

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**THURSDAY, 17 AUGUST 1911**

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THURSDAY, 17 AUGUST, 1911.

The SPEAKER (Hon. W. D. Armstrong, *Lockyer*) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

STANDING RULES AND ORDERS.

ROYAL ASSENT.

The SPEAKER said: I have to report that, pursuant to the instruction given by the House on the 10th instant, I this day presented to His Excellency the Governor the Standing Rules and Orders as adopted by the Assembly, and His Excellency was pleased, in my presence, in the name and on behalf of His Majesty, to give his assent thereto.

At a later stage,

The SPEAKER reported the receipt of a message from the Governor conveying His Excellency's assent to the Standing Rules and Orders.

PANEL OF TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN.

The SPEAKER: Pursuant to Standing Order No. 11, I now nominate Thomas William Bouchard, Esquire, member for the electoral district of Brisbane South; William Hamilton, Esquire, member for the electoral district of Gregory; David Hunter, Esquire, member for the electoral district of Woolloongabba; William Sidney Murphy, Esquire, member for the electoral district of Croydon; Thomas Nevitt, Esquire, member for the electoral district of Carpentaria, to form the panel of Temporary Chairman during the present session.

QUESTIONS.

CONSTRUCTION OF GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY.

Mr. COYNE (*Warrego*) asked the Secretary for Railways, without notice—

"When does the Railway Department intend to proceed with the construction of the Great Western Railway?"

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. W. T. Paget, *Mackay*) replied—

"The department are arranging to proceed with the construction of the Great Western Railway at quite a number of different points."

GRIEVANCES ON RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION WORKS.

Mr. ADAMSON (*Rockhampton*) asked the Secretary for Railways—

"1. Has his attention been called to an article which appeared in the *Rockhampton Record*, of 5th August, under the *nom de plume* of "Balland Cross"?"

"2. Will he make inquiries concerning the truth or falsehood of the allegations in that article which relate to the bad conditions of labour and the low wages paid to the men working on the construction works of the Port Alma Railway, the underpaying of the timber-getters, and the delay in paying the money earned by them, the two prices charged for goods sold by storekeepers on railway works, and also concerning the other allegations contained in the article referred to?"

"3. If these allegations are found to be correct, will he take steps to have the injustices referred to remedied?"

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS replied—

"1, 2, and 3. I had not previously seen the article referred to, but am causing inquiries to be made regarding the statements it contains."

SELECTION ON CURTIS ISLAND.

Mr. BRESLIN (*Port Curtis*) asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

"1. Has the department full information as to the suitability of certain parts of Curtis Island for selection?"

"2. If not, will steps be taken to obtain same?"

"3. Is he aware that there are persons prepared and anxious to take up land on Curtis Island if same was available?"

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. E. H. Macartney, *Brisbane North*) replied—

"1. Curtis Island is entirely pastoral country, and very little of it can be termed first-class pastoral.

"2. See 1.

"3. I am not aware that any demand exists for land on the island for settlement. No inquiry for land there has been made to the Land Settlement Inquiry Office."

HOURS OF POLICE PATROL DUTY.

Mr. ROBERTS (*Drayton and Toowoomba*) asked the Home Secretary—

"1. What are the hours of patrol duty performed by the police daily in the cities of Brisbane, Ipswich, and Toowoomba?"

"What is the longest period per day police are kept on continuous duty without refreshments?"

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. G. Appel, *Albert*) replied—

"1. *Beat Duty*—

"1st relief.—6 to 9 a.m., and 3 to 6 p.m.

"2nd relief.—9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"3rd or evening relief.—6 to 12 midnight.

"4th or night relief.—12 midnight to 6 a.m.

"*Patrols*.—The length of time occupied by police on patrols is necessarily governed by the nature of the duty to be performed.

"2. Six hours on beat duty—viz., 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on alternate days for a month, and from 12 midnight to 6 a.m. Prior to 1905, night duty was continuous for eight hours—viz., from 9 p.m. until 5 a.m."

CHARGES AGAINST BUNDABERG POLICE.

Mr. BARBER (*Bundaberg*) asked the Home Secretary—

"1. Has his attention been called to a report in the *Bundaberg Daily News* of the 14th instant, condemning the action of Sub-Inspector Brett in calling out the mounted police and ordering them to gallop to and fro in the main street, for the purpose of dispersing the people, thereby endangering the lives of peaceful and law-abiding citizens of the town and district?"

"2. Is he aware that the sub-inspector's action in ordering one mounted trooper to ride on the public footpath in the business centre of the town was strongly condemned by the mayor and business men of the town?"

"3. Will he have a thorough inquiry and investigation made into the complaints made against the sub-inspector referred to?"

The HOME SECRETARY replied—

"1. No.

"2. No.

"3. I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that neither the sub-inspector nor the mounted police exceeded their duty on the occasion referred to."

Mr. BARBER asked the Home Secretary—

"1. Has a report reached the department relative to the conduct and language used by Constable Dunn on Friday last, 11th instant, wherein he called upon his two colleagues, in language wholly unfit for publication, to ride down and ride over certain men engaged in the peaceful work of picketing on the Ashfield road?

