Parliament that I commend Bill O'Chee to the meeting as the National Party's nominee to fill the casual Senate vacancy.

Hon. W. K. GOSS (Logan—Premier, Minister for Economic and Trade Development and Minister for the Arts) (7.37 p.m.): There has been some controversy, of course, leading to tonight's proceedings. However, at all times the position of my Government has been clear, and tonight we honour our commitment to leave no "stone" unturned in achieving the proper constitutional result. It is refreshing to see this matter being resolved in the proper fashion, because it has been a long time since such has been the case. In previous instances quite a different approach was adopted by members opposite.

If Mr O'Chee is successful in these proceedings—and I expect that he will be—he will go with the good wishes and congratulations of all members of Parliament. I am sure that it has certainly been a remarkable and, perhaps for some people in the National Party, a slightly surprising elevation. Nevertheless, Mr O'Chee is there according to the legitimate processes of the National Party and he is entitled to be there by those processes. Accordingly, he is entitled to go forward from this Parliament.

I am told that Mr O'Chee has advised the National Party and, through the National Party, this Parliament that he has a range of credentials. He was born in Brisbane and is some 24 years of age. He is of Irish and Chinese descent. I am reminded of comments by a well-known member of the Chinese community at the local Irish Club who also describes himself as half Chinese and half Irish. He said that one half wants to drink and the other half wants to argue about the price. It is an interesting combination. If nothing else, it certainly reflects the increasingly multicultural nature of this society. I believe that Australia is the richer for that, and we welcome that.

I understand that, in respect of this nomination, amongst the other credentials of which Mr O'Chee has advised the National Party and of which the people of this State and this Parliament are advised are that he was educated at the Southport School and Brisbane State High School; that he graduated in law with honours from Oxford University; that he is a self-employed businessman running his own brokerage business trading in Latin American debt. Mr O'Chee has previously worked as a corporate finance lawyer in an investment bank and is an insolvency law expert. In addition, Mr O'Chee is fluent in German. He has been a member of the Toowong Young Nationals for some nine years. He is an Australian Debating Federation champion. I understand that he represented his country in debating and was ranked fourth in the world debating championships. As well, he was ranked thirty-first in the world in bobsledding and represented his country in the last world bobsledding championships.

Parliament is entitled to accept those credentials as advised and to accept them as worthy of qualifying Mr O'Chee for the position that he seeks. My Government will not stand in the way of the National Party's right to fill this vacancy.

Tonight, honourable members are witnessing an end to the practice of dummy and fraudulent candidates such as Mr Field—an end to the dishonest and improper practice of requiring a panel of candidates, as has occurred during my time in this Parliament—and that at last, under this Government, the proper propriety and principles of parliamentary and constitutional convention have at last been restored.

Mr INNES (Sherwood—Leader of the Liberal Party) (7.41 p.m.): The Liberal Party will accept the nomination of the National Party to send a replacement senator to join the other two senators of the National Party and the four senators of the Liberal Party. That means that this State is the only State in Australia that provides the majority of its senators from the non-Labor parties.

Mr Gibbs: You have got to have something to roll your drum about.

Mr INNES: By the time that the honourable member has finished a short period of administration, there will be a lot more.

Mr Gibbs interjected.

Mr INNES: The Honourable Minister for the Crest Hotel is wont to make interjections.

The reality is that the Senate is important, particularly to States such as Queensland—the bush States, if one likes—and any person who fulfils the position of senator bears a very important responsibility.

I note the use of the word "conservative" by the honourable the Leader of the Opposition. It is an interesting word that is intruding into political comment or debate in this State with some significant or even organised regularity. True conservatives

support the rules and the lessons of the past. True conservatives support the institutions of Government and the time-honoured principles and lessons that have been derived.

Much of our constitutional system depends upon the unwritten rules. The extent to which those unwritten rules apply—the conventions by which this House is so much governed—is a real mark of true conservatism. It is not just an emotional attitude depending on how far to the right one thinks one is. The word has a technical content that requires observation.

In the past I have said that I do not believe that it is consistent with true conservatism to act as the National Party has acted in this matter. I have seen some fairly insufficient explanations of the exercise. The rules of this Parliament dictated or determined the time at which vacancies will be filled by this Parliament. They do so for a very good reason. A limitation on time exists because it is very important that vacancies be filled. It can be crucially important, depending on what might be transpiring in the Senate. I think that on one occasion I heard a prominent spokesman from the Opposition say that it does not matter because the senator does not take his seat until 1 July. That did not really suggest a great deal of inquiry and study of the issue by that honourable member.

