

in his profession. Other members said that if there were a proper course of training and these men qualified at that course showing practically that they could do it, and members of the profession were satisfied that it was safe for them to do it, they should be permitted to administer eye drops. Public health and the public interest being involved, the House then took the wise and sensible course, again on the motion of the late Hon. A. D. Bridges, to refer the matter to a select committee. A number of members now present were on it, including Colonel the Hon. Sir Hector Clayton. The motion was agreed to on 29th August, 1963, and the committee met on a number of occasions.

Professor Baxter, who was then Vice-Chancellor of the University of New South Wales, was called to give evidence on probable courses available, syllabuses and other matters involved in training optometrists properly in the handling of drugs. The select committee's report was presented to the House on 24th September, 1963—within a month from the date of the motion. I am mentioning these matters because this House has been occupied since September last year with a good deal of duck-shoving. Tonight we have devoted to this bill all the time available since the end of question time. Obviously it deals with a matter of grave public importance. If the Government has no sectional interest and is concerned with the public interest, clearly it will agree that this matter should be referred to a select committee. Therefore, I move:

That the Question be amended by the omission of the words "now read a second time" with a view to the insertion in their place of the words

- "(1) Referred to a Select Committee for consideration and report; with leave to sit during any adjournment of the House and power to take evidence and to send for persons and papers; to make visits of inspection to places within the State, to examine witnesses and take evidence thereat;
- (2) That such committee consist of the following Members, viz.: Mr C. J. Cahill, Mr Gardiner, Mr Healey, Mr Hewitt, Mr Packer, Mrs Press, Mr Riley, Mrs Roper, Mr Sullivan and the Mover."

The Hon. N. K. Wran]

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. F. M. Hewitt.

House adjourned, on motion by the Hon. J. B. M. Fuller, at 11.57 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 1 March, 1972

Printed Question and Answer—Petitions—Questions without Notice—Pensioner Entitlements (Emergency)—Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Fund (Legislative Assembly Trustees)—Ambulance Service Bill (second reading)—Bill Returned—Coal Mines Regulation (Amendment) Bill (second reading)—Adjournment (Land Tax).

Mr SPEAKER (THE HON. SIR KEVIN ELLIS) took the chair at 2.30 p.m.

Mr SPEAKER offered the Prayer.

PRINTED QUESTION AND ANSWER

PADLOCKED GATES AT MYALL LAKES

Mr PETERSEN asked the MINISTER FOR LANDS—(1) Who are authorized to open and close padlocked gates that have been constructed by Mineral Deposits Limited across the road in the Myall Lakes area? (2) Who authorized the construction of the gates, how many are there and what is their purpose? (3) What authority is possessed by private persons to prevent the public using this road through Crown land?

Answer—(1) Employees of Mineral Deposits Limited at the direction of the company. (2) Two gates have been installed on the private road constructed by the company which holds a mining purpose lease over the area. The purpose of the gates is to limit the number of vehicles using the road while rehabilitation and re-vegetation work is carried out. (3) The road traverses both Crown land and private land. The company has no authority to restrict access to the public using the road through Crown land. By virtue of its lease, the company can control use of the private road which is on private land.

PETITIONS

SALE OF ALCOHOL AT UNIVERSITIES

Mr CLOUGH presented a petition from certain citizens of New South Wales opposing the granting of licences for the sale of liquor at universities and praying that the Legislative Assembly will not take any action that will make alcohol available on university campuses.

Petition received on motion by Mr Clough.

Mr EINFELD presented a petition from certain citizens of New South Wales opposing the granting of licences for the sale of liquor at universities and praying that the Legislative Assembly will not take any action that will make alcohol available on university campuses.

Petition received on motion by Mr Einfeld.

Mr NOTT presented a petition from certain citizens of New South Wales opposing the granting of licences for the sale of liquor at universities and praying that the Legislative Assembly will not take any action that will make alcohol available on university campuses.

Petition received on motion by Mr Nott.

Mr BANNON presented a petition from certain citizens of New South Wales opposing the granting of licences for the sale of liquor at universities and praying that the Legislative Assembly will not take any action that will make alcohol available on university campuses.

Petition received on motion by Mr Bannon.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

RETIREMENT OF COMMISSIONER OF POLICE

Mr HILLS: I ask the Premier and Treasurer whether he and Mr Allan, the Commissioner of Police, have intimated that in May the commissioner proposes to go on long leave prior to retirement and that this will run into a period approaching two years. Will the Premier agree that it becomes an unsatisfactory situation when the

Deputy Commissioner will be acting in the capacity of Commissioner of Police for such a long period without knowing whether the commissioner will return to duty? I appreciate that there are problems about the superannuation rights of the Commissioner of Police, but will the Government consider introducing a small bill to overcome this situation, if there is any legal bar to allowing the commissioner to retire at this point, thus clarifying the situation so that the police force can proceed under new leadership, if Mr Allan so desires?

Sir ROBERT ASKIN: There are several alternatives open. The taking of leave is normal in the police force, but, as the Leader of the Opposition suggests, the period involved is very long. I do not suggest for a moment that the commissioner is not fully entitled to this leave after his exceptionally long and honourable service. I want to have a talk with the commissioner at the appropriate moment; there is plenty of time, for he does not go on leave until 13th or 14th May. It may be that he will want to take leave for part of the period and monetary value for the remainder of the leave. Under the law passed during this session last year, the deputy commissioner, having been appointed to his position by the Governor in Council, automatically assumes the full responsibilities of the commissioner when the commissioner is away from duty.

It could be a matter for some concern if the deputy commissioner remained in this position for two years. That is what I meant in the concluding paragraph of my statement that appeared in all the newspapers when I said that there are some problems associated with the whole matter, and that these would need to be discussed by Cabinet. It is my intention to discuss the various possibilities with the Cabinet, and then I shall be in a position to make a statement to the honourable member and to the House. However, I want to make it clear that, whatever we do, we shall be watching the interests of the police force and, when we are trying to overcome a situation that is not altogether satisfactory, we shall be careful to ensure that the full rights of the commissioner are protected, having in mind that he has earned those rights.

ABANDONED MOTOR VEHICLES

Mr VINEY: I ask the Minister for Local Government and Minister for Highways whether his attention has been invited to a report concerning a presidential minute submitted to the Warringah shire council on Monday, 21st February. Does the report suggest that there needs to be some radical new thinking in regard to the problem of abandoned and derelict cars? Will the Minister intimate whether the Government has plans to overcome this problem?

Mr MORTON: My attention has been invited to some comment by the president of the Warringah shire council. I agree that the subject of the honourable member's question is of vital interest and needs a great deal of forward thinking in order to overcome what has become a major problem. Within the meaning of the Motor Traffic Act a motor vehicle is a vehicle that has an engine, transmission and wheels attached, and the disposal of such a vehicle is a matter for the police, not for the councils. However, in 1970 the Local Government Act was amended to provide that councils will have added powers to destroy the remains of vehicles and goods on such vehicles.

The Metropolitan Waste Disposal Authority, which has been investigating the possibility of providing places for the disposal of abandoned or derelict vehicles, has advised me that at this stage it has no immediate answer, although it is looking urgently at the question of finding areas where abandoned vehicles can be taken without penalty. At this stage I am not in favour of the authority opening up tips and making a charge for crushing these vehicles. This is already being done by private enterprise and I believe it could be extended. As this question is of vital interest, I shall confer with the authority to determine whether it can soon find a suitable repository to which these vehicles may be taken and dumped.

FORT STREET GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

Mr EINFELD: My question without notice is directed to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Minister for Science. Is the Minister aware of the deep

concern expressed by parents of students attending the historic Fort Street Girls High School that the Government intends to close the school down? Is it a fact that the school site is valued at more than \$20,000,000, and has it been suggested that if it is sold the proceeds would be used to help balance the State budget? Has the Department of Education prepared plans for new buildings to be constructed on the present site, and is it true that these plans have now been scrapped? In order to clear up all the doubts expressed by parents of the students in regard to the Government's future plans for the school, will the Minister give a clear undertaking that it will not be closed?

Mr CUTLER: Fort Street Girls High School is one of this State's historic schools, and it certainly occupies an historic site. It is true that the value of the site is well in excess of the sum of \$20,000,000 that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition mentioned. Some time ago I authorized the preparation of plans for the construction of a new school on the site. Due to the nature of the site and the existing historic buildings on it, planning for the new buildings had to be of a particular nature. The Department of Public Works has estimated that the cost of building new structures on the site for the usual number of secondary students attending this school would run into something like \$3,500,000. The building of a high school for this number of students usually costs about \$1,250,000. As Minister I was being asked to authorize the construction of a school at an estimated cost of \$3,500,000 on a \$20 million-odd site to cater for the same number of children who could be accommodated at a cost of \$1,250,000 in a school built on a much less expensive site.

There is no truth in the suggestion of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that the proceeds of sale of this site would be used to help overcome the Government's budgetary difficulties. However, it is true that I am considering a proposal that the new school should be established on a different site. I would be completely irresponsible if I were to authorize the spending of \$3,500,000 on constructing buildings on a \$20 million-odd site to cater for the

education of 1,000 children—I am not suggesting that this is the exact number attending the school—when a similar number of children could be catered for as adequately on a different site in buildings costing much less. I feel that most members will agree with me on that point. However, I would want to do two things. In common with every member of this House, I feel that one should preserve the historic nature of Fort Street Girls High School and also the historic buildings on the site. As Minister for Education my major concern is to provide education at a reasonable cost for the children who ordinarily attend Fort Street Girls High School, and this I am attempting to do.

MARGARINE

Mr DUNCAN: I ask the Minister for Agriculture whether yesterday the High Court of Australia upheld a Tasmanian law prohibiting the sale of artificially coloured margarine. Has the Minister had an opportunity to examine the judgment? After examining it, does he propose to recommend to the Government the introduction of similar legislation in New South Wales?

Mr CRAWFORD: It is true that yesterday the High Court of Australia handed down its judgment in the Tasmanian Government's case against SOS (Mowbray) Proprietary Limited in connection with colouring and flavouring of margarine. I am not a legal man, so I discussed this matter briefly with my legal advisers. It would appear that as reported in the press this judgment is a most important one. Primarily it upholds a State's right to enact marketing legislation regarding colouring and flavouring, a matter of major importance. Another significant aspect which interested me equally as much as the primary aspect is that from the scant information available this judgment strengthens a State's rights regarding interstate trade. This matter will be closely examined. It could favourably affect our marketing boards which are always troubled by interstate competition through the application of section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitu-

tion. We have never been too sure whether we could hold a proper market under a marketing board in this State.

Both aspects of the judgment are of major importance. I have asked my legal officers to obtain a copy of the High Court judgment and to examine it thoroughly. If necessary, the matter will be referred to the Crown law authorities to obtain an opinion on the ultimate effect this judgment might have on marketing legislation in New South Wales. As soon as that information is to hand I shall report to Cabinet. In due course a decision will be made about what action should be taken following the handing down of this judgment.

SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOLARSHIPS

Mr BEDFORD: I direct my question without notice to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Minister for Science. Does the bursary endowment board grant scholarships known as senior secondary scholarships to students in New South Wales secondary schools? Is such a bursary subject to a means test based on a \$3,999 taxable income maximum for the preceding financial year? Is it a fact that the depressed economic activity in both urban and rural areas this year has resulted in a denial of scholarships when they are badly needed? Because of the seriousness of the situation, will the Minister have urgent inquiries made with a view to easing the terms of the means test, at least in the short term?

Mr CUTLER: It is a fact that a means test is applied before granting senior secondary scholarships. It is a fact also that the means test is applied on the basis of the income of the previous year. The question that must be resolved is whether or not the means test should apply at all for scholarships. I am sure the honourable member for Fairfield and other members of this House agree that it would be quite impossible for the Department of Education to assess a person's income in a succeeding year. I do not see how this can be done. However, I shall look at the matter to see just how the application of the means test operates, what is involved in the abolition

of the means test, and what financial considerations must be taken into account. It would be quite impossible for the department to assess what a person's income might be in future as against what that person's income might have been in the past.

NEW SOUTH WALES FILM UNIT

Mr COLEMAN: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Cultural Activities and Assistant Treasurer. Is the Commonwealth film unit the main government organization in Australia concerned with the production of Australian films? Has that unit made many films of high quality for New South Wales government departments? Did the report prepared by Lord Willis on the state of the Australian film industry suggest that State governments should establish film units? Has the Minister examined that report and that proposal? If so, has he taken any steps towards the establishment of a State government film unit in New South Wales?

Mr FREUDENSTEIN: It is a fact that the Commonwealth film unit has made some excellent films for this State. It is a little more than a year since Lord Willis presented his report on film and television production in Australia. In that report he recommended that each State should have its own film unit. Various government departments in New South Wales have films made privately and, of course, these are supervised by the Film Council of New South Wales. I do not think that any other State has considered Lord Willis's recommendations on the establishment of State film units, but I know that a unit has been operating quite successfully in Tasmania for about two years. I think it is time that we in New South Wales had a look at what can be done in this respect, for many departments—especially those concerned with tourism, lands and, possibly most important, education—could make use of such a unit.

The Film Council of New South Wales is a body well fitted to make a report upon the establishment of such a unit, and I have asked it to undertake preliminary investigations and to report on the making of films in New South Wales on behalf of various government departments, and on the need for a

State film unit, and its organization, staffing, equipment, establishment costs and running costs. When that report becomes available it will be necessary, in view of the State's financial position, to submit the matter to Cabinet to find out whether funds can be allocated for such a project, but I shall keep the honourable member for Fuller and the House informed.

WARRAWONG HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY

Mr PETERSEN: I ask the Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Minister for Science a question without notice. Is the Minister aware that Warrawong high school in my electorate, which opened at the beginning of this scholastic year, included in the new building a library block with space for 30,000 books on its empty shelves? Is it proposed to make 4,000 books available to the library, which is almost useless from the viewpoint of educating school students? Will the Minister take action to see that the remaining 26,000 books are made available so that the library can perform its proper function, so that students can be educated, and so that the library block will not be a white elephant?

Mr CUTLER: I shall have a look at it.

PRIMARY INDUSTRY COSTS

Mr COWAN: My question without notice is directed to the Premier and Treasurer. Is it a fact that in recent months there has been a tightening of the economy generally in this State? Does this reflect the adverse season and the low income of many primary producers? Is it evidence also of how dependent we are on the man on the land? In view of the increase in confidence now evident in most of rural industry, will the Premier and Treasurer give an assurance that everything possible will be done to contain costs within the primary industries?

Sir ROBERT ASKIN: I think everyone is aware that the rural industries have been going through a trying time caused on one hand by lower prices here and overseas for their products and by a lessening of demand for some of them, and on the other hand by unavoidable increases in costs. This situation is causing the primary industries

difficulty in addition, in some cases, to adverse seasonal conditions. As a result, primary industries, generally speaking, are lagging today compared with their position in the economy of former years.

The rural industries are an integral part of our economy. They play an important part in maintaining our standards of living so it behoves each one of us, especially those in positions of responsibility, to do all that is possible to assist the man on the land. In answer to the honourable gentleman, I would say that as far as the Government is concerned we will continue to do what we can to relieve hardship for rural producers, to help keep down costs, to stimulate demand for their products and to assist in any other way.

PEACH CANNERIES

Mr GORDON: My question without notice is addressed to the Premier and Treasurer. Does the Premier and Treasurer know that canneries in New South Wales have insufficient funds to process the 1972 peach crop? Does he know that the intake of peaches by the Leeton Co-operative Cannery is restricted to 68 per cent of the 1971 intake, meaning that growers will get no payment whatever for one third of their crop? Can the Premier and Treasurer say who was responsible for these restrictions on canners in New South Wales? Does the Premier and Treasurer realize that restrictions in other States will result in a 6 per cent loss to growers, against a 32 per cent loss in New South Wales? Will he take immediate action to assist the New South Wales canners who represent an important sector of decentralised industry in this State?

Sir ROBERT ASKIN: These primary producers come in the same general category as those of whom I have been speaking. They are suffering difficulties. I do not know the exact details. The honourable gentleman quoted some statistics and percentages. I could not be expected to know without checking whether the figures are right or not, but I do know that canners are experiencing difficulty. I have heard some of my colleagues speak about this

matter and there has been some examination within the Government parties to see what can be done. The honourable gentleman has given a figure of 68 per cent and I should like to get the facts before answering the question further.

COMMONWEALTH-STATES RURAL RECONSTRUCTION SCHEME

Mr MACKIE: I ask the Minister for Lands whether he will be attending a conference of State Ministers on Friday to discuss the operation in the future of the Commonwealth-States rural reconstruction scheme. Can the Minister give an indication of what approach Ministers are likely to adopt at this conference? Also, will he advise the House of the current operation of the scheme in New South Wales?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Is the Minister able to answer that question?

Mr LEWIS: Yes. It is true that in Canberra next Friday there will be a meeting between the Commonwealth and State Ministers administering the rural reconstruction scheme. The big demand of all States at the moment is for more finance. The House will recall that at a meeting in January, 1971, the Commonwealth promised the States more finance. As from June, 1971 \$100,000,000 became available for all the States over a period of four years. The sum of \$32,000,000 came to New South Wales. There was an objectivity clause in the agreement, as honourable members will remember, when the legislation came before the House, providing that the States were to try as far as possible to have 50 per cent of the \$32,000,000 spent on build-ups—that is, additional land for farmers who had insufficient acreage to make a living—and the other 50 per cent was to be used on debt reconstruction. I had warned, as the Minister for Public Works also had warned, that the great demand at the moment is not for build-up money but for funds for debt reconstruction. This has been proved.

As at the middle of January the New South Wales Government, administering the scheme, had approved applications for assistance amounting to some \$18,300,000

although we are entitled to only \$16,000,000 over four years. The most urgent matter is the need of more finance for the States to carry out reconstruction. At the moment, acceptance of applications is running at from 30 to 40 per cent in all the States. This means that between 60 and 70 per cent of all applications are being rejected. Most applicants are rejected not because they have too much money, though this applies to a small percentage of them, but because their debt structure gives them little chance of success even if they were assisted under the rural reconstruction scheme. Not only do we need more finance; we also need flexibility of the fifty-fifty objectivity clause so that more of the money might be spent on debt reconstruction.

The officers met a week or so ago and it is most likely, in view of previous promises, that the Commonwealth will make more money available. However, other matters have intervened that have some reflection on the scheme generally. One of them is that some difficulty is occasioned by unsuccessful applicants who do not want to leave their properties. Most of them, with a family about them, have a home and a car, vegetables, and a few sheep and chickens to kill. If they take the money to vacate, it is limited to \$1,000. I have always claimed it should be a greater amount so that a man may vacate his property with some dignity, pay off his debts and still have enough to pay rent or a deposit on a cottage in a district where he can obtain employment. I intend to press this at the conference on Friday.

The Minister for Local Government and Minister for Highways knows that we have had trouble with noxious weeds. This Government has made a tremendous effort in the past seven years to control noxious weeds, and it has introduced a campaign to eradicate them. However, in these times it is difficult to prosecute primary producers for having properties infested with noxious weeds, whether prickly pear under the Department of Lands or serrated tussock or some other weed. In these circumstances the weed spreads to the properties next door and one loses control of the situation. Many blocks should be vacated in the interests of

Mr Lewis]

farmers. If a man walks off his block with dignity and with \$1,000 or \$2,000 in his pocket, what can the Government do with the vacant block? Under the present system of rates it is not possible for the Crown to obtain it as vacant Crown land. Many properties in the Western Division, the Central Division, and indeed in the Eastern Division, could be added to Crown lands for drought reserve areas or additional catchment protection, or as recreation areas.

Mr FERGUSON: On a point of order. I take the point that the Minister is trifling with the House by making a ministerial statement. He is making a mockery of the democratic right of members to ask questions.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I do not think it can be said that the Minister is trifling with the House or the question. I regret that I allowed the question. I hope the Minister will bring his reply to a conclusion as quickly as possible.

Mr LEWIS: I think the point of order indicates the contempt that the Labor Party feels for rural reconstruction.

Mr HILLS: On a point of order. Mr Speaker, the Minister is trifling with your ruling. You said that you regretted allowing the question in the first place. Further, after the honourable member for Merrylands took a point of order you asked the Minister to terminate his answer. The Minister is trifling with your ruling and I suggest that you call him to order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I should like the Minister to complete his reply as soon as possible.

Mr LEWIS: Finally, one of the reasons that the Crown wishes to acquire these properties would be to add them to nature reserves and national parks or to use them for additional recreation areas which would give some improvement to the amenity of country dwellers. A great number of smaller points will be raised at the meeting but in general those are the main points that all States will raise at the conference on the rural reconstruction agreement between the governments of the States and the Commonwealth.

T.P.I. PENSIONER WATER RATES
REBATE

Mr HUGHES: On Thursday last the honourable member for Cooks River asked me a question concerning pensioner water rates rebates for T.P.I. pensioners. As honourable members are aware, recently the Government reduced the burden of water and sewerage and land rates on pensioners by providing that a pensioner's rate would be reduced by half, up to a maximum of \$40 where the eligible pensioner is solely rateable or the eligible pensioner and spouse are jointly rateable in respect of a dwelling or flat. Provision was also made in the legislation that, to avoid hardship, the Minister may direct that an eligible pensioner who occupies a dwelling or flat, but is not liable for the payment of rates, even though he does pay them, be declared the person solely rateable and thus eligible for the rebate. Since the introduction of these concessions, there has been an overwhelming response from pensioners who have availed themselves of the relief provided by the Government.

As is to be expected in a matter of the complexity of pensioner rebates, several instances have arisen not specifically covered by the legislation. One of these is the case of the owner of a dwelling who, though not a pensioner, is the spouse of a pensioner, with both occupying the dwelling. A means test is, of course, applied before the granting of the pension, and the total income and assets of both husband and wife are taken into account, whether or not they are both eligible for a pension. It follows, therefore, that in these cases the spouse, although not a pensioner, must have very limited means. I have therefore approved that when the dwelling is occupied by an eligible age, invalid or service pensioner and his or her spouse, and the dwelling is owned by the spouse, the rebate will be allowed.