"2. Will he call upon the officer in charge of the Bundaberg police to have a full inquiry made into the matter?"

The HOME SECRETARY replied—

"1. Yes.

"2. If this circumstance really occurred (which has been denied), the question of holding an inquiry will be considered."

#### NATIONALISATION OF CERTAIN BRIDGES.

Mr. BARBER (*Bundaberg*) in moving—

"1. That, in the opinion of this House, the time has arrived for the Government to introduce legislation dealing with bridges affording means of communication across our natural waterways, thereby relieving the few taxpayers that are now called upon to bear the burden for the maintenance of such bridges by way of special taxation or payment of tolls.

"2. That the Burnett, Lamington, and Victoria Bridge Boards and joint councils should be relieved of any further financial obligations, and the balance of the cost for the construction of the respective bridges be met by the Government from the public funds of the State"—

said: My object in giving notice of and moving this motion is twofold; first, the text of the motion has a very strong local application as far as it affects the interests of a small section of the people of the Bundaberg district, but I felt that I could not merely apply the terms of the motion to the Burnett Bridge only, because I recognised that in connection with the Lamington and Victoria Bridges, which were built under somewhat similar Acts to that of the Burnett, there was another section of the citizens of the State who, in my opinion, were heavily taxed by having to comply with certain provisions of the Acts passed in relation to the Lamington and Victoria bridges, and contribute towards the amount required for interest and redemption on the two structures. At the time I gave notice of this motion, I overlooked the fact that there was another bridge in Queensland which was subjected to special taxation in order to provide the revenue for payment of interest and redemption, a bridge which was not built under a special Act like the bridges I have referred to, and that is the Fitzroy Bridge at Rockhampton. That was originally built free of cost to the people of that district, and the whole burden of cost was borne by the Government, but, owing to a flood in later years, which seriously injured that structure, it was found necessary to carry out some extensive repairs in connection with the bridge; hence the local bodies negotiated a loan with the Government of the day—I think of about £5,000—one-half of which was borne by the Government, while the local authorities

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were made responsible for the other half. I might add that the only bridge in Queensland—and, as far as I am aware, the only bridge in Australia—upon which tolls are collected, is the Burnett Bridge. I personally—and I think that practically every member of this Chamber also—look upon the system of collecting tolls as a very old-fashioned idea.

Mr. COYNE: An obsolete one.

Mr. BARBER: And a very obsolete one. I have always asserted that the cost of the construction of bridges of the character I have referred to, which constitute part of our national highways, should be borne wholly by the Government. At the time the Bill was introduced into this Chamber in 1899, considerable debate took place on the question of tolls, and Mr. Tozer, now Sir Horace Tozer, opposed the idea of the toll system very strenuously, and several other hon. gentlemen who were then members of this Assembly also spoke in very strong terms against the obsolete custom of collecting tolls, as a system that ought to be relegated to past ages. I observed just now that the Victoria Bridge, the Lamington Bridge, and the Bundaberg or Burnett Bridge were built under special Acts. I know very well that I shall be met by the reply from the hon. gentleman in charge of the department which will be affected by the carrying out of what I propose to do—namely, that the Government should relieve these three bodies from any further financial obligation and take over the liability for the unpaid balance—that at the time just prior to the building of the Burnett Bridge, the local authorities in Bundaberg and the Gooburrum Shire Council decided by resolution to collect the tolls for the payment of interest and redemption. But I have always expressed very considerable doubt as to whether the ratepayers were properly consulted on that occasion. It is true there were two meetings held, but I have never for a moment believed that had the matter been put to the ratepayers generally as to whether they would favour a system of collection of tolls—and let me say that that same opinion is entertained by a large number of the citizens of Bundaberg—and the question has been clearly understood by the people of that district, the resolutions passed on that occasion would never have been passed and sent down to the Government favouring the construction of the bridge under the conditions on which it was erected. The Burnett Bridge, crossing the Burnett River, constitutes, in my opinion, as the Lamington Bridge, and the Victoria Bridge in Brisbane do, part of the national highway, one might say from Wilson's Promontory in Victoria right through to Cape York. The bridges over the other large tidal rivers in Queensland prior to 1899 had been built and constructed at the sole cost of the Government. I have never been able, by the reading of the debates that took place in this Chamber when the Burnett Bridge Bill was introduced, to ascertain the reason why that principle was altered. The custom had been, I find, for a considerable number of years, to place a considerable amount of money on the Estimates-in-Chief year after year for the purpose of providing grants and aids to roads and bridges, and prior to 1899 all the bridges that constituted our national highways had been built and the total cost borne by