Firstly, as I understand it, Mr O'Chee will have missed the first sittings of Parliament today, which he was entitled to attend. It was not one of those vacancies to be filled on 1 July. Secondly, I believe that it provided a very poor precedent because, when the Liberal Party had precisely the same factual background, it was obliged to nominate three candidates. The now Mrs Kathy Martin Sullivan, MHR, was a senator. She left the Upper House and was preselected by the Liberal Party to contest the House of Representatives. Under the Standing Orders, the Government of the day required the Liberal Party to nominate its replacement before the Federal election. It did that without reservation. In fact, it was required to put forward three nominations from whom a senator would be chosen.

In this instance, Senator Stone's attempted transition was well known for months. Standing Orders could have been complied with. Let us just think through the consequences of not complying with the Standing Orders. The Standing Orders state that the meeting must be held within a specified time. Once that specified time has passed and the sittings has been adjourned, there is no time limit.

If we had a wrong-headed Premier or a Premier who was perhaps not in his first term of Government, and if something crucial was to be debated in the Senate, there would be absolutely no control over the timing of the resumed sitting; it would be a matter entirely for the Government and the Premier of this State to determine when that resumed sitting of the Parliament took place. There is nothing about it in the Standing Orders or the Constitution. Party organisations cannot and never should dictate to the Parliament as to when it meets, particularly when ample warning has been given and ample time is set down. I am not adopting any double standards. That is exactly what was required of the Liberal Party and that is something with which it complied.

At the time, it was suggested that the democracy of the National Party was involved and that it was nothing to do with the possibility of giving Senator Stone a second chance. One has to query that, knowing that the President of the National Party, Sir Robert Sparkes, was both the person in charge, if you like, and the strongest voice on the management committee, and that it was he who determined that the party would not preselect before the Federal election and who was quite clearly the strongest supporter of Senator Stone in his attempt to come again after failing in Fairfax.

Our Standing Orders are there for a very good purpose. They oblige the Government and the Parliament to replace a senator quickly. That is as it should be. We do not want to be in no-man's-land whereby the Government of the day can play politics and can decide that, because an important vote is to be taken in the Senate, it will defer the decision on a replacement until the crucial numbers are counted.

There is always a reason for things like our Standing Orders. One only breaches them, and breaches the spirit of them, at one's peril. Conservatives do not do that. They do not play around with sensible rules, particularly written rules. So, if people are going to take this mantle on themselves, let us put some content back into the word "conservative". It can be used in a loose sense, or it can be used in a more technical sense. I hope that it is used in the technical sense.

Mr Veivers: Come on, Angus, you are not being paid by the hour.

Mr INNES: The honourable member for Southport used to be paid by the hour for commentating football on television. His worth was quickly seen. I do not think I have heard a commentary from him in recent times. It is a two-way street, a variety bill paid by the hour.

Let us look at some broader issues. Let us look at how the people of Queensland and the people on our side of politics might view this matter. I think that people in those parts of the State outside the south-east corner—those people who are traditionally National Party voters—might view the decision with some interest. On the occasion to which I referred, my party showed good political sense in its preselection. When the Liberal Party had 110 candidates from which to make its selection, it selected a north Queenslander for the top of the Liberal Party Senate ticket.

Mr FitzGerald: We select the best no matter where they come from.

Mr INNES: I am glad that we did choose a north Queenslander. At least non-Labor politics will have one voice from north Queensland in the Federal Parliament. That is important, because for the Senate the party can allocate the positions that it is likely to get—two, three or four—depending upon the politics of the moment. The party can allocate a position to somebody who can look after a regional area—assuming he is a person of reasonable quality.

Although the member for Lockyer interjected, his leader said that there were people of quality from north Queensland who could have been selected for the Senate vacancy. Frankly, I am delighted that my party will carry the voice for north Queensland in the Senate. I hope that the Liberal and National Party senators together will make sure that the private-enterprise voice of this State is heard beneficially for the better government of this country.

The Liberal Party supports Mr O'Chee's nomination to replace Senator Stone, it gives a couple of lessons on true conservatives on the way through and it puts in a bid for our senator for north Queensland.

Motion agreed to.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The motion having been agreed to, Mr William George O'Chee has accordingly been elected to fill the vacancy in the Senate of the Parliament of the Commonwealth.

Hon. W. K. GOSS (Logan—Premier, Minister for Economic and Trade Development and Minister for the Arts) (7.52 p.m.): I move—

"That Mr Speaker inform His Excellency the Governor that William George O'Chee has been chosen to hold the place in the Senate of the Parliament of the Commonwealth rendered vacant by the resignation of Senator John Owen Stone."

Motion agreed to.

The meeting concluded at 7.52 p.m.