The honourable member for Cooks River specifically raised the case of T.P.I. pensioners. Here the position is that eligible pensioners who do not have a Commonwealth means test, namely blind pensioners and T.P.I. pensioners, do not necessarily have hardship, and I am therefore not in a position to make an order about them as a

class. There could well be cases where blind or T.P.I. pensioners are involved in hardship, and in these cases the boards concerned will be prepared to give individual consideration to each application on its merits. This decision relating to water rates will be applicable to pensioners within the areas of the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board, the Hunter District Water Board and the Broken Hill Water Board. My colleague the Minister for Local Government has intimated that he is willing to issue a similar appropriate order under the Local Government Act to apply to pensioners who pay either land or water and sewerage rates to local-government authorities.

PENSIONER ENTITLEMENTS

URGENCY

Mr KEARNS (Bankstown) [3.8]: I move:

That it is a matter of urgent necessity that this House should forthwith consider the following motion, viz.:

That in the opinion of this House the Government should:

- (a) Inform the Prime Minister that because of increasing living costs—particularly in New South Wales—age, invalid and widows pensions should be increased immediately by at least 50 per cent.
- (b) Increase construction of aged persons' housing units to reduce the present waiting time of applicants from more than five years to one year.
- (c) Grant pensioners free travel on all public transport in New South Wales.

This motion is urgent because of the seriously declining position of the pensioner in our community today. It is urgently necessary for this House to consider the effect of the rising cost of living upon the aged, the invalid and the widowed. There is an equally urgent need to bring home to an unsympathetic federal Government the fact that the community generally, but particularly the Parliament of New South Wales, wants the pensioner to receive an allowance that will enable him to meet the demands of daily living and also maintain his dignity as a human being. The urgency

of this motion is emphasized by a submission made last week in the national wage case when the industrial advocate for the Australian Council of Trade Unions said that the minimum wage rate of \$47.10 a week falls well below the poverty line. Despite this, the federal Government pays a maximum pension of \$30.50 a week for a man and wife. In fact many pensioners get less than this amount.

All honourable members will appreciate the urgency of this motion as we have all had an increasing number of pensioners approaching us, seeking our advice and assistance as they falter in the battle to make ends meet. Successive governments in New South Wales over a long period of years, going back at least to the early 1950's, have recognized the fact that the pensions received by the aged, widowed and invalid are inadequate. The Government has allowed rate rebates to homeowner pensioners, and the State Department of Social Welfare provides surgical aids, spectacles, special food, clothing and even cash grants to needy pensioners who cannot provide for themselves—and how many can provide for themselves from the pittance that the federal Government allows? Local government also recognizes the plight of pensioners, extending rate relief to many of them, in addition to that provided by the State Government. Local government provides also home nursing services, meals on wheels, senior citizen centres, geriatric committees and other services specially designed to help the aged.

For example, these services cost Bankstown municipal council many thousands of dollars each year but they attract little subsidy from the federal Government. An indication of this is provided by the Bankstown home nursing service, which costs the council \$20,000 a year and attracts a subsidy of only \$7,000 from the federal Government.

Mr WILLIS: On a point of order. It is obvious that the honourable member is not confident of having his urgency motion agreed to; he is now speaking to the substantive motion and not the motion of urgency. I submit that he should be telling the House why it should deal with this as

Mr Kearns]

a matter of urgency and why it should take priority over all other business. In fact these problems have existed since Labor was in office.

Mr KEARNS: On the point of order. The points that I have raised have been directed towards showing that it is a matter of urgency. I submit that I should be permitted to indicate that the State Government and local councils have a greater recognition of this problem than the federal Government. The motion is directed towards indicating to the federal Government our concern about the matter.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is considerable substance in what the Chief Secretary has said. It is appreciated that there is a fine dividing line between what relates to urgency and what relates to the substantive motion. The honourable member appreciates that he must confine himself to urgency. I hope that he will get away from the substantive motion.

Mr KEARNS: There is a very fine line, as you have indicated, Mr Speaker, and I have endeavoured conscientiously to ensure that I do not go beyond it.

Mr SPEAKER: I am sure you have tried.

Mr KEARNS: I was indicating that local councils recognize the urgent need to do something about the plight of the pensioner and that the federal Government should do something about it. In considering the motion we should recognize this need having regard to the services that local councils provide. I have indicated that the home nursing service in Bankstown costs the council \$20,000 each year but attracts a subsidy of only \$7,000. There is an urgent need for the federal Government to be made aware of the hostility of the community towards it because of the way in which it has shrugged off its responsibility to the pensioners and because of the strain it places on the State Government and on local councils, which attempt to meet the needs denied by the unconcerned Liberal Government in Canberra.

The motion is aimed at providing the House with an opportunity to inform the federal Government of our concern at its

neglect of pensioners. It also gives members the opportunity to have an urgent look at the housing needs of age pensioners. Thanks to the humanitarian attitude of a State Labor government, the Housing Commission of New South Wales has for many years built units to accommodate aged people, both married and single. This was done by using State funds without any help from the Commonwealth Government, until this year when some limited funds were made available from that source.

Mr WILLIS: What has that got to do with urgency?

Mr KEARNS: It is urgent that the House should give some consideration to the fact that aged people have to wait five years for accommodation in this State, which is an intolerable time. If the Minister does not think it is urgent, I am sure that the people who are waiting for accommodation do. The waiting time for this type of accommodation is in excess of five years. This highlights the urgency of the motion. I assure honourable members that people of 65, 70 or 75 who come to me seeking this type of accommodation regard it as an urgent matter. It is urgent that we act to remove the despair felt by these people at the prospect of a wait of five years or even more. It is urgent that their need for accommodation of a good standard is met within twelve months, not five years. Too many aged people are living in makeshift accommodation, moving in with family or friends or moving from one dingy room to another. They are harassed by their situation, left without hope of being able to obtain for themselves good-standard accommodation where they can maintain themselves with self-respect and dignity.

Can we not spare a few minutes of our time to discuss their housing needs and to determine ways of improving the rate of construction of aged persons' housing units? This section of the motion is just as urgent as the first part. I shall now deal with the third part. The Premier will probably say that the Government has increased the concessions given to pensioners for travel on public transport, but these concessions were introduced by a Labor government many years ago and with the passage of time they were due for improve-

ment, and they have been improved. However, the Government has increased fares on all public transport to such an extent that an average member of the community suffers hardship in having to pay them. There is a much greater hardship on pensioners, particularly age pensioners and invalid pensioners—or does the Premier include pensioners in his "let them walk" dictum?

There is an urgent need to examine the impact of the increased travel charges on the life of a pensioner. The motion provides an opportunity to meet this need. It provides also an opportunity for the House to tell the Government that free travel on public transport should be extended to pensioners. The matters raised in this urgency motion in regard to pensioners', pension housing and free travel are of vital importance to the aged, the invalids and the widowed in the community. Satisfactory action on these matters is urgent to the sections of our community that are affected. It should be also a matter of urgency to all of us. We should be seized with the urgency of showing the federal Government that if the welfare of the pensioner is of no concern to it, it is of great concern to us.

Sir ROBERT ASKIN (Collaroy), Premier and Treasurer [3.18]: On occasions the honourable member for Bankstown has made useful contributions to the debates in this House, but I must say that in a political sense it seems to me that he is being completely insincere in what he says. Either he was insincere or he has been politically hypocritical, and I shall endeavour to show why. The honourable member must know—he has been in the House long enough—that subjects affecting age, invalid and widow pensions are constitutionally matters for the Commonwealth Government and that the State Government has no say in the schedules for these pensioners. When a Labor government was in office in New South Wales it made no representations, because it was understood that these matters concerned the Commonwealth Government. It may be that we can write a letter,

or that we can make personal representations to the federal Government, but to suggest that we suspend all the business of the House because this matter has suddenly today become so urgent that we must drop everything to consider it is just nonsensical.

When the Labor Party was in office in this State for many years it did not do much about aged people, invalids and widows, about whom members opposite express so much concern. When this Government came to office it found that police widows were not getting pensions. When their husbands died they did not get pensions after 65, and one of the first things we did after twenty-four years of neglect by a Labor government was to introduce life pensions for widows of police. We have now introduced superannuation pensions for railway widows, and we have widely extended the scope of transport concessions, over and above their level when Labor left office. These things have been done by us for the people for whom the Opposition is now expressing concern—the people for whom Labor did nothing when in office. For instance, nothing was done for the pensioners so far as private transport was concerned. We have given assistance in this regard. It is all very well for members of the Opposition, who have no responsibility for finding the money, to say these things, but I remind them that they had the chance to do them when they were in office.

Labor did not bring in our far-reaching rate concessions for widows and age pensioners. As a matter of fact, as recently as the 1971 election Labor in its policy speech promised to defer the payment of pensioners' rates. We brought in legislation, quick and lively, arbitrarily to waive 50 per cent of the rates. This will cost the Government not less than \$10,000,000 a year, though Labor promised to do nothing but defer the payment of the rates. Now Labor members have the audacity to suggest that we should be doing what they failed to do in twenty-four years when they had the opportunity.

This is one of the most outrageous examples of political insincerity and hypocrisy that I have seen. Every reasonable person has sympathy for pensioners,

Sir Robert Askin]

whether they be invalid pensioners, age pensioners or widow pensioners; we would all like to see them get more. It is not a matter of the Commonwealth or the State Government paying more; it is a matter of the community paying more, and whether everyone in the community is willing to pay more tax in order to give extra payments to pensioners. This decision is the constitutional responsibility of the Commonwealth Government. It is nonsensical for the Labor Opposition to suggest, after all these years of doing nothing, that today we should drop all the business of the Parliament in order to deal with this subject as a matter of urgency.

During the seven years of our administration we have done more to help pensioners than Labor did during its twenty-four years in office. The honourable member for Bankstown referred to the waiting time by applicants for Housing Commission accommodation. The Minister for Housing has given me figures to show that, despite the economic pressures of the day, there is a difference of only two months in waiting time for elderly couples compared with the time when we came into office.

This motion reeks of insincerity. If the Opposition seeks to discuss the matter on the basis that something should be done by everyone to try to improve the lot of pensioners, then it should know that this is not our constitutional responsibility. The appropriate way to deal with such a matter is by notice of motion, for it is definitely not a matter that comes under urgency and it does not justify dropping everything immediately. Despite the fact that the Opposition had many years in which to do something in this area, it has decided that this matter has become suddenly urgent. The honourable member for Bankstown said not one word about the \$10,000,000 that the Government will spend by way of rate concessions. Further, he did not mention the millions that are being spent on the transport of schoolchildren, age pensioners, invalid pensioners and widow pensioners. All we heard from him was carping criticism. That is all that the Opposition is capable of, and that is why honourable members opposite will stay in opposition for another twenty years.

Question of urgency put. The House divided:

AYES, 43

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Mr Bannon | Mr L. B. Kelly |
| Mr Barnier | Mr R. J. Kelly |
| Mr Bedford | Mr Mahoney |
| Mr Booth | Mr Mallam |
| Mr Cahill | Mr Mulock |
| Mr Coady | Mr Nott |
| Mr Cox | Mr O'Connell |
| Mr Day | Mr Paciullo |
| Mr Degen | Mr Petersen |
| Mr Durick | Mr Quinn |
| Mr Earl | Mr Ramsay |
| Mr Einfeld | Mr Renshaw |
| Mr Flaherty | Mr Ryan |
| Mr Gordon | Mr Sheahan |
| Mr Haigh | Mr Sloss |
| Mr Hills | Mr Southee |
| Mr M. L. Hunter | Mr J. J. T. Stewart |
| Mr Jackson | Mr K. J. Stewart |
| Mr Jensen | Mr Wade |
| Mr Johnstone | <i>Tellers,</i> |
| Mr Jones | Mr Crabtree |
| Mr Kearns | Mr F. J. Walker |

NOES, 47

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Sir Robert Askin | Mr Jago |
| Mr Barraclough | Mr Lewis |
| Mr Jack Beale | Mr McCaw |
| Mr Brewer | Mr McGinty |
| Mr Brown | Mr Mackie |
| Mr Bruxner | Mr Maddison |
| Mr Cameron | Mr Mason |
| Mr Chaffey | Mr Mauger |
| Mr Clough | Mr Mead |
| Mr Coleman | Mr Morris |
| Mr Cowan | Mr Morton |
| Mr Crawford | Mr Osborne |
| Mr Cutler | Mr Punch |
| Mr Darby | Mr Ruddock |
| Mr Doyle | Mr Singleton |
| Mr Duncan | Mr Stephens |
| Mr Fife | Mr Taylor |
| Mr Fischer | Mr Viney |
| Mr Fisher | Mr Waddy |
| Mr Freudenstein | Mr N. D. Walker |
| Mr Griffith | Mr Willis |
| Mr Healey | <i>Tellers,</i> |
| Mr Hughes | Mr Jackett |
| Mr D. B. Hunter | Mr Mutton |

Question so resolved in the negative.

Motion of urgency negatived.

PARLIAMENTARY CONTRIBUTORY SUPERANNUATION FUND

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY TRUSTEES

Motion (by Sir Robert Askin) agreed to:

That in accordance with Section 14 (1) (b) of the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Act, 1971, the following Members of the

Legislative Assembly be and are hereby appointed as Trustees of the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Fund—

- The Hon. A. H. Jago,
 Mr J. A. Clough,
 Mr D. B. Cowan,
 Mr E. N. Quinn.

AMBULANCE SERVICE BILL

SECOND READING

Debate resumed (from 29th February, vide page 4639) on motion by Mr Jago:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Upon which Mr K. J. Stewart had moved:

That the Question be amended by leaving out the word "now" with a view to adding the words "this day six months".

Mr PETERSEN (Illawarra) [3.36]: One of the frauds that has been perpetrated on this House has been to describe this measure as a machinery bill. I say clearly and unequivocally that it is a great deal more than that. Indeed, in many respects this measure can be termed a bill of destruction—the destruction of community ambulance services. I am speaking primarily on behalf of dedicated people who formed district ambulance committees and have run their own ambulance services. They are now seeing what is commonly termed in stock exchange circles a takeover bid. I disagree profoundly and so do my constituents with many aspects of the proposal. Indicative of their disagreement are the views contained in a letter to me dated 11th December, 1969—when this proposal was first mooted—from the superintendent-secretary of the Illawarra district ambulance service on behalf of his district committee. Mr Speaker, I think the letter should be read in full because of its relevance to this debate.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Is it lengthy?

Mr PETERSEN: No, it covers about half a foolscap page:

At a meeting of the District Committee of the Illawarra District Ambulance Service held on Wednesday, 10th December, 1969, the re-organisation and the future of the New South Wales Ambulance Service was discussed.

As a result of their discussions the following resolution was recorded in the Minutes of this service.

Resolution: That a letter be forwarded to our Parliamentary Representatives advising them that the District Committee of the Illawarra District Ambulance Service wishes to draw to their attention the possibility of certain developments taking place in the Ambulance Service which will affect the ambulance service in this district.

We feel that from a report in the Minutes of the New South Wales Ambulance Transport Service Board dated 10th October, 1969, the Government is to regionalise the Ambulance Service in New South Wales and in the process could amalgamate the Illawarra District with Central District Ambulance Service, Sydney.

While we appreciate that regionalisation has certain advantages we must point out that the Illawarra District only stands to lose from such an amalgamation.

We request that you as our Parliamentary Representative protect the high standard of the Illawarra District Ambulance Service, and if regionalisation is inevitable we emphatically state that Illawarra must be the Headquarters of a region, and under no circumstances be amalgamated with the Central District Ambulance Service.

This letter is forwarded to you on behalf of the members of the District Committee of the Illawarra District Ambulance Service with a request that this matter be brought to the notice of the Minister for Health as a matter of urgency.

I agree completely with the sentiments expressed in that letter, which reflects the real fear of my constituents that in addition to not gaining any benefit from the proposal to establish regional committees, they look like being the milch cow for other areas. The Illawarra district ambulance service caters for a population of approximately 230,000 people between Helensburgh and Gerrinjong. It is worth noting that 46,000 people are contributing 15 cents a week for this ambulance service. This almost incredible figure is indicative of the high degree of community involvement in this district ambulance service. Not one in five of the adult population but one in five of the total population is making these weekly payments. In effect, virtually the whole population of the area is contributing in one way or another. From these contributions 93 per cent of operating costs and all capital costs of the service are met. A main ambulance station is situated at Wollongong, with branch stations at Bulli, Kiama, Warrawang and Dapto.

Mr Petersen]

I was disgusted to hear the Minister for Health say there were rich areas and poor areas, with the clear implication that he considered the Illawarra region a rich area. Admittedly, we do have an excellent ambulance service; it is second to none. This is due to one fact alone—the people in the Illawarra area possess a spirit of co-operation for historical reasons and because most of them are workers who are used to working together in the trade-union movement and in the Labor movement. They are used to helping one another and their ambulance service flourishes through that spirit of co-operation.

We have one man engaged full time on enrolling new subscribers. What is the proportion of subscribers to total population in the area represented by the Minister? Would it be one in five of the adult population of the Gordon electorate? I doubt it. The electors of Gordon do not have the sense of community spirit possessed by the working class electors, such as those in my electorate. In our area the charge made for the use of the ambulance service is \$20 for the first five miles plus 50 cents a mile thereafter. How many times in a lifetime does one use the ambulance service? I have been a contributor for fifteen years and my family has used it only once. I am a fairly average sort of person. Obviously the average person must show a loss on his contributions over the years. However, the ambulance services could not possibly operate on charges alone. That is why some services in the metropolitan area are in a mess—they do not have enough subscribers and they cannot possibly operate on charges alone. The idea is to improve the service and to do this a larger number of subscribers are necessary.

Because the people in the Illawarra region have this sense of community spirit they have been able to extend the service to areas where normally it would not be economically viable to do so. Consider the way in which we cater for people who use the Princes Highway. An enormous number of road accidents occur on that main road which is served by the Illawarra district ambulance service, maintained by the people of the Illawarra region. We bear the cost of helping these people. We provide a

service for them. The ambulance stations at Bulli, Dapto and Kiama are particularly busy. They are situated on the Princes Highway and are constantly called upon to attend a large number of road accidents, which involve many people who come from areas outside the Illawarra region. I was disgusted to hear the Minister say that he would not like me to have an accident at Bulahdelah, where there is no local ambulance services.

The people of Illawarra recognize their responsibility to the community. How the Minister got the concept that Illawarra is a rich area is beyond my understanding. It is an affront to the district committee, which is elected by the contributors. I emphasize that we of the Illawarra are not rich. I doubt whether the average income of persons in our region would be much more than half the average income of persons in the Minister's electorate. What we do have in our area is community involvement, and I should like to show just how far this involvement goes. From 1st March, 1971, the contribution rates to the ambulance service were increased from 9 cents to 15 cents a week. The service could have continued at 10 cents, as is charged in the metropolitan area and in Newcastle. However, we increased our rate to 15 cents so that new stations might be built at Kiama and Warilla.

Plans are being prepared for the construction of a station at Kiama at a cost of \$60,000. The service has something like \$80,000 in reserve and it is proposed to build another station in the populous housing commission settlement of Warilla. We appreciate the need for an efficient ambulance service on the Princes Highway. What we are frightened of is the effect of this legislation, when it comes into effect, on the proposed station at Warilla. Will we be able to build it for the benefit of the people, as is the intention, or will our funds be raided and used in another area? Considering the powers available to the district committee under the proposed scheme, it appears that the committee will not be able to negotiate any capital expenditure at all.

In this bill all the powers of the board are set out in clause 18. Clause 27 provides that a district committee shall exercise and may

carry out such powers, authorities, duties and functions as the board may delegate to it from time to time. What say will the local people have in the expenditure of the capital funds that they have raised? The local committee showed considerable sense of responsibility by increasing the weekly contributions from nine cents to fifteen cents when it knew that it could have continued operating at only ten cents. Will the Minister say that the funds raised through increased contribution are to be raided? I should like him to tell me what is to happen.

My constituents and I believe these funds should be expended at the discretion of the democratically elected local committee. I was interested to hear the honourable member for Lismore making a plea to the Minister that when he appoints the new board he should have regard to the wishes of democratically elected committees. Nothing in this bill says that the Minister must pay any regard whatever to democratically elected committees. All that the committees are there for is to give him advice. There is nothing in the bill providing that when the Minister is appointing a board under clause 18 he should pay any regard at all to any contribution that any particular person might have made during his service.

I agree with the remarks made by the honourable member for Canterbury. It will be found that ambulance committees will wither on the vine. As in all organizations, unless it enjoys some responsibility and can do what it wants to do democratically, the local elected committee will become a farce. Even now many hospital boards are a farce. There is a difference between hospital boards and ambulance committees—hospital boards get the bulk of their money from the State Government whereas ambulance committees have to raise their own funds. They do not get very much from the State Government. Obviously, the Minister does not have any plans to extend the finance available to the ambulance service, otherwise he would have told us about them in his second-reading speech.

In New South Wales there are fifty-seven ambulance districts. The board will comprise three members from Sydney and

seven from the country. It will be interesting to hear from the Minister how many district committees there will be. What is the virtue of appointing boards rather than electing them? Why not elect this board? Why cannot district committees have representatives on the board? Is it that the Minister is frightened lest by that move he might get on the board people who will question his policies and financial methods?

MR K. J. STEWART: A Labor man might be appointed.

MR PETERSEN: It would seem most unlikely that a Labor man would be appointed. If boards are to be appointed by the Minister without reference to anyone, let us be clear who will be appointed to such boards. They will consist primarily of persons who will be good crawlers. The three largest ambulance districts are Sydney, Newcastle and Illawarra. I see from the 1970 annual report that the mileage travelled in the Sydney ambulance district was 2,826,372; in the Hunter district it was 850,904 and in the Illawarra ambulance district it was 359,108 miles. That means that Illawarra is the third largest ambulance district in the State. Will the Minister give an assurance that the Hunter and Illawarra ambulance districts will be represented on the board? Let me point out that those two districts are examples of how an ambulance service can be built up by community involvement. Surely we should learn from our experiences; surely our experiences are of great value in determining just how an ambulance service should be administered.