the Government. The present Victoria Bridge, of course, was built to replace the bridge that was carried away by the 1893 flood, and for some time a system of toll collecting was in operation; but it met with so strong a disapproval and disapprobation of the public, that on a joint application of the ratepayers and the shire councils situated in the metropolitan area, both in North and South Brisbane, the system was abolished, and the responsibility of collecting revenue to provide interest and redemption was placed upon the ratepayers of contiguous districts. It has demonstrated that the management and maintenance of that bridge has been carried out in a far more economical manner under the present system than what it had been or was possible to be while the toll system was in operation. I remember that a deputation of the people in the Brisbane district who were affected by the taxation made a strong protest against this system of taxation. I think it was just prior to the 1909 elections, when the present Premier was Home Secretary, that a large deputation, consisting of the representatives of the various local authorities round about Brisbane, waited on that hon. gentleman and asked him to relieve them of any further taxation to provide for the payment of the bridge, but it being the eve of a general election, the hon. gentleman had the courage of his conviction to refuse to accede to the deputation's request. I may say that the hon. gentleman in taking up the attitude he did in telling them that, an election campaign being on, he could not conscientiously promise to relieve them of this taxation, acted in a very courageous manner indeed. That was the only position that any honourable man could take up. Coming to the question of the Burnett Bridge: When the measure came before this House, the idea was to have a combined bridge, and if hon. members look up *Hansard*, Nos. 58 and 59, they will find that a considerable debate took place on the wisdom or otherwise of constructing combined bridges. It was pointed out by the then Minister for Public Works and Mines, Mr. Macrossan, that a combined bridge providing for railway, vehicular, and pedestrian traffic could be built for something like £5,000 less than the present Burnett Bridge was constructed for, but owing to opposition being shown to that proposal by the then Chief Engineer and the Commissioner for Railways, the Government were not prepared, I presume, to oppose the ideas of those gentlemen, who were the departmental experts. It was pointed out at the time that combined bridges were very dangerous, the Bremer Bridge being quoted as an example. That idea has always presented itself as a very absurd one to me, because if anything like reasonable precaution was taken in the construction of a combined bridge, there is very little fear of any serious or minor accidents occurring. There are combined bridges in existence where more people pass over in twenty-four hours than there are in Brisbane altogether. More than thirty years ago a bridge was constructed connecting Brooklyn with New York, which cost somewhere about £3,000,000. There were five roadways—two for railway traffic, two for vehicular traffic, and one for pedestrian traffic. Since then, of course, trams have been introduced, and they have a roadway too. The bridge at Newcastle was a combined bridge, and if my memory serves me correctly, the Weir Bridge at Sunderland is also a combined bridge, and the last bridge that was built over the Tyne is a combined bridge also. Hence it seems most

absurd that at the time when a combined bridge providing for railway, vehicular, and pedestrian traffic could have been constructed at a cost of £5,000 less than the present structure cost, that the bridge was not constructed as the people desired. Owing to the Government of the day deciding to construct the bridge they did, it became necessary for the two local authorities—that is, the Bundaberg Town Council and the Gooburrum Shire Council—to negotiate a loan under the Local Works Loans Act, and about £15,104 were advanced to each of the local bodies, and that has necessitated a revenue of over £1,500 per annum being procured to pay for interest and redemption on that loan. I notice that up to the present time they have only liquidated about £4,000, and I fear that if they are only able to pay off £4,000 in ten years they will find it a very difficult matter to liquidate the whole amount during the term of the forty years for which the loan was secured. Each component body has to pay about £765 per annum. In addition to that, an amount sufficient to pay for the cost of management and maintenance, for lighting, for sanitary purposes, for the salaries paid to the two toll collectors, and for other incidental expenses in connection with the bridge has to be collected, and I may say that last year the income which was received by toll for the traffic across the bridge

[4 p.m.] amounted to somewhere about £3,000. When we consider that at

least 90 per cent. of that revenue comes from a mere handful of people in North Bundaberg and the immediate vicinity, I think hon. members will recognise that a very heavy impost is placed upon these people. I suppose that the population there, taking what we consider as North Bundaberg, or No. 1 Division of the Gooburrum Shire, does not amount to more than 1,000 or 1,500 people, and the injustice will be recognised when I inform the House that in cases where one or two members of the various families located there have to cross the river to carry out their daily avocation, that it cuts very deeply into their very small wages. In some cases there are three members of a family, in addition probably to the head of the family, working in town, and it means at least 7s. per week to be paid by these people to cross the bridge. I contend that it is the duty of the Government to see that these injustices, falling as they do on such a very small section of the community, should be removed at as early a date as possible. I might mention that during the past eight or nine years, since I have represented the Bundaberg electorate, it has been the practice during every election campaign for the candidate who has had the Government endorsement to promise a free bridge to the people of North Bundaberg.

Mr. WHITE: That is not correct. I never promised that.

Mr. BARBER: I assert that it has been the practice during the past eight or nine years for the Government candidate to promise them a free bridge.

Mr. WIENHOLT: How could he do that?

Mr. BARBER: Whether he had any authority from the Government to make that statement or not I do not know, but the whole place—especially North Bundaberg—was plastered with posters of all the colours

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of the rainbow telling the people to "Vote for Stumm," "Vote for Greatead," or "Vote for Duffy," as the case may be, and they would get a free bridge. This looked as if the Government had given these gentlemen authority to make the promises they did. But that is by the way. This heavy imposition not only falls upon the mere handful of people who reside in North Bundaberg, but it also falls pretty heavily upon the business people on that side who wish to get to town, and also on the producers who live on that side of the river, and it also affects very considerably most of the business men of Bundaberg who have to send their carts over the river with goods from the stores and from other places. It has depreciated very considerably the value of the property, and land especially, on that side of the river. It has handicapped that part of the town, because anyone who desires to build a cottage for himself has had to take into consideration what it will cost him to go backwards and forwards across the river in the way of toll. There is another point, and it is this: That at the present time tolls are practically 50 per cent. higher than they were fifteen or twenty years ago, and that in itself to a very large extent keeps back the progress of that part of the district. I had intended to have made some reference to the copies of *Hansard*, volumes lviii. and lix., containing the speeches of the hon. gentlemen who were members of the Assembly at the time when the Granville and Burnett Bridges were brought before this Chamber, but I know that the new Standing Orders have come into operation this afternoon, and I am limited to forty minutes, so I will not read any of those speeches that were given on that occasion in favour of the bridges being built and the whole cost being borne by the Government, except to point out that the system of toll collecting to pay for the bridge was strongly condemned at that time. I do not think that the present Government favour the system of collecting tolls on bridges. Some few months ago, just prior to the meeting of the House, a deputation waited on the Minister—I forget who it was, but I believe it was the Treasurer—when he was visiting Maryborough, and they asked that a new bridge should be built across the Mary River from Maryborough to the Granville district.

Mr. MAY: I want a bridge out on the Flinders.

Mr. BARBER: The members of the deputation offered to pay interest and redemption by means of a toll, but the Minister declared himself as not being in favour of the toll system.

Mr. CORSER: I do not think so. I did not hear him say that.

Mr. BARBER: Yes; if the hon. gentleman looks up the report that appeared in the paper he will see that the Minister said he was not in favour of the system of toll collecting. The chief thing that I desire to see done is for the Government to take over the full financial responsibility for the balance of the amount due on these three or four bridges that I have specially referred to. It will be remembered by hon. gentlemen who are old residents of Queensland that in the early days of Bundaberg, North Bundaberg was really the part where the township was located. As an evidence of that we have even

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to-day the railway sheds there, also the engine shed, the cleaning shed, and other works. Whether any influence was brought to bear upon the Government of that day to shift the township to the south side of the river is too much a question of ancient history for me to say. I desire to put these facts before the House because I want to see justice done to a small section of our community which has to pay tolls on the Burnett Bridge. I have already stated that it has resulted in the depreciation of property in North Bundaberg, and it has also been a considerable hindrance to the workers in that part of the district. The payment of the tolls falls very heavily upon those who have to follow their daily employment in town, and in a dozen other ways this system of collecting tolls seriously affects the people on the north side of the river. But, as I have already pointed out, I could hardly ask for relief to be granted to the people of the North Bundaberg district without bringing into the same category the residents in the metropolitan area who are affected by the rates levied to pay for the Victoria Bridge, and also the people in the Maryborough and Tinana districts, where the revenue has to be derived from a special rate. The people of North Bundaberg are quite willing to have the charge placed on the rates, but the difficulty seems to have been that the people of the town of Bundaberg have not felt inclined to agree to that. I would prefer to see the Government assume the full responsibility of the Burnett, Lamington, Victoria, and Fitzroy bridges; but, failing that, the Government should take some action in the direction of insisting, if possible, upon the local authorities of the Bundaberg district placing this matter upon the rates of the town and the different shires of the district. I might observe that, in addition to the amount which has to be paid by way of interest and redemption, during the present year, the Burnett Bridge has been repainted at a cost of somewhere about £3,900, which the ratepayers of the town, and North Bundaberg especially, are very much opposed to. They consider that by the abolition of the toll system and the adoption of the principle of making the maintenance and management of the bridge a charge upon the rates, the work could be done in a more economical manner than at present, and I appeal to members of the Ministry to grant relief by abolishing the toll system, and free the people of the North Bundaberg district from a disability they now labour under.

The PREMIER (Hon. D. F. Denham, *Oxley*): I listened very attentively to the hon. member in moving his motion, and it appeared to me right through that he had very little confidence in the motion, and practically no heart in advocating it. He advanced practically no reasons in support of his motion. He rehearsed a great deal of bridge history in different parts of the State, with which we are already familiar. If one might paraphrase his speech, it was on the woes of Bundaberg; and so little confidence had he in the justice of his claim that at the close he whittled down the whole proposition from being one for the nationalisation of bridges from Wilson's Promontory—though I do not suppose he would have us go over the territory of New South Wales, so we will have to say from Texas to Cape York—he whittled down the proposition for national highways to a proposition that in

place of the present toll system which prevails at the Burnett Bridge should be a rate. That is a local matter. Certainly, I should say that if it was a matter in which I could justifiably interfere, I would abolish the toll and substitute a rate. I think the day has come when tolls should be abolished, and the liability on the bridge paid for by the municipalities immediately concerned. But it was by the arrangement of the parties concerned that tolls and not rates were agreed upon. The hon. member, in opening his address, said that he had a twofold object. I gathered what the first was, but it was not quite clear what the second was. The first object was because of the strong local application of the motion to a small section of people in Bundaberg. He then proceeded to say that, as he was asking for something for Bundaberg, he found it necessary also to ask for something for Maryborough and something for Brisbane. I suppose upon the principle of "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours."