We on the South Coast believe that we have a viable and efficient ambulance service built up largely by our own efforts and that we have a healthy contribution scheme. What sort of efficiency will the proposed board give the statewide ambulance service? Are we to expect the same sort of efficiency that we have in Illawarra where one-fifth of the population are contributors to the ambulance scheme? How many other districts have this sort of efficiency? What is wrong with the Illawarra contributions scheme? What is wrong with our ambulance services? We would just as soon see the existing situation continue, except that we have a sense of responsibility. In addition, we have funds

that can be raided. I express considerable reserve about this bill, and support wholeheartedly the amendment moved by the honourable member for Canterbury that the bill be deferred for six months so that it can be examined further. Frankly, we want to know what is going to happen to the funds of the Illawarra district ambulance service.

I agree with the Minister that ambulance services in the country need considerable upgrading. I agree also that the subsidies from the general account are unsatisfactory. Much more could have been done to make them accord with need rather than with expenditure. For example, \$12,628 received by the Illawarra district ambulance service from the scheme in the year ended 30th June, 1970, represented only 5 per cent of the expenditure of the Illawarra service. As far as we were concerned, it was not vital to the continuation of our scheme. In fact, it was a token payment and a relic of a past era.

However, there are other aspects of the ambulance service that are pretty expensive. I have been told that it costs \$2,000 a week to run an aerial ambulance. Are our contributions to be used to pay for an aerial ambulance? Is our money to go towards the considerable expenditure needed in the country, or will all the money come from the Government's surcharge on driving licence fees, and be paid out of consolidated revenue? It seems to me that the proposed system is centralism gone mad. It is typical of this Liberal-Country party Government that this scheme has been advocated most enthusiastically by the Country Party. If there is one theme that runs constantly through Country Party policy, it is that one never worries about the size of the cake, but only about how the cake will be cut up. Members of the Country Party see poor ambulance services in the country and good services in the industrial areas like Newcastle and Wollongong, and they do not have the courage to demand that the Government update its expenditure from consolidated revenue to help improve their services.

The members of the Country Party think that the metropolitan and industrial areas should subsidize the country areas. There

is only one thing wrong with that approach; we in the Illawarra area have built up our ambulance services as a community enterprise, and once the people of any area cease to feel that they are engaged in a community enterprise, they will not be so enthusiastic about supporting it. I warn the Government not to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. The successful contribution scheme in the Illawarra ambulance district is based upon community acceptance of the local scheme. After all, a person can take a risk and not belong to an ambulance scheme, for it is unlikely that he will use the ambulance more than once or twice in his lifetime, and it is obvious also that many patients are not recompensed from the scheme. If the workers begin to feel that the funds they contribute are not being used for their own district service, if it becomes too expensive and they think it is not their scheme and will not benefit them, they will vote with their feet. In other words, they will not renew their contributions and leave the scheme.

I am speaking for all district committees on this occasion. I am speaking for the districts that feel a sense of community participation of the sort that we in Illawarra feel through having built up our own ambulance service. The present controlling body is to be replaced not by a democratically elected committee—elected by contributors—but with a board appointed by the Minister to tell our district committee, "The only power you have is to give advice and to exercise such powers, authorities, duties and functions as the board may delegate to you from time to time." Let me suggest that this is the surest way to destroy the ambulance services in New South Wales. A centralized ambulance service requires two things: first, adequate funds from the State Government and, second, a sense of democratic participation through democratically elected district committees, through officers of the ambulance service and through unions of the employees in that service.

I am afraid that this Government's decisions are based on a philosophy that bosses give orders and workers carry them out, and that nobody has a right to chal-

lenge the orders of the great white master. The same Government will destroy what in many areas is a magnificent achievement in the interests of serving its ideology, in the interests of placating the Country Party, the members of which have not had the guts to demand adequate funds from the central government to bring country ambulance services up to date.

MR CHAFFEY: We backed Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited, which gives your constituents their bread and butter, and you have not the guts to own up to it.

MR PETERSEN: Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited contributes nothing to ambulance services in the Illawarra district. I will conclude on this note. Ambulance services have been built by democratic participation by local communities, and in industrial areas by the participation of workers through working-class organizations. Once that sense of democratic participation is destroyed a great deal of the efficiency of existing ambulance services in a great number of areas will be destroyed, and it will be on the Government's own head if that happens. I urge honourable members to accept the amendment moved by the honourable member for Canterbury so the honourable members may see what damage is likely to be done to the existing system by the Government's proposed scheme.

MR FISHER (Upper Hunter) [4.0]: I welcome the opportunity to support this bill. The honourable member for Illawarra is not anxious see funds that have been contributed to an ambulance service in a densely populated area such as the Illawarra electorate used towards assisting the organization of a State-wide efficient ambulance service. I can understand his opposition to the measure. The Country Party supports this bill whole-heartedly. For a long time there has been a great need for re-organization of the ambulance services throughout the State on a uniform basis so that less densely populated areas will have an ambulance service similar to that in the metropolitan area. This is not to deny that there has been a great deal done by country ambulance services. I take this opportunity

to pay tribute to the valuable services rendered in many country areas by local committees. These committees have been assisted by bands of supporters who, I am confident, will continue to assist the local ambulance services. This bill in no way envisages that such support will not need to be forthcoming.

The honourable member for Canterbury, leading for the Opposition, endeavoured to deny the benefits of the bill to country areas in the immediate future by moving his amendment, but he has failed to offer an alternative. I assume that the Labor Party opposes the organization of a reasonable ambulance service on a State-wide basis, which would give equal opportunity to everyone throughout the State to share in these services. Many country people will be interested to learn of the opposition from the honourable member for Illawarra and the honourable member for Canterbury. I can understand how the honourable member for Casino will feel when he returns to his electorate and informs his constituents that his colleagues in this House have opposed this measure. Many of his electors have contributed to the services in their own district.

Within the electorate of Upper Hunter there are three well organized ambulance services. The Upper Hunter district ambulance service operates in four towns and this proves that rationalization can take place in country districts. This will no doubt prove desirable as this scheme gets under way. The Muswellbrook service is a well endowed service; one benefactor bequeathed over \$110,000 to it. It is organized on a district basis taking in the towns of Scone, Muswellbrook, Merriwa and Murrurundi, and is run most efficiently from the central organization in Scone. There is no petty parochialism as might be expected where a number of districts are combined to offer service. The funds of one heavily endowed service have been used to assist other ambulance services and this has in no way created any ill-feeling in the towns concerned. Smaller centres such as Murrurundi could never support an ambulance service and this town has been brought into a combined organization instead of continuing to struggle on its own.

Mr Fisher]

Mr PETERSEN: That is what was done on the South Coast.

Mr FISHER: The contribution is \$10 a contributor compared with \$5 in the Illawarra and central areas. Why should a country contributor pay up to twice as much as a city contributor? There is a great need for uniformity not only of service but also of the contributions. The Minister has pointed out that the service provided in a country area is not exclusively for its contributors but serves also people who may be travelling through it. If they have contributed to an efficient service in their own home areas they are entitled to the same service wherever they are in the State. This bill envisages that such a service will be available, including the aerial ambulance service which in recent years has developed and is now a tremendous boon to the country areas. Should the air ambulance service be required, contributors to country services are entitled to use it. A patient may need to be flown immediately to a large metropolitan hospital. The same service is available to the member for Illawarra or others who happen to be in a country area. People who do not contribute to an ambulance service in their home area may have to pay up to \$350—or more, I imagine, in the Broken Hill area. I pay tribute to the service that has been provided and to the organization of the air ambulance service throughout the State. It has been integrated with the services of the ambulance district transport boards to provide a real service to country people.

I shall deal briefly with the proposal to transfer the officers of the ambulance services to the Public Service Board. In the introductory debate the honourable member for Canterbury mentioned that full-time officers were on call over the whole twenty-four hours a day for seven days a week and received the princely sum of approximately \$62 a week. Those figures were quite wrong. The officer in charge of a station now receives over \$100 a week. The superintendent-secretary of a station, depending on his length of service and the status he has achieved, is paid \$102 a week

at the moment. A further award for that officer is pending. A station ambulance officer grade 1 receives approximately \$70 a week, plus overtime. These officers will be given a very much greater status by transfer to the Public Service Board.

Mr PETERSEN: Overtime is not part of the salary.

Mr FISHER: They receive salary plus payment for the overtime worked. These are the conditions that now apply. The honourable member for Canterbury said they were paid \$62 a week and were on call seven days a week. That is not correct. The honourable member knows it is not correct. I have stated the salaries officers in ambulance stations in country areas are receiving now. The transfer of these officers to the Public Service Board will give them greater benefits by way of superannuation and will assist considerably in recruiting officers to ambulance services. Officers entering this service will know that as members of the public service they can look forward to continuity of service and that their training will be of the highest standard.

The ambulance service will no more need to rely so heavily on the services of volunteers, as it has done for so long. I understand that this legislation will lead to paramedical status for ambulance officers, who will then legally be able to give injections at the scene of an accident. On isolated country roads, the ambulance officer is often the only trained person available to treat seriously injured people. Paramedical status is necessary to ensure that ambulance officers may legally administer morphine or other pain-relieving drugs. I pay tribute to the work of many service organizations that have done a lot for country areas by providing aids such as two-way radios for the efficient operation of country ambulance services.

The future of capital funds has caused some concern to people who have contributed towards the improvement of ambulance services in the country. The Minister in his second-reading speech gave an assurance on behalf of the Government that funds raised in local areas would remain in

those areas and be spent there. The Minister, in a letter dated 29th September, 1971, said:

Whilst the new Act will require the legal title to all ambulance property to vest in the new Board, it is my clear intention that funds now held by a district committee for capital purposes in that district, or to be raised for these purposes, should be spent in the district in which they are raised.

That statement sets out the clear intent, assurance and guarantee of this Government. Members have not heard whether the same assurance and guarantee would be given by the Opposition if it ever came to government.

Mr PETERSEN: It was not necessary.

Mr FISHER: Country people are anxious to know whether the same policy would apply if a Labor government were elected in this State. There is no doubt that under this Government local committees will continue to raise funds in their district. While local committees raise funds, which will be supplemented by funds from the central contribution scheme and from the State Government, there will be little opportunity of amalgamation of areas to any large extent. The honourable member for Canterbury has little knowledge of country areas if he considers that a local committee could be closed down in one town and moved some 50 miles away to another area to raise funds for the two towns. While ambulance services are organized State-wide and local communities raise some part of the funds, there is no doubt whatever that local communities will continue to appoint their own local committee. The bill clearly allows this. Local committees will have the opportunity to nominate their own representatives on the Central Ambulance Board.

The honourable member for Canterbury took up the time of the House unduly by quoting at some length from a report that has not been presented to this House at any stage. He based his whole argument on the Slough committee's suggestion that local committees might be dispensed with. Although that report, of which he professes to have some knowledge, has never been presented to the House, the honourable member suggested that it was the basis of

the bill. The Slough committee was set up by a Labor Government and its report was never accepted by this Government. There is no chance whatever that local committees will be dispensed with in country areas. They are needed to raise funds. In my electorate the people have every intention of maintaining a strong interest in their ambulance service and they will continue to support it.

It was interesting to me and other new members to hear the honourable member for Burrinjuck give an enlightening dissertation on Labor's technique of patronage, which was apparently used in selecting ambulance committees in years gone by. There is no evidence that this practice has continued under the present Government. I regret that such techniques were employed and that the honourable member, who had such a great reputation as a Minister, should resort to denigration of that sort. The honourable member for Illawarra deplored the fact that benefits conferred on his high-density area should be spread to country areas.

Mr PETERSEN: No, I did not. I say that the central government should find the money.

Mr FISHER: The honourable member objected to extension of the benefits that apply in his high-density electorate. He feels that less densely populated areas are not entitled to them. He is not willing to assist ambulance services in country areas in other parts of the State. The honourable member for Illawarra said that he wanted to continue to support the existing services and said that they were organized in a perfectly suitable manner. He was not willing to support the bill, which aims not only at rationalizing services throughout the State and providing excellent services for everyone, no matter where they live, but also at setting a common contributing fee so that all will contribute on a similar basis. The bill will in no way deny to local committees the opportunity of offering local support to their ambulance service. It assures them that funds raised in a local community will continue to be spent in that local centre. These provisions are all embodied in the bill,

which gives the guarantee that the control of the ambulance service will be vested in a board of ten members, seven of whom will reside in country areas. This will ensure that the whole State will benefit equally and on a fair basis. I oppose the amendment. I believe that the House should consider the bill now so that real benefits will flow not only to contributors but also to the officers who have served the service so well and faithfully for many years. I support the bill.

Mr JOHNSTONE (Broken Hill) [4.23] I should like the Minister to answer a number of questions. After listening to previous speakers I am convinced that someone should impress upon the Government that a delay of six months would give the Government breathing space to make inquiries of the various ambulance services and learn how the other half lives. The honourable member for Temora, the honourable member for Upper Hunter and the honourable member for Lismore have spoken about their local areas in which the arrangements are different from those applying to Cobar, for example. I know why the honourable member for Temora calls this measure a machinery bill; he can envisage ambulance officers being relieved of having to run chocolate wheels. I have been out in the West and I have seen how ambulance services operate in other parts of the State. I have seen some on the coast. I have nothing but praise for these men who so often have to go out and earn their wages by running a chocolate wheel. Such a situation is an indictment of any government—not this Government alone, but any government. I am glad to see that something is being done to rectify the situation.

I do not know whether the Minister understands the ramifications of the bill. I believe that he has been misinformed by the Ambulance Transport Service Board and the officers of the department and that a six-month breathing space is necessary so that the Government might determine what the measure should be. The bill should be approached on a non-party basis with the aim of doing something good for all the people of New South Wales. In Broken Hill the ambulance trust is in a good financial

position. I suppose that it is as financial as any other service and perhaps better off than the large majority, but even there the situation must be clarified. I heard the honourable member for Upper Hunter say that he knew of this bill on 29th September last year.

Mr JAGO: A letter was sent.

Mr JOHNSTONE: Apparently the honourable member knew by letter but the first I knew of the bill was when it was introduced last week. I do not know whether I have failed to read my correspondence or I am missing out, but the ambulance trust in Broken Hill knew nothing about this until I rang last week and gave it the information. If I am not being informed, neither is the trust. Perhaps this is because we are so isolated. I want the Minister to understand what the trust is likely to face. In the past the County of Yancowinna has been excluded from a number of awards and Acts of Parliament. Is it to be included in this one? If so, on what conditions is the county to come in? Is it to be on the same basis as everyone else? Are the present conditions of employees of the trust to be carried on? Will our ambulance remain the same and will our services be the same?

Our service offers some unique benefits. One of its main tasks is transport of pensioners and the unemployed, who do not have to belong to the trust; they travel free on our ambulances. Should such a person be hurt at Menindee or Cobar the trust's ambulance will bring him back to Broken Hill. Perhaps it may be said that the Flying Doctor Service is there to cope with that but looking at the number of seventy-six outback calls for last year it would seem that the Flying Doctor Service does not cover everything. Will the same situation continue? Last year our ambulance carried 4,105 unemployed or pensioner patients. The members of the trust want to know these things before it comes into the scheme.

I have here an award which is negotiated every three years—the same as every other agreement—through the Barrier Industrial Council. Will those conditions of employment continue or are the conditions applying to ambulance officers elsewhere in New South Wales to be forced on the people at

Broken Hill? We have a thirty-five hour working week and men are paid double for all overtime. They are entitled to four weeks' annual holidays plus one day for every public holiday. Will their long-service leave be the same? They receive two weeks' leave for every year after ten years' service, so that after ten years they have twenty weeks' long-service leave and it continues at the rate of two weeks for every year worked after that. Will that still be done at Broken Hill? What about sick leave? The officers are entitled to three weeks' sick leave on full pay in each twelve months and it accumulates. If they take no sick leave one year, they can have six weeks' sick leave next year. On retirement they are entitled to a lump sum payment equal to 50 per cent of the money value of accumulated sick leave.

This is only a small three-page agreement but it is a good one. It is the result of negotiation between the ambulance drivers and the trust through the Barrier Industrial Council. Will it be retained? I cannot see how the men will be able to retain these conditions if they are brought under a Statewide scheme. All officers will doubtless have the same conditions. That is why I feel that six months' delay will provide an opportunity to work out something for cases like ours. We do not want to be outside the scheme. The trust has said that if it is possible to come into the scheme and retain all its conditions it wants to be in it. We in Broken Hill want to be part of New South Wales. For too long we have been left out of the State. We want to come into the State again.

A couple of weeks ago a case came to my attention concerning a 14-year-old lad who was suffering a serious back condition as a result of a disease. It was necessary for him to be brought to Sydney for specialist treatment. His parents had a lot of medical expenses and they were feeling the pinch. On a prior occasion they had him brought home by private aeroplane at a cost of \$500 but no working man can afford that kind of money every few months. Thinking the aerial ambulance service was part of the State-wide scheme, I made inquiries from the Minister's office. However, I was told that the aerial ambulance really did not

want to go out to Broken Hill, and it is true that a lot of people do not want to go there. I was told that if the boy could be brought to Cobar or Condobolin the air ambulance would call there and pick him up when it was possible to do so. It meant that the lad would have had to spend two nights in hospital waiting to be picked up at either Cobar or Condobolin. He is confined to a special bed and it is not practicable to transport it by aeroplane. It meant that he would have to be put into a strange bed for two nights and this could have caused him injury.

I contacted the Ambulance Transport Service Board regarding this matter as I did not consider this sounded right. However, I found that it was indeed the position. After I discussed the matter with a member of the board I was told that it would cost about \$925 for the aerial ambulance to go to Broken Hill and in addition it would tie the crew up for some time. I appreciate that there may be problems in this regard, that the 'plane might only average 150 miles an hour, that it would have to refuel somewhere on the way back and that the time lost would put the crew behind in their schedule. However, I took exception to what had been put to me. Although it is supposed to be a State-wide aerial ambulance service, because of the time that would be lost and the amount of money involved it would not come to Broken Hill to transport this patient. Is this the sort of thing that will happen under the new system? Will Broken Hill be part and parcel of the scheme, or will it be in it in a half-hearted sort of way? That is one of the questions my trust wants answered. If Broken Hill is to be only half in the scheme, I am afraid there will be trouble—and when I say that I am not making an idle threat.

MR JAGO: Broken Hill is not in it now. The people there are running their own show.

MR JOHNSTONE: That is the point. We are given a subsidy of only \$169 a month.

MR JAGO: It could be much worse than that. There will be a lot of improvements and I shall touch upon some of them.

MR JOHNSTONE: That is why I am bringing forward these matters. It has been said that we have a strange way of doing things in Broken Hill. However, we do not have a table in the street with a man selling raffle tickets or collecting ambulance contributions, asking people will they be in it. It has been resolved by meetings of workers in Broken Hill that they will contribute to the ambulance service, and their contributions will be taken out of their pay by the employers and passed on to the ambulance trust. That is a neat and satisfactory arrangement. It means that there is almost 100 per cent contributions to the ambulance trust in Broken Hill. Will this arrangement continue or are we to be brought into a scheme where contributions are voluntary?

If we are included in the State scheme, contributions must be voluntary. It is not practicable to have one set of contributions for one district and another set for some other area. The service provided by the Broken Hill ambulance extends to Menindee and Wilcannia. It has gone as far as Orange, Wentworth and Adelaide. In the past year it has provided services on the roads to those places seventy-six times, which is about one-and-a-half times a week. Will this continue to be part of our area? If so, will we have representation on the board or will we remain isolated in the west of New South Wales, except when the Government comes to collect royalties from the mines each year? Incidentally, since 1965 over \$75,000,000 has been put into the coffers of this Government from Broken Hill. I have been trying to work out how much has been returned to the area by the Government. I know that the balance is very much loaded in favour of the State Government, but that is beside the point.

I think I have answered the statement by the honourable member for Lismore that as a result of the bill ambulance employees will have better conditions. The question is, will their conditions be as good as they are now? Will Broken Hill get representation on the board? A board member coming from Lismore or from the area represented by the honourable member for Sturt would not know the conditions obtaining in Broken Hill. Broken Hill must

have representation on the ambulance board if it is to be part of the scheme. I doubt whether many members of the present board have ever been to Broken Hill. Some of the board's officers may have gone there now and again, but having been closely associated with the ambulance trust for many years I am sure that if they had come to Broken Hill in the past twenty-five years I would have heard about it, known of it or met them.

I ask the Minister to answer the questions I have asked and then pass them on to the board for its consideration. It is interesting to hear honourable members talk about their ambulance trusts and organizations. Broken Hill has probably one of the oldest ambulance services outside the metropolitan area. It commenced operations in 1900 with a hand-litter. Many humorous stories are told about those days in Broken Hill. The ambulance service has developed to a great extent since then. At one stage the Victorian Ambulance Association was formed and it received its first horse-drawn vehicle. It is interesting to recall that of 315 calls upon the ambulance in the first year of its operation, 257 came from the mines. I am happy to say that the accident rate is a lot lower now than it was in those days. The service developed from the Victorian Ambulance Association to the stage where one of the mining companies and other people in the town, including the football clubs, commenced paying subscriptions and collecting money on behalf of the trust. The ambulance soon developed into a motorized service.

It is interesting that the government subsidy in 1911 was \$50, so over the past 61 years it has not risen much. Indeed, taking into account the decline in the value of money, the real value of the subsidy is now much less. The people of Broken Hill are proud of their ambulance service. Many fine men have been elected to the board. Incidentally, it is not easy to gain election to it. As most of the 9,000 contributors are willing to cast their votes at an election, one must be fairly good to be successful. A man cannot simply approach the board and say, "I want to be a member," or write to the Minister in similar vein. Membership of the board of the Broken Hill ambulance trust has been

regarded as a post of high esteem. Some estimable men have helped to run this ambulance. As a result we now have an excellent service in the district. Any backward step, away from district committees, would be detrimental to the ambulance service.