Mr. LENNON: The idea behind the hon. member's mind was that he was dealing with waterways, which is another expression for tidal waters. He did not refer to the territory from Point Danger to Cape York.

The PREMIER: "Natural waterways" is the term he used in the motion—not "tidal waters."

Mr. BARBER: I said "tidal waters" in my speech.

The PREMIER: I can only go on the hon. member's resolution, which desires—

"That, in the opinion of this House, the time has arrived for the Government to introduce legislation dealing with bridges affording means of communication across our natural waterways, thereby relieving the few taxpayers that are now called upon to bear the burden for the maintenance of such bridges by way of special taxation or payment of tolls."

He urged, therefore, that because of the inconvenience caused to certain individuals in the neighbourhood of the Burnett Bridge, the bridges at Maryborough and Brisbane also should be free.

Mr. BARBER: It shows the generous spirit I have.

The PREMIER: I wish the hon. member had proceeded to supply arguments why that should be done, and to realise how far-reaching such a resolution would be. I gathered clearly his first object, but I could not quite apprehend what his second was. Whether it is because the mode of collection is antiquated or whether it is because local government is effete I could not quite gather. I would like to know, since he is going to provide in this generous fashion for Brisbane and Maryborough, if he proposes to go right through the State in the same generous spirit. I am told by my colleague, the Secretary for Railways, that in the neighbourhood of Mackay there is quite a number of bridges for which the local authorities have paid; and it is only fair that, if you are going to remit the liability in certain cases, in the same spirit of generosity you should credit the accounts of this local authority with the amount spent in the erection of their bridges. South of Mackay there is an iron bridge over Alligator Creek, an iron suspension bridge over Sandy Creek, an iron bridge over Scrubby Creek, the Pioneer Bridge, a wooden bridge

across the Pioneer River at the hospital; the Sydney-street Bridge, an iron bridge built in 1888 by the Government and since maintained by the Bridge Board. North of Mackay there are several wooden bridges on the Bowen road; and there are the Wakerston and Eton wooden bridges on the main road to the West *via* Nebo. And a number of the loans for these bridges have already been paid off. So there is quite a large number of bridges that might also be provided for if the same generous spirit is going to obtain throughout the State.

Mr. BARBER: The main bridge was built free of cost to the local authority.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is not so.

Mr. BARBER: They are not over main waterways.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, they are.

The PREMIER: The hon. member says in his motion that the "time has arrived for the Government to introduce legislation." With what anxiety, with what interest, with what solicitude the hon. gentleman must have waited for the full lapse of time to move this motion. It is apparent that the time has only just arrived for evolving this scheme. Had the hon. gentleman moved the motion last year, I assume that the fullness of time would not have arrived for the springing of this colossal scheme on the Parliament of Queensland.

Mr. BARBER: Is not that the usual phrase?

The PREMIER: The laudable object which the hon. gentleman has of relieving a few taxpayers who are now called upon to discharge their obligations—that laudable object would not allow the time to be anticipated; but had the time been mature, no doubt he would have delivered his soul of the burden that has evidently been resting on it. I expected the hon. member would have indicated by the signs of the times how the time had arrived—that he would have told us what indicated the hour of action. There must be some evidence that the psychological moment arrived when this motion should be sprung on the House, and I have cogitated to find it myself. I wonder whether the hon. gentleman thought the finances of the State were in such a buoyant condition that the Treasurer is looking for a means of relieving himself of what he may conceive to be his surplus cash. If that thought was pressing on his mind—if that would account for the time having arrived—let me disabuse his mind of the idea, because I can assure the hon. member that the Treasurer is not at all worried as to how to spend the money at his command, but rather how to make the money at his command cover all the demands pressing upon him. Then I was wondering whether he is apprehensive lest some taxation might be remitted in the course of a few weeks when the Treasurer delivers his Financial Statement, and he thought he would put in a claim that would prevent any such thing by saying, "Deal with these bridges. Just relieve the woes of Bundaberg; lighten the burden of Maryborough; make glad the heart of Brisbane; and if you like to extend your vision, go along the coast until you strike even Cape York." I can assure the hon. gentleman that there is not the least danger of any wholesale remission of taxation, so that the psychological moment has not arrived for the introduction of a new scheme to anticipate relief from

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taxation. I can assure the hon. gentleman that we have to keep a tight grip on the finances; and he need not be in the least concerned that the Treasurer is going to come down in a few weeks' time with a great Budget showing that we hardly know how to relieve ourselves of the cash. I wonder whether he is seeking to undermine the whole principle of local government.

Mr. BARBER: Perish the thought. (Laughter.)

The PREMIER: I was not quite clear, when he referred to highways, whether he was seeking to nationalise our bridges. "Nationalisation" appears to be a favourite motto with many hon. members opposite just now. When discussing the Health Act Amendment Bill the other night the hon. member for Carpentaria wanted to nationalise the doctors.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: I suppose the only way to do that would be to make it impossible for any medical practitioner to engage in private practice.

Mr. RYLAND: He did not say "all."

The PREMIER: I apprehend that he would go "the whole hog" if he nationalised them at all; and the only way to do so would be to make it impossible for them to exercise private practice, and provide that they must do so under the régime of the State. Yesterday, when we were dealing with State children, more than once the word "nationalise" intruded itself into the discussion; and I gathered that the hon. gentleman might have regarded this as the psychological moment when the time had arrived to nationalise the bridges. He did slightly venture on that theme, but he hauled off; he was not quite clear as to whether the ground was sound and good. It is clear enough, however, that if the motion is carried it will strike a pretty big blow at local authority control. It has been laid down that local authorities accept the responsibility for the construction of their bridges and their roads; and if the hon. gentleman is logical, when removing responsibility in the matter of bridges, he will remove responsibility in the matter of roads also. After all, what is a bridge? It is practically an artificial road; it is a highway made by means of piers or supports on which there may be placed iron or wood so that traffic may pass over it; and if you are going to make this claim in respect to these bridges, it is only fair to relieve local authorities of the burden with respect to communication over all the waterways between Texas and Cape York.

Mr. LENNON: Keep the tidal waters before your mind.

The PREMIER: Perhaps the hon. member will move an amendment limiting it to tidal waters; but I thought he was not so parochial in his ideas. Evidently the mover of this motion has not been able to get away from the woes of Bundaberg; and in order to give some colour to his proposal, he includes Maryborough and Brisbane. But if you are going to deal with bridges, it is only fair that you should deal with ferries also, whether those ferries are maintained by boats propelled by John Smith with oars, or by means of an iron rope, or with steam machinery. Why should they not be made free everywhere in the State, from Texas right up to Cape York?

Mr. LENNON: Why not?

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The PREMIER: Why should the taxpayers of Cairns contribute towards the cost of maintaining our Victoria Bridge? They have absolutely no interest in Victoria Bridge, and why should they be asked to contribute towards the cost of its maintenance? And why should the taxpayers of Croydon be called upon to contribute towards the cost of maintaining the Burnett Bridge? Why should the taxpayers of Roma be called upon to contribute something towards the maintenance of the Lamington Bridge?

Mr. LENNON: Why should they pay for the Indooroopilly Railway Bridge?

The PREMIER: I do not think they do. Last year the general railway system paid £4 10s. 1½d. per cent., so that instead of there being a liability in connection with that bridge, there is a credit.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. LENNON: But prior to last year?

The PREMIER: I am dealing with things as they are—(Opposition laughter)—but we can go back for as many years as the hon. member likes, and we shall find that that particular section of our railway system has paid far more than ½ per cent.—it has more than paid interest on the cost of construction, so that Croydon, Roma, and Bundaberg have not had to pay for the Indooroopilly Bridge. But if we are to be so generous as to call upon Croydon, Roma, and Cairns to pay for the bridges mentioned in this motion, then I expect the hon. member for Maranoa will expect that those places should also pay for a work which has been worrying that hon. member. They have had some trouble at Roma in connection with their gas bore. They have got a loan of £5,000 for that work, and have put a bore down, but unfortunately the gas is not coming through. Still they have to pay interest on their loan. If Cairns and Croydon and Roma are to come to the rescue of Bundaberg in its woes, and of Maryborough in its sorrows, and of Brisbane in its trouble, would it not be a perfectly fair thing that those various shires, towns, and cities should become responsible for, and pay the liabilities in respect of, the Roma bore? You cannot relieve Brisbane, Maryborough, and Bundaberg except at the cost of the general taxpayer. But I ask, is the Bridge Board in the metropolitan area less able to carry its liability, less able to pay its interest and redemption now than it was when it entered into that obligation? Is Maryborough less able to pay its proportion of the debt owed on the bridge which it is concerned in now than it was when it entered into that obligation? Is Bundaberg less able to meet its obligations now than it was when it incurred those obligations? I venture to think that in this year, 1911, when things are more prosperous than they were when the local authorities concerned felt able to enter into those obligations, they can meet their liabilities without assistance from the State. I know that when the Victoria Bridge Board incurred their liability things were very dull, and there is nothing before the House to show that they need any special relief at the present time; nor have we any evidence that other local authorities concerned are in need of special relief. I have often thought that it would be an excellent thing if we could find money to help local authorities in newly-opened districts—in a district like Atherton,