I do not want to labour the point that the people of Broken Hill are jealous of their excellent labour conditions and of the way the city is run. These people do not mind putting their hands into their pockets for worthy causes. When the Minister has visited the area he has acknowledged the extent of their contributions to the building or development of their local hospital. As long as these people get value for their money and their representatives have a voice in local affairs they do not mind putting their hands into their pockets. I cannot see how the people of Broken Hill will gain any benefit from the scheme proposed in this bill. I hope the Minister takes notice of the proposal put to him by the honourable member for Canterbury to defer the debate for six months so that the matter can be fully considered. I understand the position quite well, for I have discussed it with men who have been associated with the ambulance trust at Broken Hill for most of their lives.

Mr K. J. STEWART: Country Party members have not even read the bill.

Mr JOHNSTONE: That is correct. From what I have heard from them in this debate I believe that they know very little about it. Admittedly they know something about their own parochial affairs, but they certainly need to sit back and pay attention so that they can learn more about the ambulance committees that are scattered throughout New South Wales. Again I advise the Minister to heed the advice of the honourable member for Canterbury to defer this debate for six months. It should then be possible to hammer out a worthwhile measure in relation to the ambulance services of New South Wales.

Mr CHAFFEY (Tamworth) [4.43]: The honourable member for Broken Hill is the first Labor member from a country area, other than the honourable member for Burinjack who is a former Minister for Health, to apply himself to this matter. It would

seem that now for the first time he has become aware of the Government's intentions and the Minister's thinking in relation to ambulance services—as if this proposal has come before us like a bolt from the blue. There have been a number of speakers from the Government side representing country areas, but it is noteworthy that there has been a dearth of speakers from the Opposition side from the country. After all, the ambulance services in the metropolis come under the administration of the Central District Ambulance and this has led to a decline in community association with the ambulance service.

Mr PETERSEN: Apparently the honourable member did not listen to me and the honourable member for Broken Hill.

Mr CHAFFEY: I listened to both those speeches. Frankly I was disgusted with what the honourable member for Illawarra said both on the introductory motion and at the second-reading stage. He attempted to give the impression that some of his constituents, with great respect to the ambulance committees that operate in an honorary capacity, are being asked to make some sort of a sacrifice in order that people in the out-back areas may benefit. The honourable member for Illawarra seemed to be at cross purposes with the honourable member for Canterbury, who led for the Opposition on this bill. It would be as well for the honourable member for Illawarra to confer with his colleague the honourable member for Broken Hill who apparently has suddenly realized what is contained in this measure. He had something to say about ambulance services in the Western Division, around Broken Hill and the operation of the aerial ambulance. I do not want to dwell over much on the honourable member for Illawarra, who seems to follow his own maverick line, if I may use that term. He espouses some peculiar causes. For example, recently he has attacked Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited, an Australian company that makes use of Australian resources in its steel complex centred in New South Wales.

Mr K. J. STEWART: What about the 8 per cent rise?

Mr CHAFFEY: Is the honourable member referring to an increase in the price of their product?

Mr K. J. STEWART: Yes.

Mr CHAFFEY: I reply by asking, what was the decline in demand for that company's product? This is what Opposition members fail to acknowledge. They expect the wage payer to go broke, but still keep people in employment. They will all be out of work if they do not wake up to themselves. Provided they obtain their bread and butter they do not care about the declining profit of big organizations like Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited.

Mr DAY: Is it going broke?

Mr CHAFFEY: If Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited goes broke, the source of material needed in peace or to meet a threat to the nation will be destroyed. Thus Australia will be unable to meet any challenge with which it is confronted. The Opposition wants to send a major wage payer bankrupt by denying it the right to continue its operations properly. It is important to keep people in employment. Firms that operate profitably contribute to the national welfare by keeping people in jobs. This nation's economic policy should be based on full employment. I fail to understand the psychology of some of our peculiar friends opposite. Apparently they want to destroy the very ones who can keep workers in jobs. Industry must be kept going. If an organization like BHP is wrecked, the whole economy will be destroyed.

Mr K. J. STEWART: Now, how about the ambulance services?

Mr CHAFFEY: Very well. The spirit of a community, the community conscience, is reflected in the extent to which people prepare to meet emergencies. Committees are formed to run ambulances and medical services, to provide first aid, to run women's auxiliaries and to maintain the bush nursing service. Somehow or other there is this pattern of people who come together voluntarily to do something for others, to do something that goes beyond their selfish needs.

Irrespective of changes in the political barometer, the pattern upon which our society will survive is set by the sort of factors to which I have referred, and community sensitivity to them, backed by the hard core of public service administration. The question is whether society is under an obligation to the individual, or the individual is under an obligation to society, or whether it is an intermingling of the two. Each man must answer that question for himself. The proposal made by the Minister in this bill has not been plucked out of the air. The present Minister has administered the portfolio of health since 1965, having inherited it from the previous regime. It would be a different situation if early in his period of office the Minister had put forward a proposal of this nature. However, the bill is based on the Minister's experience, after discussing with his department what should be done, after observing what is happening in the community, judging the reaction of persons in the metropolitan area and in the country, and after talking with those who operate on district committees—superintendents, medical practitioners and others. This bill provides specifically that the ambulance transport service will remain a separate entity and will not be absorbed into the hospitals administration, as is the avowed policy of the Opposition.

MR K. J. STEWART: Nonsense. Last night the Minister said that that was government policy.

MR JAGO: To absorb the Health Commission, not the hospitals.

MR CHAFFEY: I say that it was the avowed policy of the Labor Party to absorb the ambulance service into the hospitals administration system in this State.

MR K. J. STEWART: I say again, nonsense!

MR CHAFFEY: I do not want to question in a non-parliamentary way the veracity of the honourable gentleman. I merely ask him to look at *Hansard* for 1962.

MR K. J. STEWART: That is what the honourable member for Burrinjuck said.

MR CHAFFEY: Does the honourable member for Canterbury not accept what was said by the honourable member for Burrinjuck?

MR K. J. STEWART: He was expressing a personal opinion.

MR CHAFFEY: I say that he was making a statement of government policy.

MR DAY: Does the honourable member mean to say that policies cannot change in ten years?

MR CHAFFEY: Members of the Opposition would not know what their policy was unless somebody told them. Further, they cannot adapt to changing circumstances. They have that peculiar trait of all socialists—they must do what they are told. If he does not understand what I mean, the honourable gentleman might have a look at some of the motions he moved at the annual conference of the Australian Labor Party. The honourable member for Illawarra had something to say against members of the Country Party.

MR O'CONNELL: They did not know what they were talking about.

MR CHAFFEY: If the honourable member for Gosford were fair—and I shall have to appeal to others, for I know he could not be fair—he would say that the fact was that the Country Party, through its federal leader, was the first to back Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited in the recent price dispute. Everybody else, including the Labor Party, attacked the company. The Country Party saw Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited as vital to the internal economic strength of this motion.

MR DAY: The federal leader of the Country Party said there was to be no increase for primary producers.

MR CHAFFEY: The honourable member for Casino fails to understand that the persons he is back-scratching at the moment are only just feeling the repercussions of what has happened in the country as a result of a rural recession in the past two years. Some of his constituents cannot take the output of manufacturers, for there are

no orders to fill them. If a steel producer is down 30 per cent on orders, and others are increasing their costs by goodness knows how much, that steel company must either increase its prices or go broke. Of course, there are repercussions when it does increase prices, just as there are when public transport fares are raised to the extent that nobody wants to use that transport system.

Mr K. J. STEWART: The Labor Party did not support public transport fare increases.

Mr CHAFFEY: It is the same old thing that happened when the Labor Party was in government, and I do not agree with it, no matter what anybody says. However, let me get back to the bill before the House. It has been suggested that the Government is not willing to show its bona fides by making adequate financial provision for the ambulance service. A quick reference to the budget papers shows that in 1963-64 \$460,000 was provided for the ambulance service in New South Wales. In 1970-71 the figure was \$975,000, and for 1971-72, the year in which this new scheme is being instituted, the budget provision is \$1,175,000. Apart from regularizing the administration of the ambulance services, and co-ordinating their activities, there can be no suggestion that there is any intention other than that the Government will provide the necessary funds to make this new concept work. There is no attack upon the idea of persons being able to lend their voluntary support to ambulances, hospitals, or any other form of welfare activity in our community.

The bill does not interfere with auxiliaries, which will continue their fund-raising activities to meet local requirements. Ambulance officers will be given security of employment. There will be no interference with the voluntary efforts that have been a feature of ambulance services over the years. The aerial ambulance came into operation in about 1964.

Mr JAGO: It was 1966.

Mr CHAFFEY: It had some sponsorship in my electorate, where the Tamworth Base Hospital caters for patients from various parts of the North-west. Even before the aerial ambulance came into operation,

urgent cases were put on mercy flights. It was suggested that the Government subsidize specialists who went to isolated areas to treat patients. The committee was formed in Sydney under the late Lieutenant-Governor and substantial funds were raised. I stand to be corrected on this for I am only giving my impressions, but I think I am right in saying that the original idea was to have three centres, say Tamworth, Dubbo and Wagga Wagga. The concept was to get patients and to bring them to a base for specialist treatment. The idea developed from there. It was determined that the first aircraft be based in Sydney and put to work on a sort of milk run. It was planned subsequently to put on more aircraft based at strategic points in the country. Eventually a second aircraft was purchased.

There is no doubt that the aerial ambulance service has justified its existence. In the initial stages, people contributed substantial amounts with the idea of helping to build up a network in their own area. They made donations in the same way as they contributed every year to the local ambulance service. Unfortunately, there is a feeling that they were let down. Tamworth has a base hospital with specialist and other medical services. The substantial building programme there was divided into four stages, and the third stage is now well on the way to completion. I should like to think that it is not only a base hospital but, with all its services and the construction programme, really a regional hospital. With this advantage, and with an airport and facility for aircraft servicing, Tamworth is the ideal base for an aerial ambulance.

Mr JAGO: The aerial ambulance service is staffed by East-West crew.

Mr CHAFFEY: Not wanting to be parochial, I hesitated to mention that. This bill repeals the old Ambulance Transport Service Act, which had to be amended in 1962 to make provision for the aerial ambulance. Apparently under some other Act the meaning of motor vehicle did not include an aircraft, or something to that effect. The new legislation contemplates a broad ambulance

service. The scope of the new authority will not be hampered by any need for too much detailed interpretation.

The board, upon which various interests are to be represented, will be properly balanced and I have no doubt that it will act responsibly. In the handover or takeover the staff will be secure. Under this modern concept, members of the board will take the ambulance service out of the realm of political expediency, thus relieving the responsible Minister of the tribulation of being continually harassed in his attempts to organize details of administration, though he will remain responsible for the service. There can be no suggestion that the Government will not be in control of the new statutory authority under the Crown.

I believe that is the correct approach. In this modern age there is an inundation of details, which leaves no time for people to engage in policy making. I have seen that happen in several fields. Policy decisions based on political expediency result in bad government and bad administration. I support the measure and I congratulate the Minister. The Minister is welcome at any time to come to my territory, where I shall be glad to move a vote of thanks to him.

Mr O'CONNELL (Gosford) [5.11]: This bill has one aspect in common with much of the legislation that has come before this House during the life of this Government; it illustrates the perfidy and hypocrisy of the Government. I cannot understand why anyone, particularly anyone interested in the ambulance service, would support the bill in its present form. I have been a member of an ambulance service for 15 years and I find the bill most objectionable in several of its parts. Members of the Country Party who have spoken in support of this bill must have little acumen and no perspicacity.

Mr K. J. STEWART: Also, they do not know what they are talking about.

Mr O'CONNELL: That is right. The Minister recognizes that. He has taken advantage of their lack of insight and has worked a confidence trick on them. The hypocrisy

of the bill is that it establishes committees and gives them no powers. Clause 27 of the bill provides:

A district committee shall—

- (a) give advice to the Board concerning all matters involving the provision, conduct, operation and maintenance of ambulance services relating to the district of that district committee; and
- (b) exercise and may carry out such powers, authorities, duties and functions as the Board may delegate to it from time to time.

Yet the bill contains no provision for the board to delegate powers to the committees. Clause 20 provides for the board, by instrument in writing, to delegate to the holder of any prescribed office the exercise or performance of certain powers. The delegation is to the holder of any prescribed office: the district committee does not seem to be a prescribed office. That is not said anywhere in the bill. The only delegation provision that the board has is to officers. At present the officers make recommendations to the committees. This bill will place the committees in the most invidious position in that they will have to make recommendations to the officers. Imagine the Country Party members falling for that. They do not know what the bill means. People do not read bills. That was illustrated during the debate on the Egg Industry Stabilisation Bill. Country Party members supported that measure and did not find out what they were supporting until it was pointed out to them that the provisions were wrong. After they had all spoken in support of the bill, the Minister agreed the provisions were wrong and undertook to correct the position.

Clause 18 states that the board shall provide, conduct, operate and maintain such ambulance services as it deems necessary from time to time. That is another obnoxious provision. It means that a district committee operating efficiently could have its service reduced by the board's transferring that committee's staff or equipment to another area. The diligent will suffer to assist the lazy. I am a member of the Brisbane Water district committee, which operates efficiently, far beyond the value of its contributions, and I know that the board will say to that committee, "You offer a service that cannot be justified by your contributions; you have too many ambulances, we

shall transfer two of them to the bush." It has been said that Casino has an excellent ambulance service. The same thing will be said there, that the service is too good in comparison with, say, Grafton, and one of the Casino ambulances will be transferred to Grafton. I cannot accept that I can work on a committee for 15 years, provide a service to the people in my area, and have part of it take away overnight and given to someone else.

In its present form the bill has the two major failings that I have mentioned. Everyone concerned with ambulance services will find those failings obnoxious. The measure should not leave this Chamber until the weakness in regard to the delegation of powers has been corrected. The only way this can be done is for the amendment to be accepted. I ask the members of the Government, particularly members of the Country Party, who must answer to their constituents, to support the amendment. On the matter of the committees' having no powers, although I hesitate to quote from something that has been previously quoted, I shall read from the Slough report to demonstrate to government members that the report is available. At page 22 the Slough report states:

As mentioned earlier the district committees are elected triennially by the "subscribers". Each committee is to consist of not less than seven nor more than twelve members. When reference is made to the figures quoted earlier in this report on the number of employees in each district, i.e. 46 districts employ less than ten staff, 19 employ three or less, one is led to wonder what duties and responsibilities are there to engage committees of this size? What decisions are there for them to make?

During the course of its inquiries, the Committee asked these self-same questions of several district committees. The replies were unconvincing. There was talk of the need for keeping an eye on the local finances, of determining the contribution rates, of deciding when to buy a new vehicle, of enlisting local support in the affairs of the ambulance service, of encouraging fund raising.

Some members of the district committees confided to individuals of the Committee that they previously had not asked themselves these questions, but on doing so frankly had to admit that they doubted whether there were any issues they were called upon to decide that a Secretary-Superintendent could not safely have decided himself.

Mr O'Connell]

Obviously that report has been the guide for the formulation of the delegation provisions in this bill. The Minister obviously thinks that these committees perform very few useful functions and might as well not have these delegations, that the powers could as well be delegated to a superintendent or some other appropriate officer. The Minister has framed the bill in accordance with the suggestions in the Slough report and the Country Party members have swallowed it boots and all.

Mr COWAN (Oxley) [5.20]: I add my support to what has been said by members on this side of the House and I join the honourable member for Tamworth in complimenting the Minister on introducing this measure. The ambulance transport services of this State are the best in the world: this has been acknowledged by people who are familiar with the work they perform. After examining the services that are available the Minister has decided that there is a necessity for a co-ordinated ambulance service throughout the State. The ambulance services will be extended throughout New South Wales and will provide a first-class service to the whole community. It is a shame that the debate has developed into a discussion on the city *versus* the country or the Country Party *versus* the Labor Party. There is no need for the matter to be approached in this way.

Country people are proud of their ambulance services. Our local ambulances should be proud of the service they provide, not only in the major towns but also in the smaller country centres. This excellent service has been operated for many years under the auspices of district committees, which have provided first-class vehicles, excellent ambulance stations and a most efficient service. I admit that in the country—and I dare say in the city—there is a need to expand ambulance services. That is the intention of the bill: it seeks to co-ordinate the ambulance transport services within the State. There is no reason why any service, particularly one concerned with the health of the people and one of the magnitude of the ambulance service, should not

be co-ordinated. The Minister intends to organize the co-ordination of the regions that will be set up throughout the State.

I represent an area that has a most efficient ambulance service. I should be the first to ask what will become of it. The Manning River district ambulance service is one of the most efficient ambulance organizations in the State. Its service extends into the territory represented by the honourable member for Raleigh, to Wauchope, Port Macquarie and to Gloucester. The service has developed over the years to the point that there are now eighteen modern air-conditioned vehicles being operated from its centres in those towns. The committees in these areas have voluntarily, quietly and efficiently over a long period of time built up the service. I should be the first to object strenuously if I thought a bill was being introduced that would be to the detriment of these ambulance services, but, I know this measure will be to their advantage.

This afternoon I listened attentively to one honourable member who read from a letter from the Minister. I should like the Minister to give an assurance that where an ambulance service, such as the Manning River district ambulance service, has raised a sum of money and has placed it aside to build a certain project to supplement existing services, it will be allowed to keep the cash and use it to develop projects that are in mind. The Manning River district ambulance service has approximately \$250,000 in assets, and I think it has set aside about \$60,000 or \$70,000 towards implementing specific plans to extend existing services. It is intended to expend this money on real estate—land, bricks and mortar—so that an improved service can be given to a part of the district.

It is comforting to know that these local ambulance services will be able to retain the money they have accumulated, and that they will be free to continue to raise funds. There is some mis-understanding when people say that these services will be controlled. They will be controlled, but only from a co-ordination point of view. The Government will assist them to expand.

They will be assisted to set up new committees so that people throughout the rural parts of the State might be given a service they do not have at present. Many country people could not expect to get this type of service except for the passage of the bill. The most important services in the State are those concerned with the health of the people.

The honourable member for Tamworth spoke about the aerial ambulance service. Any day in the country, particularly on the North Coast, one can walk outside one's home and hear the aerial ambulance pass overhead. Some of the larger towns in the State would be visited by the aerial ambulance as often as five times a week. This service was never available before an amendment was made to the Act in 1962. We are now, in 1972, dealing with an amendment to the Act that will provide an expanded co-ordinated health service for the people of this State.

One wonders why members opposite oppose the measure in principle and ask that it be put aside for a period of six months in order that somebody may look at it, when the bill would be pulled to bits and thrown out. I cannot understand why people who are elected to a parliament by democratic means do not want to support a bill that will improve ambulance services for both country and city dwellers. This afternoon the honourable member for Illawarra said that he and his family have not required the services of an ambulance for years. They have been lucky. My family has had the same experience but we pay into the ambulance fund. It is like taking out an insurance policy: at some time it might be of use.

I congratulate the Minister upon taking the initiative in introducing the measure. Apparently it is not popular with all honourable members but I do not know why this is so when it will benefit the people they represent. There is always a great division when attempts are made to introduce legislation that will improve the health of the people. It gets back to the old story of the country *versus* the city. This is an important part of decentralization, and that is another reason why members should support it.

Mr O'CONNELL: This is a most centralized measure.

Mr COWAN: If there were no schools there would be no people in the country. Without hospitals and ambulances people would not live in the country. We are keen to have this legislation passed: it is the policy of the Government to give service to the people. Another benefit that will result from this measure will be a common fee for membership in the ambulance services of this State, instead of the present system under which different services charge different membership fees.

This afternoon an honourable member pointed out that one should never take from people the initiative to raise funds for charitable purposes. I certainly agree with that view. One of the basic reasons why Australia has progressed so rapidly is that our people have always been encouraged to run their chocolate wheels or raise money in other ways for a variety of purposes. Such organizations as Rotary and the Red Cross have rendered splendid service on behalf of the community. In my district most people support fund-raising efforts in order to finance efficient services like the ambulance. This legislation will not prevent that practice. It is quite clear that funds raised in this manner will be retained by ambulance committees for expenditure within their districts. I am pleased to support this bill, which I regard as a progressive move to improve this State's ambulance services. I favour the principle of co-ordination incorporated in the bill, as it lays the foundation for extending a service to many people in small country towns who otherwise would not receive it.

Question—That the word proposed to be left out stand—put. The House divided:

AYES, 48

Sir Robert Askin	Mr Crawford
Mr Barraclough	Mr Cutler
Mr Jack Beale	Mr Darby
Mr Brewer	Mr Doyle
Mr Brown	Mr Duncan
Mr Bruxner	Mr Fife
Mr Cameron	Mr Fischer
Mr Chaffey	Mr Fisher
Mr Clough	Mr Freudenstein
Mr Coates	Mr Griffith
Mr Coleman	Mr Healey
Mr Cowan	Mr Hughes

Mr D. B. Hunter
Mr Jackett
Mr Jago
Mr Lewis
Mr McCaw
Mr McGinty
Mr Mackie
Mr Maddison
Mr Mason
Mr Mead
Mr Morris
Mr Morton
Mr Mutton

Mr Osborne
Mr Punch
Mr Singleton
Mr Stephens
Mr Taylor
Mr Viney
Mr Waddy
Mr N. D. Walker
Mr Willis

Tellers,
Mr Mauger
Mr Ruddock

NOES, 44

Mr Bannon
Mr Barnier
Mr Bedford
Mr Booth
Mr Cahill
Mr Coady
Mr Cox
Mr Crabtree
Mr Day
Mr Degen
Mr Durick
Mr Earl
Mr Einfeld
Mr Flaherty
Mr Gordon
Mr Haigh
Mr Hills
Mr M. L. Hunter
Mr Jackson
Mr Jensen
Mr Johnstone
Mr Jones
Mr Kearns

Mr L. B. Kelly
Mr R. J. Kelly
Mr Mahoney
Mr Mallam
Mr Mulock
Mr Nott
Mr O'Connell
Mr Paciullo
Mr Petersen
Mr Quinn
Mr Ramsay
Mr Renshaw
Mr Ryan
Mr Sheahan
Mr Sloss
Mr Southee
Mr J. J. T. Stewart
Mr K. J. Stewart
Mr Wade

Tellers,
Mr Ferguson
Mr F. J. Walker

Question so resolved in the affirmative
Amendment negatived.