for instance, where the scrub is very heavy, and it is difficult to make roads, and costly even to clear them, or in districts like the Tully River district and many parts of the St. George district. I have anxiously desired to be able to assist local authorities in districts like those to construct bridges, and possibly to make roads, but such has been the state of the finances that we have not been able to make any provision for such works. To relieve the local authorities of Bundaberg, Maryborough, and Brisbane by putting a further obligation on outside districts, where they have to struggle with new conditions, would, I think, be an unfair thing to do this year, in which the expenditure of the State is being piled up very considerably, not only by increasing salaries, but also by increased services, and by the increased vote for the Education Department. I can assure the hon. member that there is no surplus cash to draw upon for the construction of bridges. If we relieve the Burnett, Lamington, and Victoria Bridge Boards of their present obligation and future liability in respect of their bridges, it is certainly a fair thing that we should adjust the accounts of local authorities who have erected bridges at any time during the past ten years, whether they have any liability to the Treasury or not. I recognise very clearly the difficulties which surround the constitution of a betterment area. No matter where you have a betterment area, you are bound to meet with some injustice or anomaly. But in such matters we have to do the best we can. When the Bridge Board district in the metropolitan area was constituted, no doubt there was a certain measure of injustice done to the various local authorities concerned.

Mr. MAUGHAN: Would not the betterment principle apply to the districts you have mentioned?

The PREMIER: Yes, we have it there already; but we should like to go beyond that in the case of local authorities in newly-opened districts where they have special difficulties to contend against in making roads, and all we have been able to do has been to give them some assistance from the public estate improvement fund. But, to come back to the constitution of the Brisbane betterment area, I quite recognise that there were perhaps inequalities resulting from the arrangement made, and possibly some injustice done, but the thing was fixed by law, and the whole matter was thoroughly thrashed out in the House. I was not there at the time, but I understand that the matter was dealt with in a spirit of kindness and with a desire to help one another. There is no such thing as a toll at Maryborough. I crossed that very handsome bridge, the Lamington Bridge, recently, and I did not find anyone collecting toll. The pretext for the revenue from which that bridge is maintained is paid by imposing a rate on the taxpayers, and I think the same thing can be done equally as conveniently in the case of the Burnett Bridge. I make no secret of the fact that we really cannot afford to finance the proposition which has been laid before the House by the hon. member for Bundaberg.

Mr. MANN: Unless you strike a rate on the areas to be benefited.

The PREMIER: The areas are paying a rate now. The total cost of the Victoria

Bridge is £127,457. Up to the present the local authorities have regularly met their obligations, and there is a balance due of £57,861. The total cost of the Lamington Bridge, including some repairs, is £27,144, and the balance of the loan to-day is £13,178. The total cost of the Burnett Bridge is £65,997, and the total liability or balance of loan is £25,611. Now, if you write off these loans to comply with the hon. member's request—because that is what it amounts to—the amount of £97,651 9s. 3d. would have to be borne by the general taxpayer. Now, this could not be debited to loan fund. There is no revenue surplus to be cut up in that manner, and, even if there was, we would have in all decency to carry the thing further to other local authorities who are concerned in the matter before the House.

Mr. MANN: It practically drags all the other local authorities in.

The PREMIER: Yes. The whole thing would have to be subsidised by the State. It must be borne in mind that these bridges under review to-day have probably had better treatment than other bridges in the State, inasmuch as the Government agreed in the Bill to provide half the original cost. Having half the original cost provided, there is a proposition now, after a few years, to remit the balance of taxation. We could not differentiate, and we would have to deal with the local authorities right throughout the State, not merely in connection with tidal rivers, but also with waterways, so that I must protest against the resolution; first, on account of the financial aspect—too big a burden on the taxpayer; second, that I think it would be inequitable—not a fair proposition that the people in the West, who have no immediate interest in either of these large structures, should be asked to finance it; and, third—which I think equally as important as either No. 1 or 2—it is subversive of the genius and thought and idea altogether of local government. It would really be a reversion, a going back to the days of endowment, which would involve enormous grants from the Treasury, which the Treasury cannot stand up against. There would be only one way of standing up against it, I suppose, and that would be the imposition of a land tax. Already local government is really in effect a land tax. It is a tax on the unimproved value of land for spending in their local business, and I think it is a far nobler and better principle to continue than from a general pool to provide money for doing works of benefit in any special district. I think the answer is sufficiently strong to enable us to hope that the motion will either be withdrawn or negatived on the voices—that to agree to this would impose a heavy burden on the general taxpayer, that it would be inequitable, and that it would be subversive of the spirit of local government.

Mr. RYLAND (*Gympie*): The Premier treated this matter a bit too lightly at the beginning of his address.

Mr. LENNON: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: Do you object to a little light sometimes?

Mr. RYLAND: No; but local government is a serious question. It is a serious question to the people in Bundaberg and other districts, especially the people who have to pay the toll for passing over this bridge. The Premier says that this is an inopportune time to consider endowment. This is a time a democratic Government

*Mr. Ryland.]*



which represents Australian democracy ought to take some steps to do away with tollbars on our main bridges in Queensland. I do not know of any place right throughout Australia at the present time where they have a tollbar crossing a bridge, except over the Burnett River. I think this method should be abolished and some other provision made different to that of the old days when people had to pay 1d. to cross a bridge. We had to pay a toll for a year or two when crossing Victoria Bridge.