Mr JAGO (Gordon), Minister for Health [5.37], in reply: In replying to the second-reading debate, I should like to answer briefly some remarks made by honourable members, especially two important submissions. The first of them concerns the control of assets of the various district ambulance committees. It is as well to point out that the bill does not establish any ambulance districts. The existing fifty-seven districts are being preserved. They may be expanded or reduced in number according to decisions of a representative board. I wish to refer particularly to two important points in relation to which some members displayed their ignorance. As I have said, the first relates to the control of assets by ambulance committees. In this respect I invite the attention of honourable members to the fact that since 1924 any asset of a

district could be taken over by the board. So, for the past forty-eight years it has been possible for the board to commit a heinous crime that some honourable members seem to think might be perpetrated by the board as a result of the powers being conferred on it by this bill. Section 16 of the Ambulance Transport Service Act provides:

Any real or personal property which at the commencement of the Ambulance Transport Service (Amendment) Act, 1924 . . . is acquired by a district committee . . . shall, if the board so requires, be forthwith assured to and vested in the board or as the board may direct.

Any statutory authority established by an Act of this Parliament—and therefore subject to the Parliament—is required to conduct its affairs responsibly and seriously. Members of Parliament have a similar responsibility. Surely we will not abdicate our responsibility to the ambulance services, with which we are directly identified and of which we are mostly extremely proud.

The honourable member for Illawarra referred to the position at Gordon. All I can say is that the Gordon ambulance station was demolished recently, and when various local squabbles of a parochial kind are clarified, we may eventually have another ambulance service there. At the moment we have none. Another point to which I draw attention, as it was raised by several members, relates to clause 20 of the bill, and this business about the delegation of authority. The whole purpose in developing a uniform ambulance service in New South Wales is to ensure, not centralization, but the delegation of authority from a representative board to district committees. At the moment the board has 40 per cent country representation. The proposal in this bill is that that figure be increased to 70 per cent. Under existing law, in order to be a representative on the board, one does not have to reside in the district concerned. The representative may live in Sydney and retain past associations.

Before I reply briefly to some of the views expressed in the debate and give information that has been sought on various points, I should like to say that I am advised by the Parliamentary Counsel that clause 20 has been drawn as it is to enable the board to

delegate authority to the holder of any prescribed office. I say without fear of contradiction that a prescribed office includes a district committee, and I give a complete assurance on that point. The honourable member for Canterbury, leading for the Opposition in a field in which he has had considerable experience, described this bill as cunning legislation. We may differ in our opinions on the choice of adjectives of that sort.

Mr K. J. STEWART: You said that it was sinister.

Mr JAGO: I was trying to help the honourable gentleman out as I sometimes do when he is groping for a word. Why is it that not one employee of the ambulance service either indirectly or through his parliamentary representative has objected to the provisions of this bill? Why have district committees written and commended the bill? I was in Manilla recently, when the Tamworth district committee handed me a letter endorsing the proposals in the bill.

Mr JOHNSTONE: We did not know about it until last week.

Mr JAGO: Our colleague from the County of Yancowinna knows that this legislation was authorized in the Government's election policy announced in February last year. If the Government wants authority for anything, it has it in that document. I liked what the honourable member for Lismore said in the debate, that local committees may, on their own decision, develop an ambulance service throughout the whole of the Richmond River Valley. Strangely enough, Casino was one of the birthplaces of the ambulance service in New South Wales, and the home of great stalwarts of the service like the late Jack Dennis, Mr Bailey and others. I should refer also to the fact that the Lismore ambulance service has invited me to open the new ambulance building at Lismore some time next month. This sinister, cunning, dangerous member of the Government is going up to Lismore to congratulate the local committee and to open the new ambulance station, just as he opened two new ambulance stations, one at Wollongong and the other at Dapto. On each of those

occasions the Government's proposals were well known, having been discussed publicly, and the president of the Wollongong committee said that the proposals were completely acceptable.

The honourable member for Illawarra, who rightly reposes the whole of his responsibility in the area for which he is responsible, should remember that the ambulance service in the area immediately south of his electorate, known as the Shoalhaven, is in dire financial distress. Does he think it likely that some contributors to the excellent Wollongong scheme would travel through the Shoalhaven area and want ambulance attention? Could they be denied an efficient service because the Shoalhaven district was in financial difficulty for various reasons? Does not the Shoalhaven district ambulance frequently buy discarded ambulance vehicles from the Illawarra area? Talk about discrimination between the rich and the poor, a subject with which we associate the honourable member for Illawarra, and on which he is entitled to his views.

I do not know what the honourable member for Canterbury would have done without the Slough committee report. He must have spent 55 minutes of the 1 hour and 10 minutes of his speech discussing that report. Mr Slough is behind the bar of the House at the moment and has heard all the debate. He has been of tremendous assistance over the years in assisting with the solution of ambulance service problems. One of the most serious of them in recent years has been in the Murrumbidgee district.

The honourable member for King interjecting,

MR SPEAKER: Order! There is no occasion for the honourable member for King to become excited.

MR JAGO: The Slough committee was appointed by the former Minister for Health. When I followed him into office, I continued that committee, which did a magnificent job in overhauling the ambulance service and looking into new problems that were emerging. The committee was a representative one. Honourable members have been warned of the Government's "sinister"

proposal to provide for only seven districts in the future. Seven seems to be a good biblical number. As far as the honourable member for Canterbury is concerned, the Government is proposing seven of this and seven of that; we are to have sevens all over the place. It is interesting that at present there are fifty-seven districts. The chairman of the district committees organization is Mr Jack Dudley from Lithgow, who was a member of the ambulance board nominated by the Government in the days when the Labor Party was in office. However, on no fewer than five annual occasions, to the consternation of certain persons who would like to see everything nicely centralized, tidied up and boxed, I have given an unqualified guarantee on behalf of the Government that the districts will prevail, that they will survive, and that only by a voluntary decision on the part of those committees will they amalgamate or join together for a variety of reasons—which is certainly entirely within the province of the slightly reduced ambulance board. Several speakers, particularly on the Opposition side, have asked what the composition of the ambulance board is to be. The honourable member for Illawarra suggested it was unlikely that anyone with a Labor Party association would be appointed to the board. He thought I was sufficiently one-eyed to ensure this.

The bill provides for a board of ten, three of whom shall come from the metropolitan area of Sydney—the central district, that great district which was amalgamated in 1962 in a succession of shotgun weddings, embracing Canterbury-Bankstown, St George, the eastern suburbs, and the western suburbs including Parramatta. This is one of the imbalances of the service. The chairman of central district ambulance, who is in Mr Speaker's gallery at the moment, came from one of the committees, I think Canterbury-Bankstown or St George. This tremendous organization has provided ambulance services for 2,500,000 residents in this vast area.

The honourable member for King interjecting,

MR SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for King is in peril.

Mr JAGO: The 2,500,000 residents of central district were getting a cheap ambulance service. Their contribution of \$5 a year for a family entitled them to full benefits. There has been a variety of contributions throughout the rest of the State. Let us have a uniform contribution, a common contribution for the service. Let us have equal benefits. Let us have a board with three people to represent those 2,500,000 residents of central district. Obviously another representative must come from the Hunter River-Newcastle area, which has a magnificent contribution scheme and an efficient ambulance service, and another from the Illawarra district. This will make five representatives of contributors on the ambulance service board. Many people have given outstanding service for many years, and their integrity is beyond question.

The Slough committee report, with its drastic recommendations, was not acceptable to the Government, though the bona fides of its members were not questioned. Surely it is stretching the imagination to suggest that a report received in 1965 should lie around for seven years while the Government awaited an opportunity to bring down this allegedly diabolical proposal. The report recommended a reduction of district committees, which, as has been mentioned, would transfer to the State Government the whole responsibility for financing the ambulance service. It would be unwise to do this. A feature of the service has been voluntary contribution with strong local support. In Gosford, a magnificent ambulance station is about to be opened for the Brisbane Water ambulance service, which is improving in remarkable fashion. It is essential that its parochial boundaries and distinctions be broken down.

One or two members seem to think that all members of the ambulance service will come under the Public Service Act. Let me clear up the position. I mentioned in my opening remarks that the staff of the ambulance board, by reason of the possibility of a move in various sections of a comprehensive health service, will be employed under the Public Service Act. However, the general structure of the ambulance service will be retained, with its employees being eligible for superannuation benefits from the local government and other authorities

superannuation fund. One of the most contentious issues in the ambulance service as I know it has been employment only by districts. This unwarranted limitation perpetuates the white-haired-boy philosophy—look after the local boy—and ignores other persons who have discharged onerous responsibilities under great difficulties, thus precluding them from entering the green fields and lush pastures.

Mr DAY: There are rules of seniority, though.

Mr JAGO: Yes, but merit comes into it, too, and the question whether people wish to be transferred. It is desirable to have a career service that people may enter with confidence. This is much better than to isolate districts and to have appointments made entirely at the whim of a local committee. There have been a number of resignations from the committees. The legal position is uncertain as to who employs whom and as to what rights people have. This will be clarified. The legislation will afford protection to employees of this great service. It gives them rights of transfer and promotion that they have never known before. This is of tremendous importance.

Let me now turn briefly to the remarks of the honourable member for Lismore. I have dealt with the important question of maintaining local assets. When funds are raised for a specific purpose, it would be fundamentally dishonest and a breach of trust for the ambulance board to divert them to another purpose. When funds have been raised for specific purposes, they have never been used for any other purpose. I am sorry that some bad feeling developed between the honourable member for Burrinjuck and me during the debate. He is proud of the 1962 legislation. He referred to certain personal matters which I shall not try to canvass here.

Mr PETERSEN: He was proud of the appointment he made to the Hospitals Commission, too.

Mr JAGO: Yes. I do not wish to denigrate anybody who was appointed to such a position. There was no suggestion of people being shanghaied. Let me refer to

the case of my brother. I was unaware that he had ever been a member of the ambulance board until his name was mentioned last night, though I had mentioned in my speech that, through him and his association with the Grafton ambulance service, I had lived for some forty years in the shadow of the ambulance service. My brother was the chairman at Grafton, and then he came to Sydney. On 24th June, 1955, he was appointed by the Hon. Maurice O'Sullivan as a government nominee to the ambulance board. Upon re-constitution of the board under the 1956 amendments, the honourable member for Burrinjuck, who was then Minister for Health, selected as government nominees Mr Barry, chairman, Mr Dudley of Lithgow and Mr Bates of Newcastle, displacing Mr R. J. Hawkes, chairman, Mr P. N. Ryan, M.L.A. and Mr G. A. Jago. That was a long time ago. I am assured by Mr Kelly, secretary of the board, who is in close attendance here tonight, that there is no substance in any suggestion of soliciting for the re-appointment of my brother to the board. I have had the records checked as far as this can be done. I quote: "At no time was Mr Jago's name canvassed for the position of permanent chairman of the board". However, he came in through a back door, having been nominated by St John Ambulance, and he resigned from that position in August, 1965, shortly after I was appointed.

[Mr Speaker left the chair at 6 p.m. The House resumed at 7.30 p.m.]

Mr JAGO: Before dinner I was dealing with a regrettable difference of opinion that occurred during the second-reading debate yesterday. I have now obtained from the Ambulance Transport Service Board certain information in regard to the association of my worthy brother with the ambulance service of this State. My brother was in fact a member of the first air ambulance appeal committee. Sir Kenneth Street, the president of that committee, and other able people on the committee, such as Mr Hudson, Mrs Nancy Walton and others, asked whether my brother could be given leave from his employment so that he could devote his full time to the appeal. Unfor-

tunately, it was not possible. I am sorry that personalities should have been introduced into the debate.

The honourable member for Temora raised a very important matter. In New South Wales there are two isolated ambulance services. One is at Broken Hill and the other is in Bland shire with its headquarters at West Wyalong. The Bland shire service is of a very high standard. Its premises are first class and the shire has every reason to be proud of the service. The superintendent, Mr Anderson, is an ex-Navy man and has had a great deal of training in health care. The honourable member for Temora asked what would be the position of such an isolated ambulance service in the new over-all State structure. I have no doubt that reasonable and fair arrangements will be made with the Bland shire council. Ratepayers in that shire will no doubt be able to enter into reciprocal arrangements so that wherever they may be in the State they will be eligible for road or aerial ambulance transport. I am sure an amicable agreement can be reached.

Obviously the solution to many problems will be found in the regionalization of administration of the ambulance service. In future years the responsibilities that now so frequently overlap between the State and local-government authorities will be perhaps merged. At some time in the future the federal authorities might be willing to delegate some of their responsibilities, so that the people in our community bearing the expense of these services will be saddled with no more than the minimum of overhead costs and duplication. I should welcome in the next decade the emergence of regional health councils, controlling the ambulance service as part of their total health concept. Local people would be involved in such a scheme.

Mr MALLAM: There would have to be uniform consideration of industrial matters.

Mr JAGO: That matter, which might be better raised in Committee, is one for the industrial arbitration machinery. On second thoughts, I am grateful to the honourable member for Campbelltown for raising that question. No section of our community

deserves better recognition and remuneration than those people who make a career in the ambulance service, frequently in distasteful circumstances and in situations such as I saw locally not so long ago when a person jumped under a train. I agree with the honourable member for Campbelltown that the community should give appropriate recognition to this service. People in the ambulance service should be able to concentrate on the duties with which they are primarily charged and not be involved in fund-raising activities.

The honourable member for Illawarra quoted at length from a letter written by the Wollongong district committee. There is no fear that the Wollongong service will be merged in the central district service. In my opinion, the central district is now too big. It serves a population of 2,500,000, which is virtually half the population of the State. An election by the subscribers to the ambulance service would ensure that every member of the board came from the metropolitan area.

Mr MALLAM: I should like to see the State take over the ambulance service, as with the fire brigade and the police.

Mr JAGO: The Government, and many members of the Opposition, I am sure, would like to preserve the voluntary interest and the local support.

Mr MALLAM: There is no need for it. It was an opinion of the last century.

Mr JAGO: It would be regrettable if we merely sat back on whatever nature has provided for the purpose, and expected someone else to organize the service for us. I should like to encourage people who have shown an interest in this field. Otherwise, we shall move into what has been described as a bureaucratic atmosphere and wait for someone else to make decisions. Every element of this bill tends to the delegation of authority. The degree of authority delegated will depend on the representations made by members of this House as the situation develops.

I have considerable regard for the city of Broken Hill. Despite the difficulty the Government might have in winning that elec-

torate, it has given generously and has provided first-class hospital facilities. For the first time for many years, shower rooms, change rooms and toilets are now appropriate to the industrial requirements of that city.

Mr JOHNSTONE: The people of Broken Hill have a good representative.

Mr JAGO: That is right. Without wishing to give the honourable member what might be termed in a political sense the kiss of death, on the occasions that I have been in Broken Hill the honourable member has given me assistance. Shorty O'Neill once said to me that I would be welcome in Broken Hill up to the time of the next election, after which he had no doubt that I would be no longer Minister for Health. The honourable member represents an isolated part of the State where there are difficulties in respect of the provision of the aerial ambulance service. However, I am sure that as a result of this measure there will be a special health region in the West and that the improvements in regard to the service given to Tibooburra, Wilcannia, Wentworth and Broken Hill will provide evidence of the Government's interest in that remote part of the State.

The honourable member for Broken Hill mentioned a lad who has to be brought to Sydney for specialized treatment. I understand the lad's father is vice-president of the Barrier Industrial Council. I should be prepared, at the request of the honourable member, to put before the ambulance transport board yet to be constituted as a result of the provisions of the bill, a reciprocal arrangement by which, whatever the decisions of the ambulance board may be, in the interest of the total service, it may assist in the care of the people of Broken Hill, who should not be left in isolation. The flying doctor, in association with the aerial ambulance, could provide a complementary service that would end the isolation of Broken Hill and deal with problems similar to the one involved in the transport of this unfortunate 14-year-old lad to Prince of Wales Hospital, at great expense to his parents. We are worried about this situation, I am sure an amicable arrangement could be made. We still look upon the

people of Broken Hill as residents of New South Wales, who are entitled to the same standards of care and attention as any other citizen in the State. It was not brought out in the debate, when we spoke about heavily populated areas, but there is a need for us to think of these more remote parts.

The honourable member for Tamworth at times convinced me that he was more concerned with the survival of Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited than with some of the problems facing the ambulance service. However, I can understand it: his brother is a prominent member of the staff of that organization in Wollongong. Before I conclude, I shall say something about the next stage of the aerial ambulance operations. The board has seen fit to acquire three Queen Baron aircraft. It was stated that the aerial ambulance travels at only 150 miles an hour, and that may be so if you include time taken in ascending, coming down and circuiting. However, I understand these ambulance aircraft have a cruising speed of 220 miles an hour.

The question was asked as to who started the aerial ambulance. The fact is that many people launched an appeal that raised at least \$500,000. There is very little political philosophy involved in a discussion on ambulance services. When you wish to help people you do not ask them what their religion or politics might be. We are all affected by the activities of the ambulance service. There will be a great development of the ambulance services. The Government came to office in 1965 and the first aerial ambulance flew in 1967. My predecessor in office, in association with the late Sir Kenneth Street, and other prominent people promoted the appeal.

The honourable member for Oxley has been assured about the assets of district ambulance committees and their rights in relation to them. These assets have been acquired by the board since 1924. I have given an assurance about their freedom from danger in the years to come. I close on the note of Commonwealth recognition of the need for ambulance services as an essential part of our total health service concept from a taxation point of view and also under the voluntary health insurance scheme. It is desirable that people be able

Mr Jago

to contribute to an ambulance service in the same way as they contribute to a voluntary health insurance scheme. I look forward to the expansion of the service commenced in St Vincent's hospital and in other organizations in association with the central district ambulance in relation to the development of coronary care units. I hope—without denigrating the ambulance service—that we shall reach the stage where medical services will be available particularly in spinal injuries and other serious types of injuries.

The Ambulance Transport Service Act of 1919 carries the following long title:

An Act to make better provision for rendering first aid to and for the transport of sick and injured persons, and for that purpose to establish a board with certain powers and duties; and for purposes consequent thereon or incidental thereto.

The bill before the House does just those things.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE

The CHAIRMAN: Order! With the consent of the Committee I propose to put the bill in parts.

Part II (clauses 5 to 20)

Clause 5

Page 5

20 Minister; and

(c) shall consist of ten members appointed by the Governor on the nomination of the Minister, one of whom shall, in and by the instrument of his appointment, be designated as the chairman.

Mr K. J. STEWART (Canterbury) [7.51]: During the second-reading debate I foreshadowed that in Committee I would move an amendment to clause 5 to permit the nomination of a member of the Health and Research Employees Association of New South Wales to the new New South Wales Ambulance Board. The Minister replied courteously and at length to all members who participated in the debate. However, I thought that he glossed over some of my remarks notwithstanding the fact that I made the longest speech. Certainly he said that my comments on the report of the Slough committee were so extensive that had I not obtained a copy of that report I should not have been able to make my

speech. He ignored completely that this was a report on this State's ambulance services. I thought that I had proved conclusively to the House that many of the recommendations in that report are provided for in this bill. Indeed I pointed out that they are cunningly provided for. They are set out in black and white, but unless one has a copy of the report to compare with them, one would not discover the real thinking underlying this measure.

There were a number of Country Party speakers on the bill. I suppose that no Liberal member considered that he needed to join in the debate. The Country Party members were critical of city members, but none of the Liberal Party members, who receive an excellent ambulance service as most of them live in the area covered by the Central District Ambulance, bothered to reply. They left the debate to the Country Party. As the record of this most informative debate will be available for posterity I certainly hope that the ideals enunciated by Country Party members will be lived up to by them in the future. I am sure that if they fail to do so they will be quickly reminded of their shortcomings.

During the second-reading debate I challenged the Minister to tell members why after fifty-three years of continuous representation by a member of the union covering employees engaged in the ambulance service, the Liberal-Country party Government has seen fit not to include in the bill a provision on those lines. The Minister offered members no reason for not having a union representative on the new board. Yet he told members that there will be amalgamations of districts or there could be alterations to districts. He added that this would be on a voluntary basis after a committee requested an amalgamation or alteration of boundaries. I do not accept the Minister's assurance in that regard. In 1919 a union representative was placed on the Ambulance Transport Board.

Mr CAHILL: Under a Labor government?

Mr K. J. STEWART: No, under a Nationalist government, which is worse than a Liberal government or even a Liberal-Country party government. In those days if you were a "Nat" you were indeed an

ultra-conservative person. Even the ultra-conservative government of 1919 saw fit to include a union representative on the board. All of a sudden, after fifty-three years, off the board he goes. The Minister stated that no regard had been paid to the Slough committee report, and he implied impertinence on my part for suggesting it. That report was available in 1965, in dark distant days and apparently forgotten by this Government. Certainly that report did not recommend that there should not be a union representative or a representative of the central district ambulance or a representative of ambulance districts elsewhere in the State.

I thought that the Minister might say why after 53 years this Government has decided not to have a representative of the Health and Research Employees Association of New South Wales on the new ambulance board. After all, there are sure to be changes in the conditions of these employees. As the law now stands promotion for them is limited to the districts in which they are employed. Following the enactment of this measure they could be transferred to other districts throughout the State. Transfers will not be at the whim of the district, even though we are led to believe that there will be delegated authority. The bill specifies that a district committee will be able to employ and dismiss people up to a certain grade. For positions above the grade of station officer the decision will be made by the board. It is not suggested in the bill that the decision be made by the board on the recommendation of a district committee. I should imagine that the Minister will reply that regard will be had to the opinion of the district committee when a decision is being made on the appointment of any employee above the rank of station officer.

My point is that for the first time in many years the conditions of employment of people in this service will be in jeopardy. I do not mean that the Government will interfere with their conditions. I mean that they will be in jeopardy in that something that has not occurred previously will happen in the future—it will be possible for a man to be moved from district to district within New South Wales. Let us all remember that the Minister said that nothing will be done

about amalgamations during the formative years. If not, why not just appoint the first board? That board will do the amalgamations and the abolitions of districts. During the second-reading debate I made this claim, and it was refuted by members of the Country Party, but they added that if it does happen, they will accept it in the interests of the whole of the State.

Mr FISHER: I did not say that.

Mr K. J. STEWART: The honourable member for Upper Hunter claims that he did not make such a statement. He did, and so did the honourable member for Temora and the honourable member for Oxley. They said it in effect by accepting this measure with their eyes open. If there are to be no alterations to districts, why appoint the first board? What is the two-year period for? During that time will the board members simply be shaking hands, getting used to the contents of the board room cupboard and attended meetings? After their two years' apprenticeship will they be re-appointed for five years, or are they being put there for two years in order to organize amalgamations of district committees? The Minister knows the answer to these queries.

Why has it become necessary, 53 years after the introduction of the ambulance service, to drop the union representative from the board—the representative who would protect the men affected by transfers and by alterations of districts? In 1919 unionism was not a pleasant word. If an ultra-conservative government of that time saw fit to have a representative of the men on the board, why does the present Government see fit to drop him from it? Why did the Minister not reply on this point?

Mr JAGO: I should not have had enough time.

Mr K. J. STEWART: As the Opposition feels that it is imperative to have a member of the Health and Research Employees Association of New South Wales on the new New South Wales Ambulance Board, I move:

That at page 5, line 24, after the word "chairman" there be inserted the words "One of the members nominated by the Minister shall be a qualified ambulance transport man

from a panel of three persons nominated by the Health and Research Employees Association of New South Wales."

I have included in my amendment three persons because under the bill the Minister is required to make the nomination. In order that my amendment will be in order I have allowed for a panel of three persons so that the Minister will be able to exercise his right in accordance with clause 5 of the bill.

It is important that the Government appoint a union representative as a member of the board—representation that has proved worth while, not only through the terms of the present incumbent of the office, but during the past fifty-three years. I see no reason why a representative of the Health and Research Employees Association of Australia, who should also be a qualified ambulance transport officer, should not be appointed. I have extracted that qualification verbatim from the Ambulance Transport Service Act, 1919–1965, which the Minister says has done much for ambulance services in New South Wales. Nowhere in the bill is there a suggestion that a qualified ambulance transport man should be a member of the board, but employees of the ambulance board are entitled to have their representative on the board to protect their interest. The precedents of fifty-three years support my argument that there is no reason why the Government should now remove such a representative from the board.

Mr JAGO (Gordon), Minister for Health [8.2]: An interesting amendment has been moved by the honourable member for Canterbury. In the general concept of ambulance service legislation in the past, the amendment would have been appropriate, but it is not acceptable at this juncture, for it will be apparent that a board of twenty-one persons provided wide-ranging representation.

Mr K. J. STEWART: Nineteen persons.

Mr JAGO: The Act provided for twenty-one members, but as a result of certain developments the net membership of the board is nineteen. The proposal in the bill is to have a board of ten members, three

from the metropolitan area and seven from elsewhere. That leaves the matter entirely open. It will be seen from the present composition of the board that a variety of organizations are represented. I apologize to the honourable member for Canterbury if he thought I was casual in my reply at the second-reading stage. I did not wish to show disrespect for the manner in which he addressed himself to the question, but I wanted to be brief. The essence of the bill is for applications to be made by ten contributors to the ambulance service, and not employees of that service, to be appointed to an ambulance board. Certain worthy organizations now represented will disappear from the board, such as the St John Ambulance Brigade, the St John Ambulance Association, and a number of others. The honourable member for Canterbury bases his support for the amendment on the need for somebody to be on the board to protect the interests of ambulance employees.

Mr K. J. STEWART: Not primarily.

Mr JAGO: But at least to have regard to those interests. He asks that a qualified ambulance transport man be appointed. I have a considerable and sincere regard for the Health and Research Employees Association of New South Wales.

Mr K. J. STEWART: Cut it out! Are you going to accept the amendment or not?

Mr JAGO: I have already indicated that I am not going to accept the amendment. It is completely contrary to the concept of the bill. The bill provides that ten contributors to the ambulance service of New South Wales shall be appointed to a board.

Mr K. J. STEWART: Not first appointed.

Mr JAGO: Shall be appointed to a board—and that is what the board will be for two years in the first place, and then later for a longer period. No mention is made in the bill of having union representation. Mr Torkington, who is secretary of the association to which the honourable member for Canterbury refers, recently resigned

from the ambulance board. I have considerable respect for him and the responsibility with which he has discharged his duties.

It is said by the honourable member for Canterbury that since 1919 there has been a union representative on the board, even when a Nationalist government was responsible for the introduction of this legislation. Throughout the whole of this era it has been essential for those who were employed in the service to work for their living, not only professionally, but also by raising funds on the side. Four or five years ago I was in Port Macquarie looking at a delightful ambulance station and I asked the staff, "Where is the ambulance?" They said, "It is down in the main street where they are selling lucky numbers." I think there was a by-election taking place in the area at the time.

No longer should members of the ambulance service have to sing for their supper. How long did they have to do so when their proletarian friends were in government? I shall not answer my own question. I will merely say it is a pity that a political philosophy is invoked in respect of this service, and how tragic are the circumstances in which it often operates, and how great is the service rendered by so many from the highest to the lowest levels. Irrespective of the recommendation of the Slough committee, the bill does not accept any concept other than the appointment of an executive board of ten members, which could well include a qualified ambulance transport man.

Mr K. J. STEWART: What about Mr Kille?

Mr JAGO: Mr Kille, the much maligned chairman of the board, sweated it out last night—

Mr K. J. STEWART: Who maligned him?

Mr JAGO: He was worked out here last night. I do not wish, however, to disturb the pleasant atmosphere as we discuss an almost non-political matter. I give a guarantee that there will be a qualified ambulance transport man on the board, and there may be two.

Mr K. J. STEWART: Nominated by the union?

Mr JAGO: No. Mr Maurie Kille is chairman of the board. The Government did not appoint as chairman a member of some social service committee of the Australian Labor Party. Our nominee is a man who entered the service at Bellingen as a station officer. He is a qualified ambulance transport man. He first became a member of the board to represent the Tweed district in another capacity. I would go so far as to say that there might be more than one qualified ambulance transport man appointed to the board.

Mr K. J. STEWART: To represent the union?

Mr JAGO: No, because union representation is not needed. I was given a lot of hoo-haas last night when I said that I belonged to a trade union. If a person belonged to a trade union in 1930, which was before some honourable members opposite were born, he really believed in the rights of the working man—especially if he was paid about thirty shillings a week. I was getting £178 per annum at 21, and for four years afterwards. Possibly the honourable member for Cooks River belonged to the same organization.

Mr CAHILL: I was more exclusive, being at the State bank.

Mr JAGO: The Premier was a prominent member of the bank's industrial organization too. While we are indulging in these pleasantries, let me say that in rejecting the honourable gentleman's amendment no disrespect is intended to the Health and Research Employees Association of Australia, or anyone associated with it. Men such as Mr Torkington and Mr Kille are to be commended for the responsible way in which they have carried out their duties. The composition of the board as submitted in the bill has no bearing on the industrial problems of employees of the service. I conclude on the note that nobody in the ambulance service has sought such representation. I think the honourable member for Canterbury said that he was surprised that no one had been in touch with him about it.

Mr K. J. STEWART (Canterbury) [8.12]: That is nonsense. The Minister did not listen to me. I am dismayed by the fact that the Minister does not listen to me. I knew that he did not listen to his departmental advisers, otherwise he would not have said what he did. Has he tried to vindicate his refusal to put a union man on the board? He merely says he does not want one. He has given no reason. He has not explained why, after fifty-three years of union representation on the board, this representation is no longer necessary. He said the Government would appoint ten people who are subscribers. That is not right. Subclause (4) prescribes that the members first appointed under this Act shall hold office for a period of two years and shall be eligible for re-appointment. I should not have spoken again on this clause if the Minister had not said that there would be ten representatives of subscribers. Subclause (6) prescribes that members other than members referred to in subclause (4)—and they are the people who are first elected—shall be contributors and shall be nominated, so it is only those who are second elected. The Minister just told the Committee that they had to be subscribers. Under the bill they do not have to be subscribers. Why should he say that they must be subscribers? He is like Country Party members who do not know what is in the measure. There is more enlightenment in this debate after Opposition members have shown members of the Country Party in particular what is in the measure. Later in the debate I might mention the *faux pas* of members of the Country Party in asking the Minister for certain assurances when he is precluded by the measure from giving those assurances. It was futile to ask him for those assurances. There is specific provision in the bill that precludes such assurances.

Mr JAGO: They have always been given.

Mr K. J. STEWART: I do not want to labour the subject. I regret very much that the Minister should give an incorrect assurance in Committee. He has told us that these representatives must be subscribers when, under the bill, they do not have to be. We have read the bill. We are not like

members of the Country Party. The Minister should not tell us something that is not correct. He should tell us what is in the bill. If he does not, we shall tell him what is in it.

Mr JAGO (Gordon), Minister for Health [8.16]: The amendment deals with subclause (2) (c). The erudite gentleman with such profound knowledge of the bill has overlooked subclause (3) which reads:

(3) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section, a person who is—

- (a) of or above the age of seventy years;
- (b) an officer or employee referred to in section nine of this Act;
- (c) a servant of the Board; or
- (d) an honorary ambulance officer,

shall not be eligible for appointment as a member.

That is a contradiction of the amendment.

Mr CAHILL: One cannot put two amendments at once.

Mr K. J. STEWART: If the Minister accepts this amendment, I shall move for the deletion of that provision.

Mr JAGO: The House agreed to it at the second-reading stage.

Mr K. J. STEWART: No. If it did, it would mean that we could not move amendments in Committee.

Mr JAGO: The honourable member could move to alter that particular provision, but he has not done so.

Mr K. J. STEWART: We have not come to it yet.

Mr JAGO: The amendment is proposed at the bottom of page 5. The next succeeding paragraph—

Mr CAHILL: We have not reached that yet.

Mr JAGO: The House agreed to it. No indication was given of any other amendment to this clause. I submit that the whole approach—

Mr CAHILL: On a point of order. At the third-reading stage the Speaker says that he has a certificate under a certain standing order that the bill is in accordance with the bill as agreed to in Committee. We are in

Committee at present. The only thing we have resolved at the second-reading stage is that the House consider the bill in detail. Whether this bill is accepted depends upon the deliberations in Committee.

The honourable member for Raleigh interjecting,

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I call the honourable member for Raleigh to order.

Mr CAHILL: It is for the Committee to decide whether this bill will be accepted in its printed form or whether it should be amended. For the Minister to say that it was all agreed to at the second-reading stage is an attempt by him to mislead the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: What the honourable member for Cook's River says is correct, but it is not a point of order.

Mr JAGO: I shall not labour the point any further. The amendment is not acceptable. It is contrary to the whole concept of the bill. I have great respect for the organization mentioned by the honourable member. I leave it at that. I am sure the necessary arbitration machinery will be available to it. I hope the administrators pursue and obtain the benefits to which their members are richly entitled. They have rendered excellent service.

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted—put. The Committee divided:

AYES, 44

Mr Bannon	Mr Jensen
Mr Bedford	Mr Johnstone
Mr Booth	Mr Jones
Mr Cahill	Mr Kearns
Mr Coady	Mr L. B. Kelly
Mr Cox	Mr R. J. Kelly
Mr Crabtree	Mr Mahoney
Mr Day	Mr Mallam
Mr Degen	Mr Mulock
Mr Durick	Mr Nott
Mr Earl	Mr O'Connell
Mr Einfeld	Mr Paciullo
Mr Ferguson	Mr Petersen
Mr Gordon	Mr Quinn
Mr Haigh	Mr Ramsay
Mr Hills	Mr Renshaw
Mr M. L. Hunter	Mr Ryan
Mr Jackson	Mr Sheahan

Mr Sloss
Mr Southee
Mr J. J. T. Stewart
Mr K. J. Stewart
Mr Wade

Mr F. J. Walker

Tellers,
Mr Barnier
Mr Flaherty

NOES, 47

Sir Robert Askin
Mr Barraclough
Mr Jack Beale
Mr Brown
Mr Bruxner
Mr Cameron
Mr Chaffey
Mr Clough
Mr Coates
Mr Coleman
Mr Cowan
Mr Crawford
Mr Cutler
Mr Darby
Mr Doyle
Mr Duncan
Mr Fife
Mr Fischer
Mr Fisher
Mr Freudenstein
Mr Griffith
Mr Healey
Mr Hughes
Mr D. B. Hunter

Mr Jackett
Mr Jago
Mr Lewis
Mr McCaw
Mr McGinty
Mr Mackie
Mr Maddison
Mr Mason
Mr Mead
Mr Morris
Mr Morton
Mr Mutton
Mr Osborne
Mr Ruddock
Mr Singleton
Mr Stephens
Mr Taylor
Mr Viney
Mr Waddy
Mr N. D. Walker
Mr Willis
Tellers,
Mr Brewer
Mr Mauger

Question so resolved in the negative.

Amendment negatived.

Mr MALLAM (Campbelltown) [8.27]: I have listened with great interest to the debate on this bill. At the introductory stage I thought the bill was going to bring about a wonderful change. I asked a number of questions and I expected to hear a good deal about what is to happen. However, the Minister seems to be one of those nice old-fashioned gentlemen who like to turn back the clock to the last century. Listening to him tonight was like listening to the puffing of the wind. The Minister does not want to make any changes. These days, changes are not forbidden and it is not unusual for ordinary people to be made members of boards. In some very big companies, union men are being appointed as members of boards. In Germany, for instance, every effort is made to make such appointments. In its early days, Qantas Airways Limited had on its board representatives such as Mr Bill Taylor.

Mr JAGO: Mr Taylor was a solicitor, a legal man.

Mr MALLAM: The Minister wants to go back to the year 1900. The Government will not take any notice of what is happening in a modern world and will not allow a union representative to be on the board. In that event, how can the board get the views of the man who is earning \$68 a week, on call for seven days a week, driving an ambulance on his own? In the organization the bill proposes, how can the board get to know the problems of that man?

This is an old-fashioned method of appointing members to a board. It is a case of the biggest subscriber becoming a member. The biggest nong in the community could be appointed to the board. When the Minister introduced the bill I thought there would be a step forward, but the clock is being turned back. The constitution of the board is a vital part of the ambulance service. As the honourable member for Canterbury pointed out, in the matter of representation on the board we are taking a step backwards.

Mr HEALEY: On a point of order. The honourable member for Canterbury moved an amendment to clause 5 (2) and that has been dealt with. The honourable member for Campbelltown is now speaking on the same subclause and is alluding to matters that have already been dealt with. The honourable member should be discussing the matters contained in paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) of subclause (2) of clause 5.

Mr CAHILL: The amendment has been disposed of and we are dealing now with clause 5. The honourable member for Campbelltown is directing his remarks to clause 5.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! What the honourable member for Cook's River says is correct. As the Committee has dealt with the specific amendment dealing with union representation on the board, I must rule that the amendment should not be dealt with again by the honourable member for Campbelltown.

Mr MALLAM: I was dealing with the whole function of the board and I made those remarks in passing. The Committee should know what the fees of the members of the board will be.

Mr JAGO: They will be included in the regulations: they have not yet been determined. They will be the standard fees.

Mr MALLAM: We are not told what the standard fee will be. That is one of the objections I have to the Government's legislation. Parliament is being by-passed when too much is left to be included in the regulations. This is a new measure and honourable members should be told something about it.

Anybody would be suspicious of the Government having regard to the way it introduces legislation. Honourable members are entitled to know what the fees will be and what expenses will be paid. This clause setting out the constitution of the board is a basic part of the bill. The Minister has not had enough to say about this clause, and what he has said has not been a satisfactory explanation. We could be pardoned for thinking that the Government intended to introduce a new ambulance system under which a proper board would be set up with the right type of representation, similar to that on the fire brigades board. I expected the Minister to tell us that the board would be representative of all sections of the community. I should like the Minister to assure us that the board will be based on the quality of its representatives not on their fund-raising ability.

The Minister may say that there are seven country representatives, but are they the seven best men available? If not it will be disastrous for the ambulance service. Trouble has been experienced in the past with big names and people with insufficient ability. What are to be the qualifications of members of the board and how will they be selected? Will they be paid on the same basis as members of the fire brigades board? There should be a set-up similar to the police force. The health of the community is just as important as any matter concerning the police force. There is nothing more vital than a properly constituted ambulance service. The voluntary system could be abolished. That could be done even in the milk industry, but it is not possible under this measure. The clock is being turned backwards; it is an old-fashioned method, an old-fashioned board and old ideas. Per-

haps the Minister can tell me how it is possible to upgrade the ambulance service by paying higher salaries. The other night the Minister nodded agreement when I said that two men should be riding in an ambulance.

Mr JAGO: It cannot be set out in the bill that every vehicle shall have two people in it.

Mr MALLAM: The Minister nodded agreement; he agreed it was vital in certain cases. The bill is negative; it will not do the job we were told it would do. It will give the Minister a lot of power over the board—something he did not have before. I object to the composition of the board.

Part II (clauses 5 to 20) agreed to.

Part IV (clauses 35 to 37).

Clause 35

[Contribution Scheme]

Mr K. J. STEWART (Canterbury) [8.40]: During the second-reading debate I foreshadowed an amendment to clause 35 of the bill, which relates to the contribution scheme. The amendment I intended to move would ask the board to pay regard to certain matters. I suppose that I could have just as validly moved an amendment to part V of the bill because clause 38 provides:

The Treasurer may, out of moneys provided by Parliament, from time to time make such contributions to the funds of the Board as may be determined by the Treasurer.

The amendment I intended to move would have had the effect of adding the following proviso:

Provided that in considering the rates or amounts of contribution to be paid the board will have regard to the amount of surcharge levied on a motor vehicle driver's licence in New South Wales payable to the ambulance service and—

- (a) credit the contribution of the holder of a current New South Wales motor vehicle driver's licence by an amount equal to the surcharge paid if such holder is a contributor; and
- (b) if such holder is not a contributor allow a reduction of the account for ambulance service in the same proportion as the amount paid as a surcharge on a motor vehicle driver's licence is to the contribution.

Though I would claim that I am not naive politically, I have been naive enough to believe what the Minister for Transport said last November in relation to payment of a proposed surcharge on motor drivers' licences to the New South Wales ambulance board. As I believed that this promise would come to fulfilment. I suggested at the second-reading stage that in this financial year the board would have \$1,075,000 available to it from this source. The Minister might not recall my statement, but I assure him that this was my belief. The Minister corrected me by saying that the surcharge would be an amount up to \$1. One cent is an amount up to \$1. Last November when motor drivers' licence fees were increased, allegedly to finance road works and the ambulance service, honourable members thought that the surcharge for the ambulances would be \$1. We now find that it is to be an amount up to \$1. I assumed that \$1,075,000 would go to the ambulance board out of the increase from \$4 to \$6 in the motor driver's licence fee.

Today, to my surprise, from inquiries I made—and I should not be surprised if the Minister made the same inquiries yesterday—I learned that my earlier assumption was incorrect. This is an example of how shallow some of the Government's propaganda really is. I was informed today, first, that the surcharge would be of an amount of up to \$1; second, that the rate had not yet been determined; third, that it would not be determined for at least 12 months; and fourth, that even if it were determined, no sums would be transferred from the road transport and traffic fund to the ambulance fund until the deficit in the road transport and traffic fund had been taken up and there was a surplus in that account. Then, and only then, would the Government decide what amount would go to the ambulance services.

The honourable member for The Hills is a very keen member and is often in attendance in this Chamber, and therefore I would not charge him with making a statement as stupid as that made by some of his colleagues in November last. They then asked: "Why are Opposition members complaining about a surcharge on the motor

driver's licence? After all, the money is to go to the ambulance services." They said also, "What a horrid lot they are to oppose a measure that will provide finance for this purpose." I believe that these Government members were sincere but I find now that what was stated by the Minister on that occasion was pure trickery. It was chicanery. As not one cent is yet available from the surcharge on motor drivers' licences for the ambulance fund, I am unable to move my amendment.

The Minister rightly pointed out that the amendment that I foreshadowed would be an administrative nightmare. I agree with him, but I thought that at least if drivers were to be levied \$1 a year for the ambulance service, they should be regarded as contributors for a proportion of that surcharge. I now find that not to be the position. The Government's announcement was as much a blind as the reason given by a criminal for a robbery he had committed. He claimed that he did it because his poor, sick, old mother needed an operation. In effect the Government said, "We are robbing the motorists of this State to help the poor, sick, old ambulance fund." No rate has yet been fixed and it will not be announced for at least twelve months. No money will be paid to the ambulance service until the Minister for Transport has a credit balance in his road transport and traffic fund.

Though it is claimed that traffic accidents are responsible for the majority of ambulance calls, I do not agree with this allegation. I agree that road accidents account for a big proportion of the mileage of ambulances in this State but many people who require ambulance transport have never been injured in motor accidents. Although it has been said that motorists will have to pay up because of their heavy involvement in accidents, I am sure that Government members will rationalize and claim that as more money will be spent on traffic lights, traffic signs, and safety precautions, this will reduce the number of road accidents. Then they will go further and say that this will reduce the calls on the ambulance service.

Mr K. J. Stewart]

I would bet that the Minister thought that he was to get \$1,000,000 out of the surcharge. However I shall not ask him to answer yea or nay to that. In my second-reading speech I asked what would happen to the \$975,000 already allocated for the ambulance service in this financial year. I asked whether it would remain in consolidated revenue and whether the ambulance service would be credited with only the amount of the surcharge on motor drivers' licences. Probably in the coming financial year there will be an allocation to the ambulance service somewhat similar to that for this year. The honourable member for Monaro said that the surcharge represents only five pulls on a five-cent poker machine.

Mr RUDDOCK: Twenty cents. It was the honourable member for Canterbury who referred to the five-cent machine.

Mr K. J. STEWART: I checked up on what was said and it was definite that the honourable member for Monaro referred to five pulls on a five-cent machine. He was talking about a monthly contribution, but I am not accountable for the mathematics of the honourable member for Monaro. The Government was not pulling the handle of a poker machine when it told him about the surcharge; it was pulling his leg.

Part IV (clauses 35 to 37) agreed to.

ADOPTION OF REPORT

Bill reported from Committee without amendment, and report adopted on motion by Mr Jago.

BILL RETURNED

The following bill was returned from the Legislative Council with amendments:

State Emergency Services and Civil Defence Bill

COAL MINES REGULATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

SECOND READING

Mr FIFE (Wagga Wagga), Minister for Mines and Minister for Conservation [8.51]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

A principal object of this bill is to give statutory recognition to the position of certain mining officials in the coal industry. The first of these is deputy manager. It is a position that has existed in the industry for a long time but it carries no statutory recognition under the Act. Consequently, no legal responsibilities are attached to it. Its existence has been acceptable to both management and workmen because all persons appointed as deputy manager hold a first-class certificate of competency which would, in any case, permit them to be appointed as managers of a mine.

When mines were comparatively small producers and the coal was won by hand-mining methods under a contract system, the administration of a mine was not difficult and the technical problems could be handled by the manager, assisted by an under manager. With the change to intense mechanization there has been a change in the extent of the managerial duties, which have, in effect, increased so much as to make it difficult for the manager personally to see that they are carried out. Deputy managers have been appointed by owners to lighten the burden on the manager, though these persons have, as I have said, no statutory responsibilities under the Act.

The bill authorizes the owner or agent of a mine to appoint a deputy manager. He will be subject to the control of the manager and will have the powers and duties conferred and imposed on deputy managers under the Act. To be appointed as a deputy manager, a person will need to be the holder of a first-class certificate of competency. In the absence of the manager, the deputy manager will have the same responsibilities and will be subject to the same liabilities as the manager.

A similar problem exists in relation to the position of assistant under managers, as they are called in this bill. Under the Coal Mines Regulation Act, no mining official between the deputy and the under manager has any statutory authority. There is evidence that such an official is necessary, because it has been the practice, over the years, to appoint overmen to assist in the supervision of mines. Their duties range from immediate supervision of particular

jobs to making up pay sheets and organizing production from specific sections of the mine.

Under the Act, daily personal supervision is required to be exercised by the manager or by one or more of the under managers. Under present conditions, it is sometimes necessary for the under manager to confer with up to eight deputies going on shift and the same number coming off. Unless this is done within a relatively short time, it impedes the working of the colliery. He needs also to be at the colliery to confer with the deputies when the afternoon shift finishes. With the recognition of assistant under managers it will be comparatively easy for these officials to confer with the deputies. This will help ensure that all matters and instructions are properly conveyed from shift to shift.

An under manager in the larger collieries has to read and countersign as many as 200 reports. This, as members will appreciate, takes considerable time and restricts consideration of other equally important matters. The appointment of assistant under managers will relieve this position. Officials of this type are needed also to ensure that electrical supply equipment is moved closer to the coal face when required, and to organize the flow of materials properly so that a district is always supplied with sufficient timbers and other items for the safe working of the mine.

Under section 5AA to be introduced by this bill, a manager of a mine, where there is an under manager, may appoint one or more assistant under managers. The status of an assistant under manager will be superior to that of a deputy but inferior to that of an under manager. To be appointed or to act as assistant under manager a person will be required to hold a first-class or second-class certificate of competency or a certificate of service as an assistant under manager. Certificates of service will be granted by the Minister to applicants who immediately prior to the commencement of these amendments have at least two years' experience in a mine performing, under the control of a manager, the duties imposed upon assistant under managers by this Act. These duties will be set out in detail by

Mr Fife]

regulations made under section 56B of the Act, and will relate to instruction of workmen, observance of safety measures and such matters.

At the Committee stage I shall move a minor amendment to subsection (6) of proposed new section 5AA—dealing with the issue of certificates of service. I want to clarify the point that an applicant for such a certificate need not have been performing, during the previous two years, each and every one of the duties that may be required of an assistant under manager. This would be unrealistic as the duties will be covering a fairly wide range. Certificates of service are necessary because although the intention is ultimately to have the position of assistant under manager held by persons with second-class certificates of competency, there are not enough holders of certificates of this type, at the present time, to supply the demand.

In all the discussion I held, it was unanimous that if a new arrangement imposed the requirement of a first-class or second-class certificate of competency as a qualification for assistant under managers, some protection ought to be given to persons who are now performing the same duties without such a certificate. A certificate of service represents that protection and, from the advice I have received, it will be available to some 90 persons.

A further aspect of supervision in mines, dealt with in clause 3 of the bill, concerns the appointment of sufficient deputies in a mine. There is generally too much work in a mine for one deputy as provided in the Act, and in fact more than one deputy is usually appointed. In future it will be up to the manager to appoint as many deputies as are sufficient, in his opinion, to ensure the efficient discharge of the duties of deputy.

Section 3 contains definitions of various terms used in the Act. To the present ones have been added those of "district check inspector", "electrical check inspector" and "inspector of the district". These are terms in frequent use in the Act and a definition of them will be helpful. Two existing terms have been omitted from the section—these are "coke-works" and "gassy-place". Reference to coke-works is unnecessary: such

works now come within the jurisdiction of the Department of Labour and Industry. The definition of gassy-place has been omitted as the term is used nearly exclusively in the electrical regulations contained in the seventh schedule. It is planned to redefine this term and to place the definition more appropriately in the schedule.

An increasing number of mines have installed winding or hauling engines of a fully or partly automatic type. For example, at the Aberdare East Colliery near Cessnock, mineworkers and other persons wanting to go to the coal face or return from it to the surface are conveyed in cars which run on rails laid in one of the tunnels. The movement of the cars is controlled by a winding rope, one end of which is attached to one of the cars, called the "control car" or "dolly car", the other end being attached to the drum of a winding engine, situated in the engine room near the entrance to the tunnel. As the winding rope is unwound from or wound on to the drum, the control car and any other cars which may be attached to it move down from or up to the tunnel entrance.

In order to operate the haulage the operator seats himself at the controls and depresses the knob of the lever, which is a dead-man control, and moves the lever forward or backward according to the direction of travel required. By returning the lever to the centre position the haulage comes to a slow stop. When the hand is lifted off the knob, thereby operating the dead-man control, the haulage comes to a quick or emergency stop. An automatic lift has also recently been installed at Darkes Forest by Coal Cliff Collieries Proprietary Limited. This lift is a four-rope friction drive automatic man-lift with each cage being double decked. It is not designed for the carriage of goods or materials. The only controls available to people inside the lift are the ability to open the door manually, and a button to cause the lift to move when ready and a button to stop both cages in an emergency.

Section 11 of the Coal Mines Regulation Act provides that a person in charge of a winding or hauling engine shall be the holder of a certificate of competency or of service. This is clearly unnecessary in mines

where there is installed the type of engine that I have described. The driver of such an engine does not require any special skill or experience to control the engine, which is designed automatically to "fail safe" in the event of malfunction or improper use. Under this bill, provision is made for the chief inspector to exempt any person driving machinery of the type I have described, that is, machinery of a fully or partly automatic nature, from being required to hold a certificate of competency or of service under the Act.

Clause 3 (j) deals with the medical examination of holders of engine drivers' certificates. The holders of certain of these certificates will now be required to undergo regular two-yearly medical examinations before operating prescribed machinery. These examinations will be of engine drivers, such as winding engine drivers, whose duties in a mine involve the safety of fellow workmen. Under new section 11B, to be inserted by this clause, the holder of a prescribed certificate shall not take charge of or operate machinery to which subsection (3) applies, unless he has produced to the manager of the mine a medical certificate relating to an examination undergone by him not earlier than two years before the date on which he takes charge of or operates the machinery. The Minister is authorized to declare the classes of engine drivers' certificates affected by this provision and also the class of machinery to which this subsection applies. By this method, the mandatory medical examination prescribed by subsection (3) of section 11B will be restricted to winding engine drivers and to such other classes as may be necessary.

When a medical certificate shows, in the opinion of the chief inspector, that the driver is unable to perform his duties safely, the Minister is required to cancel or suspend the engine driver's certificate. Similarly, the Minister has the power to restore a cancelled engine driver's certificate, or to remove the suspension of a certificate in cases where a medical certificate is subsequently received and the chief inspector certifies that the person is now able to perform his duties. These provisions are of a similar

nature to those contained in the Mines Inspection Act, where they have worked successfully since their introduction in 1968. That Act of course deals with metalliferous mining, not coal mining.

I should like now to mention the changes made by this bill affecting electrical engineers and mechanical engineers in coal mines. A mine electrician will now be known as a mine electrical engineer. This is a more appropriate term as such persons are members of the Institute of Mining Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. It is also a term indicative of their true status. However, the qualifications to obtain the certificate of competency will be as at present. A new certificate of competency as mine mechanical engineer is introduced by these amendments. Until now, anyone could be appointed in a mine as mechanical engineer, whether properly qualified or not. This is undesirable. The complexity of mechanical engineering equipment now in use at collieries requires the attention of a properly trained person to keep it in safe working condition. Under this bill the coal mining qualifications board will appoint examiners to examine applicants for certificates of competency as mine mechanical engineers. An applicant will need to have not less than two years' experience in the maintenance of machinery as an engineer or fitter in a mine, though this period is reduced to one year when the applicant already holds a degree or diploma in mechanical engineering from an approved educational body.

Another provision of this bill concerns section 35A of the Act. Subsection (2) of this section, as it now stands, requires that, within three months of the variation of a colliery holding by the acquisition or disposal of lands, or the acquisition or cessation of rights to mine, a plan of such lands or particulars of the rights, be furnished to the Under Secretary for Mines. It would appear that when lands which have not been newly acquired are added to a colliery holding there is no necessity for a plan to be lodged. The obvious objective of section 35A is that my department should be able to keep up to date a register of all land within a colliery holding, where mines have been opened and are operating. This in

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turn enables my department to ensure performance of, and supervision over, the many requirements for safety with which the Act is concerned. The section is to be amended with this objective in view so that notice of all variations in a holding will be received.

The provisions of the Act dealing with the reporting of accidents and dangerous occurrences in mines are being amended to bring them into line with overseas practice. The present requirements are set out in sections 36 and 36A. Under these sections, where loss of life or personal injury occurs in a mine, certain reports and notices must be given to the Minister and inspectors. These provisions require the reporting of very minor injuries and, in consequence, it becomes difficult to make a proper comparison of accident statistics with those of other countries. In their amended form these sections will now require notice of loss of life or serious bodily injury, as distinct from personal injury, which might or might not be of a serious nature. "Serious bodily injury" means, for this purpose, such injuries as may be prescribed by regulation. Section 36A sets out the list of dangerous occurrences which must be reported. To these have been added the outbreak of fire on the surface of a mine and the abnormal inrush of water or other material into a mine. The full list is set out in clause 3 (v).

When any mine is abandoned, the owner and every person interested in the minerals of the mine are required to fence off the entrances to prevent accidents. This requirement is contained in section 38 of the Act. These fences are frequently damaged or fall into disrepair, and although the section extends to their maintenance, it is not easy to police, because of the number of mines and the difficulty of locating previous mining lessees who may have left the area. Furthermore, there is some doubt whether the present terms of the section could properly be enforced against a person who was no longer either a lessee or occupier of the mine. These difficulties have led to a twofold amendment of the section. In the interests of safety, the requirement to fence an abandoned or discontinued mine has been changed to the duty of sealing it to the satisfaction of the chief inspector.

There may of course be many cases where fencing would still be more appropriate and in these instances the chief inspector can, at his discretion, allow them to be fenced. The onus of meeting the requirements of the section will be on the owner of the mine or on the person who but for the abandonment would be the owner of the mine. These changes should provide durable safeguards against accidental injury from abandoned mine workings.

I now turn to the matter of barriers within coalmines. It is an established safety practice, here and overseas, to leave part of a seam of coal unworked so as to provide a barrier of a certain width against the external boundaries of the colliery holding. These barriers protect workmen in a mine from any inrush of water or noxious or inflammable gas from adjoining workings and separate the workings of one mine from those in adjacent colliery holdings. The relevant terms of the Act are contained in section 38A, but this section refers only to barriers against the external boundaries of colliery holdings. There are other places in coalmines where barriers, or protective pillars, are required to ensure safety of workmen in the mine, or to protect natural or artificial features on the surface. In many instances, it is the duty of coalmining companies under the terms of a lease to provide additional barriers and protective pillars. However, they are often provided at the suggestion of an inspector or even by the company without formal request.

The amendments to be made by this bill extend the circumstances in which barriers and pillars are required to be left during the working of a seam of coal. A barrier, as at present, will be required against the external boundaries of the colliery holding. Where the coal seam crops out within the colliery holding boundaries, a barrier of a prescribed width will be required against the outcrop of the seam. Barriers will also be a statutory requirement between open-cut workings and underground workings, where both these methods are being conducted in the colliery holding. The Minister will now have the authority to direct, by means of an order given to the owner, agent or manager, that a barrier or protective pillar of

specified size be left against the mean high-water mark of tidal waters, or against surface improvements or any feature, whether natural or artificial, within the colliery holding. When such barriers are no longer needed, and can safely be extracted, subsection (5) of the present section authorizes the Minister to permit their removal.

The final matter concerns summary court proceedings that may be commenced following an accident in a mine. When there has been a special report by an inspector, or a report made by a court appointed to hold a formal investigation, or a coroner's inquest has been held, which indicates that provisions of the Act were not complied with, proceedings can be taken within three months after the report or inquest. This time has been found to be too limited, as reports of this nature are very large and complex, and when they infrequently arise, the time within which action must be taken does not give my department or the Crown Solicitor sufficient scope to make a close appraisal of the report. The present period of three months is therefore to be extended to six months. That completes my appraisal of the bill. I believe it constitutes a worthwhile measure and I commend it to the House.

Mr JOHNSTONE (Broken Hill) [9.17]: As I listened to the Minister, I realized that many of the amendments contained in this bill are long overdue. Many of the requirements set out in the measure are already contained in the regulations applying to mines other than coalmines and I have long been puzzled why such matters have not been included in the Coal Mines Regulation Act. The records disclose that this Government has moved slowly in introducing amendments to this Act. In 1966 the chief inspector of coal mines, Mr W. C. Anderson, drew attention to certain matters in the Coal Mines Regulation Act. He pointed out that under section 5A (1) of the Act the deputy, when appointed in a mine, has particular responsibilities regarding safety and no other person, unless superior to a deputy with statutory responsibilities under the Act, shall interfere in any way with a deputy or countermand any direction or instruction when the deputy is performing his statutory duties.

In 1968, the new chief inspector, Mr A. F. Perkins, reporting on the supervision of safety regulations, stated:

A number of complaints have recently been made to the Department that deputies have not been properly appointed, and also that officials at mines other than the manager and under-manager have countermanded instructions by deputies to workmen, and have in some cases presumed to instruct deputies in the discharge of their duties. These workmen, who are usually given the designation of "overman" have stated in several cases that they have been delegated powers by the manager to supersede deputies in the working of the mine.

The overman crept into the industry like a thief in the dark and took over the position of deputy, who had to hold a certificate of competency. Many overmen did not hold a certificate, and most of them were what is commonly known in the mining industry as a pink-eye of the boss, who was given authority over a man who had been examined, certificated and deputized by the Mines Department to carry out these duties. These matters were reported upon in 1966 and 1968. However, about that time there was a change in the Minister for Mines. I realize that it takes a long time for a man to take up the reins and get into action, especially in the mining industry. Most mining regulations were written many years ago and they have been revised many times since. They are a complex set of regulations and they take a lot of understanding. It is an indictment of the Government that it has taken from 1966, when the matter was first reported on by the chief inspector of mines, until February, 1972, to bring forward these amendments. I appreciate that these amendments have been kicked around by the mine managers. The federation and the other mining unions came into the matter, although not often. These amendments have been kicked around mainly by the colliery proprietors. After six years they have come forward instead of being introduced at least two or three years ago.

Although these amendments were first brought forward in 1966, not a great deal of alteration has been made to them. In the intervening time the accident record of the coalmines of this State has been such that the Government should have been concerned about it. The Government should have done

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something towards eliminating or at least reducing a number of mine accidents. Coal-mining is a hard and dangerous game. A coalminer goes underground to a new, dangerous world. If he does not take the proper precautions for his safety, if all safety regulations are not carried out and proper supervision exercised, he may be in trouble. I have been in the mining industry almost all my life. Men go underground for the same reason as men work in factories—to earn a living. They go into mines to earn the best living they can. Maybe at times the men are lax in regard to their own safety, but it is important that supervision over safety measures is preserved so that the rate of fatalities and injuries in mining may be kept to a minimum.

The bill deals with appointments to the positions of deputy manager and assistant manager. Maybe it will give the manager a choice in regard to the number of deputies to be appointed. Perhaps this is something the Minister might clarify. However, it would seem that it is a matter for the mining companies, which do not adopt a mean attitude in regard to deputies. The Minister proposes a reduction from two years to one year as the period during which a man has to serve in a mine before he is granted a certificate. A man does not get enough experience underground in twelve months to take over a deputy's job; he should have at least two years' experience.

Even if the result of this measure is that there is a shortage of deputies as a result of qualified men being elevated to the position of assistant underground manager or assistant manager, we must not accept a measure that results in a reduction of the period of two years. Deputies could be appointed on a trial basis until they had completed the training period of two years. When the backlog of deputies is caught up with, we could revert to the present provision that a man must have two years' experience in the mine. I should prefer to see a re-introduction of the old rule in which a period of two years at the working face was stipulated. However it is recognized that with mechanization in the coal-mining industry it is not possible for every man to have two years' working at the face, and that if he were in and around that area he could have the required experience.

I shall now deal with the matter I touched on earlier—safety and fatalities. In New South Wales seven fatalities occurred in 1964. There were sixteen fatalities in 1965; eighteen in 1966; eleven in 1967; nineteen in 1968; ten in 1969; twelve in 1970, and eighteen in 1971. There was a substantial increase in the number of fatalities between 1964 and 1971. I do not know whether an examination of earlier years would disclose a larger or a smaller number of fatalities. However, the figures I have given are a reflection of the growth of the industry. For instance, although there were ten fatalities in 1969 and eighteen in 1971, production increased by more than 4,500,000 tons a year in that period. The rate of production will increase as the effects of mechanization become more apparent. The regulations do not provide for a big enough space in a mine to handle some of the large equipment being used, and the size of equipment is increasing each year. This should be investigated, for it is causing loss of life.

I have a list of the accidents in Queensland and New South Wales mines. However, I shall mention only the figures concerning New South Wales because that is the only State over which we have jurisdiction. Of the eighteen fatalities that occurred last year, nine were caused as a result of faulty machinery. One miner was killed when his head was crushed between a locomotive and a pipe attached to the roof. This must have resulted from the space allotted in the mine not being big enough to take the machine that was being used. The unfortunate man did not have enough space in which to work the machinery with which he was provided. He could have been working on a shuttle car which hit a piece of coal that had fallen from a truck. The machine could have hit a lump of dirt or rock that had fallen off the wall, and his head could have been forced against the pipe.

That was not the only accident that occurred in those circumstances. I have before me details of another fatality when a man's head was crushed between a bar and the roof timber. That is an accident

that could have happened in normal circumstances. The bar could have slipped or the roof could have come away and his head may have been caught in a position where it should not have been.

Another fatality occurred when a miner was run down by a shuttle car. There could be a possibility that the miner did not have enough room to avoid the shuttle car and he was crushed against the wall. My point is that planning of coalmines is not keeping pace with increases in the size of mechanical equipment that is coming into use. In 1971, five miners were killed due to roof falls. This sort of incident can be caused by carelessness, bad supervision or simply bad luck. Mechanical equipment causes so much noise that a man working the machine, doing timbering or working in the vicinity, does not hear the creaking and groaning of the roof. Thus he does not receive the sort of warning that for hundreds of years men working underground have heeded. It was always a natural instinct for a miner to detect the creak that warned him in advance of a rock fall from the roof. With the machinery now in use sounds like that often cannot be heard.

Another fatality occurred after a miner had bored a hole for rock bolting. When he went to insert the bolt he was killed by a fall of rock. That incident was clearly the result of bad supervision and bad mining practice. Had this bill been passed last year it could have been the means of more competent supervision and that miner's life could have been saved. If the roof of the mine was in such a bad condition that a rock bolt had to be inserted, it should have been barred down. It all comes back to competent supervision. The supervisor, the man in charge, has legal responsibility in this situation. He should make sure that the area is safe for a man to insert a rock bolt.

Surely the taking of such a long period as six years to bring in a bill to make sure that there is adequate supervision in the coalmines of this State, amounts to an indictment of the Government. I feel very strongly about this matter. I am not saying that the eighteen men who died last year in the mines would not have died had this bill been introduced earlier. I am only saying that adequate supervision might have saved some

of those lives or might have prevented some serious injuries to miners. At least that would have been a tremendous gain.

I invite the attention of honourable members to the report of the Joint Coal Board for the financial year 1970-1971. It has taken the board a long time to display concern about accidents in the mines. In its latest report it refers to a procedure for reporting accident statistics. Why has it taken the board so long to adopt this change? At least the board acknowledges that to combat accidents in coalmines, or in any mines for that matter, accurate statistics must be maintained. Supervisors with experience in accidents should obtain from each injured miner a full account of what occurred, and that information should be recorded. What precautions are taken to ensure that adequate safety measures are introduced to prevent a recurrence of an accident? An analysis should be made of opinions of injured miners on the causes of accidents. Such an analysis could result in the introduction of a regulation that could either save lives or prevent serious injuries. The board draws certain conclusions in relation to analyses of data, the preparation of reports, and so on. Two of its conclusions are as follows:

1. The study reported in this paper provides guidance for further accident prevention work as indicated below, but it is not to be regarded as a substitute for the part which can be played by an experienced safety officer in investigating the cause of accidents, and for a responsible attitude to accident prevention on the part of senior management, based on such investigations and other relevant information.

2. This analysis has shown that accident frequency rates in 1970-71 were somewhat below the 1969-70 rates but that there has been little overall improvement during the past 8 years . . .

Why has it taken six years for this bill to be introduced after the initial suggestions for it were made in 1966 by the Inspector of Coalmines? Although I have looked carefully through earlier reports of the Joint Coal Board, its latest report is the first to include a summary of accidents and this is the first time the board has gone to such lengths to state its feelings on the situation. The manager, the deputy manager, the assistant under managers and the deputies are responsible for implementing

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safety regulations and for ensuring that working conditions for the men who go underground are safe. Even though a long time has elapsed since the original proposals were put forward, at least the Minister is now to bring in regulations requiring the recording of information in relation to accidents in mines. Ultimately this information should help to save the lives of some miners working in the coalfields.

I have never felt that mechanical engineers and electrical engineers who work in the mines are as highly qualified as they should be. Of the eighteen miners who were killed in the mines in 1971, seven of them were electrocuted. Were these deaths caused by poor wiring, exposed wires, faulty switches, lack of supervision of equipment, bad workmanship, or what?

Mr PETERSEN: Or due to a crane jib striking an overhanging wire?

Mr JOHNSTONE: That is so. There should always be enough room for the movement of machinery without striking water pipes, air pipes or electric wires. Matters like this should be taken into consideration in the planning of a mine. This should be done by managers, deputy managers and assistant under managers. I believe that most fatalities in coal mines are attributable to the machinery in use in the mines. In 1971 more than 60 per cent of fatalities were caused by machinery. For example, one fatality was caused by a shuttle car crushing a man against the wall.

The Opposition will not move amendments to this bill, for all the provisions contained in it are necessary for the safe working of mines. I should like to be able to compliment the Minister on introducing the legislation, but it is difficult to do so after having to wait from 1966 to 1972 for the measure. I support the provisions to make working places in mines safer. There is always a possibility of water or gas breaking through from old adjoining workings, and regulations of this sort should have been made many years ago.

If I had my way, every disused mine shaft in Australia, whether a coalmine or any other, would have to be sealed completely with concrete or filled in. I do not

accept that fencing is adequate. I have seen places where fences have deteriorated to such an extent that they are almost non-existent. The undergrowth that grows over these holes could cause unsuspecting persons, children and adults, to think that it was safe to go into the area, and they could disappear from sight.

Mr FIFE: The purpose of the amendment is to require sealing. It has been one of my greatest concerns since I have been Minister to impose this sort of regulation.

Mr JOHNSTONE: Will not this bill require fencing only?

Mr FIFE: No. The Government already has power to require fencing, and it is now intended to require the sealing of shafts, although there may be an odd case where a fence also is appropriate. Wherever possible it will be necessary for mineowners to seal disused shafts.

Mr JOHNSTONE: I agree wholeheartedly. I hope that the Minister is successful in his efforts: I have sought a similar provision for many years. Mining areas are pitted with disused shafts, and they are a hazard to children and adults. However, I am not keen on the provisions relating to winding-engine drivers. I know that a man needed a special qualification to drive a steam engine, to handle the gauges and the other equipment. Lift type cages have now come into the mining industry. I take it that they are used to carry men only and not goods or equipment. More stringent safety precautions should be provided in the legislation governing their use, and in relation to grippers, dead-man controls and switching arrangements, so that if there is a power failure, the grippers are sure to grip the runners. Some coalmine shafts are badly timbered.

When previous legislation was before the House I agreed with the requirement for medical examination of engine drivers. Early in my political career I was rapped over the knuckles by a number of unions for taking that attitude, but I think I convinced them, or perhaps they convinced themselves, that medical examinations are necessary for engine drivers, especially if they have a history of heart attacks. In

my opinion this regulation should have been applied to the coalmining industry when it was made applicable to other mines.

I suppose I must commend the Minister for bringing the measure forward, even at this late date. I hope that in the future the many amendments to the Act that are necessary will be brought forward in a speedier fashion, especially now that the safety committee is working well. That committee has met once or twice to my knowledge. It met on 1st February, and the check inspectors from the federation put forward what I think are worthwhile suggestions. Let the department analyse and investigate those suggestions quickly, and let us hope that in the next six or seven months further regulations will be introduced, including some covering the suggestions put forward by men who work in the industry and know what is necessary.

Mr L. B. KELLY (Corrimal) [9.47]: I support the view of my colleague the member for Broken Hill that this is good legislation, and I support any proposal that will give further protection to the men working in the industry. I am not sure what caused the Minister to delay introducing the measure; possibly it was that he had been taught to be cautious and did not want to make any move until he had examined the matter fully, and had got over the serious difficulties that earlier jeopardized the introduction of these proposals. I refer to the wrangle between the federation, the Deputies and Shot Firers Association and the management.

I regret to say that today there is pressure for high coal production. This is causing problems in the industry. Last year there were 23 miners' deaths in Australia, and 18 of them were in New South Wales. The loss of one life in industry is a serious matter. I hope the day will come when we are able to say that no lives are being lost in this industry. That may be ambitious, but it is important to strive for that goal.

There have been overmen in mines for many years. In some places, particularly on the South Coast, some of the overmen have been able to co-operate successfully with deputies and with management to work in the best interests of the industry.

It has been apparent that overmen in some collieries, in their enthusiasm to press for high production, have been compelling men to go into unsafe situations. That has been a cause of dissatisfaction to the deputies.

I am not yet able to comprehend why the majority of coalminers seem immune from a fear of going into a mine. They appear to accept it as a hazard of the industry that death can be the penalty if one is caught out below the surface. I liken them to the soldier who knows he is engaged in an activity that could result in death. We must try to overcome this disregard of hazards, which miners acquire as a result of their familiarity with them. Many who know that death is lurking in the vicinity seem to accept the fact without concern or fear, though probably a great number of men are conscious of the hazards at all times.

We must impress on all men engaged in coalmining the desirability of being extra cautious in their work. Unfortunately by reason of the bonus system under which they are paid, the amount of coal they win determines the amount of pay they receive. This is why the coal owners have abandoned care and concentrated purely on production. The emphasis of colliery proprietors is on production. All employers, even governments, are endeavouring to break production records. The Minister has been quoted in the press as saying that a certain record had been broken in a certain period.

Mr FIFE: Would the honourable member care to quote the occasion on which I made that statement?

Mr L. B. KELLY: I withdraw it if I am wrong. I thought I had read the Minister's statement to that effect. I shall try to find it again. I felt the Minister had announced that certain records of coal production had been exceeded. That could be true. For several years production of coal has been increasing. It would be quite in order for the Minister to make that announcement.

Mr FIFE: A record for a year's operations, but not in relation to a particular colliery where safety is involved.

Mr L. B. KELLY: I did not say that. I said that the emphasis is on production. I have read the Minister's statement that coal production had been a record. The emphasis in coalmining is on production, exporting of coal, and finding markets for it. The other unfortunate aspect is that in mines today, as the Minister has said, the emphasis is on intense mechanization. The situation has changed considerably from the days when men were engaged in hand mining. There were then more men employed and production was lower. Today fewer men are employed and production is much higher. The reason for higher production is intense mechanization. With the introduction of sophisticated and larger machinery, more coal is being extracted for fewer man hours worked. This is why there has been an increase in the number of accidents, and fatalities in particular. This must be overcome. We must rationalize the position, ensuring that mine equipment is suitable and mine machinery safe so that the lives of miners will not be in jeopardy.

The Minister said that mine managers would have power to employ deputies wherever they were needed. This could be a good point. The whole implication of the measure is that with the extensive growth of mining, and with collieries working more than one section, the mine manager cannot supervise all sections and therefore deputy managers must be appointed. I agree that they should have certificates of competency. Then there will be assistant under managers, which was the old classification of overmen. It would be a good thing for mine managers to appoint sufficient deputies for each section. I should not like it to be left entirely to them. If they were niggardly and cut down on deputies to save money, the lives of the men would be in jeopardy. Some consideration must be given to a maximum or minimum number of deputies. If all the men were working in one section, one deputy would not be needed for every ten men, which would mean ten deputies for a hundred men in one section. Some consideration should be given to the number of sections worked when determining the number of deputies to be employed.

Many of the problems in the coalmining industry have been caused by the working of four shifts. There must be a lot of understanding between deputies, assistant under managers, deputy under managers and the manager on the instructions that they give to each shift. The provisions in the bill are valuable and I am pleased that they have been introduced.

I must not let pass the opportunity of referring to the disaster at the old Bulli colliery in my electorate. Judge Goran, who presided at the inquiry into the disaster, made some strong remarks about production methods. If my memory serves me rightly, I think he laid some of the blame on the overmen for concentrating on production and having little concern for safety. The whole question has now been resolved amicably between deputies, shot firers, overmen and management, and adequate safety measures are assured at the colliery.

I hope the Minister will see to it that the Coalmines Safety Advisory Committee concentrates on safety in mines. The committee's report for 1971 says that the committee met regularly in the past year and made several recommendations. I realize it is not possible for the Minister to outline those recommendations, but I point out that safety must be given the maximum consideration. The report of the Joint Coal Board for the year ended June, 1969, contains a valuable table setting out the number of fatalities in New South Wales coalmines since 1949, but it is disturbing to note that in its reports for 1970 and 1971 there is no reference to fatalities. I am dismayed that the Joint Coal Board has excluded any reference to fatalities from those reports. The 1971 report makes considerable reference to accidents, and the honourable member for Broken Hill has already referred to this. It is significant that there is no schedule of fatalities. It would be invaluable to include such information so that the situation might be reviewed. I ask the Minister to inquire into the reason for omitting this information. A report that is valuable to everyone in the industry should have included it.

I was disturbed to learn that last year there were eighteen fatal accidents in coalmines in New South Wales, and that in the first five weeks of 1972 there have been four. I should like to see the day when there are no accidents in coalmines. We know that coalmining is a hazardous industry, but every effort should be made to reduce accidents to a minimum. I appeal to the Minister to ensure that the legislation is enforced. No legislation is any good unless it is enforced. Where men's lives are involved there should be no relaxation of safety measures.

Mr M. L. HUNTER (Lake Macquarie) [10.0]: No doubt the measures introduced by this bill will reduce the hazards in the coalmining industry. Discussions I have had with management and workers in my district have shown that they welcome these provisions. The only criticism they have concerns the time that has been taken to introduce the bill. These matters were discussed and agreed to in 1968 and it is unfortunate that it has taken so long to bring them before the House.

One thing I am worried about is the provision for medical examination of men in charge of or operating prescribed machinery, such as winding engines. These men will be subject to a medical examination every two years. The Minister has not said what will become of a winding engine driver who, for instance, is unable to pass the medical examination. Perhaps the Minister will be able to say that another position will be found for him in the mine or on the surface. Many of these men have given years of faithful and loyal service to the management and to the men. They have held responsible positions and have had in their hands the safety of many people each day. Their employment should be adequately safeguarded.

Most of the workers in the coalmining industry welcome this legislation, especially the provision regarding the reclassification of mine electrician to mine electrical engineer, and of mine engineer to mine mechanical engineer, with the requirement that certain qualifications be held before such a classification can be obtained. The Minister and his department are to be complimented

upon realizing that only qualified people should be employed in these positions. Furthermore, the requirement that a person have practical experience before he can be appointed to these positions is commendable.

As previous speakers have said, there are still too many deaths in the coalmining industry. Sometimes mechanical devices or the lack of safety measures is blamed for these deaths. However, the human element is involved far too often because of lack of proper training. The new classifications set out in the bill will ensure that people are properly trained. In time, perhaps, even the ordinary miner or labourer on the surface will have to be trained before he takes up duties in a mine. The mining industry stands on its own and is hazardous. It is asking for trouble to put into the industry without proper training a raw recruit, or a man from some other industry, or a man off the land. The bill will ensure that more capable people will be in charge of the work in mines. Personnel must be trained prior to taking up responsibilities and being left to work on their own in mines. Previous speakers have referred to the introduction of modern machinery into mines in the past five or ten years. Since the bonus system was introduced, production has sometimes been regarded as paramount. On occasions this has led workers and management to forget about safety measures. Regulations must ensure that machines are capable of being operated safely.

The provision requiring the sealing of old shafts is long overdue and is welcome. I hope the Minister and his department will police this matter thoroughly and find the lessees or owners of old mines that have ceased production for many years but have shafts that are dangerous to the public, especially to children. As the honourable member for Corrimal said, measures to tighten up safety are of no value unless they are enforced. I hope that when some position needs correcting in the future, there will not be the delay there was on this occasion.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Petersen.

Mr M. L. Hunter]

ADJOURNMENT

LAND TAX

Mr FIFE (Wagga Wagga), Minister for Mines and Minister for Conservation [10.9]: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

Mr RUDDOCK (The Hills) [10.10]: In 1957 a parcel of land at Baulkham Hills was subdivided into 130 building blocks by Harfield Proprietary Limited. The land formed part of the Carrington Park estate. The blocks were sold to young couples who built homes there and have dwelt in them for fourteen or fifteen years. Most of their children are now at secondary school; some of them are at university. Recently approximately 80 to 100 of these homeowners received a bombshell—of the delayed action type—when they received identical letters from the Commissioner for Land Tax. Mr R. E. Sinclair of 12 Judith Street, Baulkham Hills, received a letter, which reads as follows:

Information held at this office shows that you are the owner(s) of the abovementioned land, and accordingly you are informed that such land is subject to a charge for \$34.83 land tax due by a former owner who has defaulted in payment.

Land tax until payment is a first charge on the lands taxed in priority over all other encumbrances whatever—refer Section 47 of the Land Tax Management Act, 1956.

As recovery proceedings (including possible enforcement of the said charge) to obtain payment of the amount of \$34.83 are being considered, your advice is requested as to whether you consider the charge to be ineffective as against you and if so the grounds on which you rely and the reference number of any relevant document.

These people are all neighbours, and one can imagine how they felt when they received a letter of demand for land tax that should have been paid by a defaulting developer going back fourteen or fifteen years. Naturally the ladies of the district talk about the matter over their fences as they put out their washing and their husbands talk about it as they mow their lawns. Most of these people have been in touch with me and I shall read parts of the letters they have written to me. Mr Sinclair wrote to me as follows:

As we all had different solicitors does this mean all our solicitors were incompetent?

As it is impossible to gain reference numbers and a bad debt is only collectable for 7 years how can the commissioner explain how all this can happen.

I think this is a waste of taxpayers' money and I would rather go to jail than pay this money, we in this area are agreed to do this. After ringing solicitors in Sydney they were amazed that this is happening.

A number of the ladies, including Mrs Sinclair, have written to me saying that as a matter of principle they are prepared to go to gaol as a group. Judging from the way some of them have said this to me, they meant it. Mr N. L. Dawes of 8 Judith Street, Baulkham Hills, stated that he is not a defaulter and he believes his solicitor to be dead. Mr J. R. Binning of 6 Yvette Street wrote and said that a bad debt of this kind is not his responsibility. Mr P. Thomson of Ula Crescent, wrote to me as follows:

I consider that the practice of transferring the charge of the land tax from the former owner to myself for no other reason than that the Land Tax Office has failed, over the past decade, to obtain payment of the debt from the previous owner, apparently in spite of some endeavours on their part to do so, is grossly unjust.

When I received a number of these letters I wrote to the Commissioner for Land Tax asking that the charges be withdrawn. I suggested that they were wrong in principle and could not even survive the statute of limitations. The commissioner has replied to me in a rather long letter and I shall merely read parts of it that relate to the issue. I do not deny that what the commissioner has written is strictly in accordance with the Act but this type of thing should not happen. The Commissioner for Land Tax wrote as follows:

Harfield Proprietary Limited defaulted in the payment of the land tax due by them for the 1958-59 and 1959-60 tax years, and the tax, until payment, is a first charge on the lands taxed, which lands include lot 93. Section 47 of the Land Tax Management Act, 1956, which provides for land tax being a first charge on lands taxed, also provides however, that no charge will be of effect as against a *bona fide* purchaser for value who, at the time of purchase, made due enquiry but had no notice of the liability. I have no record of any certificate being issued to or on behalf of Mr Sinclair which renders ineffective as against him the charge on lot 93.

* * * * *

The current position is that the Crown Solicitor has been requested to commence winding-up proceedings against the company, but it is known that the company's financial position is such that a substantial part of the outstanding taxes will not be recoverable from the company; such part will presumably only be recoverable if recourse is had to the effective charges which still attach to any of the lands taxed.

I suggest that this is a ludicrous situation. These 80 to 100 homeowners should not be asked to pay these amounts. The charges that have been demanded should be withdrawn. The provisions of the Act should be inspected. It is not a matter of the amounts; it is the principle involved. The Commissioner for Land Tax and the Minister may say that these people should have gone to their solicitor at the time and if they had got a clearance everything would have been all right. However, this happened fifteen years ago, and some of the solicitors cannot be located. I suggest that such a statement would be merely drawing a red herring across the trail in an attempt to excuse what has been done. One firm of solicitors, Hodgkiss, Deane and Company, acted in a number of these transactions for both the vendor and the purchaser. This is another matter that needs investigation. I suggest that everybody concerned look into this matter and see that these unfortunate people do not have to pay charges that were incurred fifteen years ago by some other person.

Mr FREUDENSTEIN (Young), Minister for Cultural Activities and Assistant Treasurer [10.17]: I commend the honourable member, who no doubt is solicitous for the welfare of his constituents. It is a pity that the solicitors who acted in these conveyances were not solicitous about the interests of their clients in the first place and did not make inquiries from the Land Tax Office as to whether land tax had been paid. In view of the provisions of section 47 of the Land Tax Management Act it is essential that, in order to protect their clients, solicitors obtain a certificate of clearance from the Commissioner for Land Tax before title is transferred. That is a normal conveyancing requisition that solicitors are required to fulfil. The Land Tax Management Act specifies that land tax is a first charge on land and it remains

there until it is satisfied. It is not a personal debt of the people who purchase the land; it remains a charge upon the land. I think that panic buttons have been pressed in this area, and quite unnecessarily as appears from the letter of request from the Commissioner for Land Tax. He has sought the views of the present owners on whether they consider that the charges are ineffective against their land. It was not a demand for money. I emphasize that none of these people has been asked to pay the land tax.

The Commissioner for Land Tax is endeavouring to pursue the former owner to recover the land tax charged on this land. The commissioner has asked for the co-operation of the present owners of the land. I appeal to the honourable member to go back and ask for the co-operation and assistance of the land owners. I believe that if any solicitor who has erred in this matter can be found, he should meet the charge. As has been pointed out, this is not good conveyancing practice. Not one of these landholders or householders has been asked to pay the land tax. If the member seeks their co-operation in supplying this information to the Commissioner for Land Tax, I am sure the matter will be satisfactorily resolved.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned at 10.22 p.m.

Legislative Council

Thursday, 2 March, 1972

Quotations from *Parliamentary Debates*—Death of Hon. Sir Kenneth Whistler Street, K.C.M.G., K.St.J.—Legislative Council (Return of Writ)—Ambulance Service Bill (first reading)—Local Government (Newcastle Fruit and Vegetable Market) Bill (second reading)—Botany Cemetery and Crematorium Bill (second reading)—Presbyterian Church of Australia (Amendment) Bill (second reading)—Roman Catholic Church Property (Amendment) Bill (second reading)—Special Adjournment.

The PRESIDENT took the chair at 4.28 p.m.

The Prayer was read.

QUOTATIONS FROM PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

The PRESIDENT: I feel I should say something more regarding the incident yesterday when I ruled that honourable members were not in order in reading from the *Parliamentary Debates* reports of speeches made by members in another place. The ruling I gave then was based on the rulings of previous Presidents, which were apparently acquiesced in by the House at the time, and also on May's *Parliamentary Practice* which, at page 414 of the 18th edition under the heading "Allusions to Debates in the other House of the Current Session" says, in part:

The rule that allusions to debates in the other House of the current session are out of order, prevents fruitless arguments between members of two distinct bodies who are unable to reply to each other, and guards against recrimination and offensive language in the absence of the party assailed; but it is mainly founded upon the understanding that the debates of the other House are not known, and that the House can take no notice of them. . . .

I realize that Standing Order 76 does tend to create some confusion. In dealing with conditions under which a member may make a personal explanation that standing order, by implication, envisages that members may quote generally from the speeches made in another place. Against this must be set the interpretations placed on the matter generally by Presidents and the House over the years, and by the ruling in *May* to which I have just referred. However, I am the servant of the House. I do not make the rules. My duty is to apply, to the best of my ability, the rules and precedents that have been evolved over the years in this House and in the Parliament of the United Kingdom.

If honourable members feel that there should be an explicit standing order authorizing reading from speeches made in another place, as reported in the *Parliamentary Debates*, I suggest that they take the matter up through the Standing Orders Committee which, after consideration, may make an appropriate recommendation to the House and it will be for the House to make a decision. If I may at this stage express my own opinion, I feel that the rule against such quotation which is apparently based on experience in the past, is a good one, for if the door