The PREMIER: It was so for some time.

Mr. RYLAND: That was done away with, as the local authorities within the area took over the liability, and are bearing it now.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Why don't the local authorities in Bundaberg do the same thing?

Mr. RYLAND: It is not so very long ago that you could not go to Toowoong without having to pay a toll, but that is done away with. That is why the hon. member for Bundaberg thinks that the time has arrived when a democratic Ministry, such as we are supposed to have, should take steps to do away with tolls all round.

The PREMIER: It is quite a matter of local concern.

Mr. RYLAND: It may not be a matter for local concern; it may be a matter for the Government. They contributed proportionally to the erection of this bridge—a very important bridge over one of the largest rivers in the State, and one of our national highways. The local authorities should be able to meet their liabilities in some other way than by a tollbar. That is what I have an objection to—the Government is not seeing that the money is collected in some way that would be more equitable than this.

Mr. MANN: The shires are paying for it.

Mr. RYLAND: The people going in over the bridge from North Bundaberg and other parts to do business in Bundaberg are the people who are paying for it. They pay 1d. when they go over, but the property-holders in the town do not practically pay much at all, because they have no necessity to go over the bridge.

Mr. MANN: This motion does not propose to do away with it.

Mr. RYLAND: We want to do away with the tollbar in connection with it; it is in that sense I am supporting the hon. member for Bundaberg. By some means we should do away with the barbarous system of the tollbar.

Mr. MAUGHAN: They did away with the tollbar on the Ipswich road.

Mr. RYLAND: I remember in connection with this very bridge, I was going along to Bundaberg, and I did not want to stop in North Bundaberg; I wanted to get right in the town of Bundaberg and stop for the night. While I was riding across the bridge on my bike the toll-keeper jumped up and shook his hand at me, and I thought it was some old friend of mine when working on railway construction, and I just rode by and shook my hand at him. (Laughter.) When I got into Bundaberg I was told he wanted me to pay the penalty, and I was asked "Did he blow the whistle?" I said, "I heard no whistle." "Well," he said, "If he blew the whistle that was to call the police,

[*Mr. Ryland.*]

and the police would follow me and arrest me for going over that bridge without paying the penalty." (Renewed laughter.) Now the hon. member for Bundaberg wants something done that will do away with the tollbar system, and I think the Government, if they cannot see their way to deal with this question in the way the hon. member suggests, they should see that the money was provided in some other way than by the toll system. Why should not the Government define a benefited area, or a joint local authority, to meet this liability?

The PREMIER: That is not proposed under the resolution.

Mr. RYLAND: Yes, it is.

The PREMIER: It is a demand to relieve them of all liability.

Mr. RYLAND: That is a matter of detail—to relieve them of liability.

The PREMIER: You may call that a detail, but it is a principle.

Mr. RYLAND: We want to do away with this toll system in connection with bridges.

The HOME SECRETARY: Why do not the local authorities take action to have their Act amended so as to allow them to form a joint local authority?

Mr. RYLAND: It might not be necessary.

The HOME SECRETARY: It must be the case, because the bridge is under their Act.

Mr. RYLAND: Can they do that without legislation?

The HOME SECRETARY: No; they must have legislation.

Mr. RYLAND: That is the point. Will the Government bring in a Bill to make provision for a joint board of the local authorities in the area benefited? If one local authority stands out they would prevent it being done.

The HOME SECRETARY: The power rests in the Home Department to bring them all in. I did that in connection with the Three-mile Bridge the other day.

Mr. RYLAND: I do not think you can do it without legislation, because there is Bundaberg itself. That is one of the wealthiest local authorities interested in this bridge, and yet it is the one that pays less.

The HOME SECRETARY: Their Act would have to be amended undoubtedly.

Mr. RYLAND: I think the Government should make some provision—

The HOME SECRETARY: Does not all the traffic coming into Bundaberg provide the money?

Mr. RYLAND: There are a lot of people who go into Bundaberg to work, and they have to pay, while the big business men—it is not necessary for them to go over the bridge—do not pay.

The HOME SECRETARY: I am not fathering the toll system. I do not believe in it.

Mr. RYLAND: As regards what the Premier said about Brisbane finding the money to build their own bridges, I remember the time when a good deal of work was done in Brisbane from Government endowment, and that endowment was practically got all over the State. We used to give endowment to the local authorities, but the metropolitan area—North Brisbane and South Bris-

bane in particular—practically raided the Treasury. I think it is a good principle as regards local government that the Government should provide the big national highways of the State, instead of giving a system of endowment that is mopped up by the city of Brisbane, and, perhaps, Rockhampton, and other big towns. They should give endowment to make the roads and large bridges over our tidal rivers, such as we have at Brisbane and Maryborough. I think that would be more satisfactory, and it would be more in keeping with the principle of equity than the way the endowment was given. Although I was always against the local authorities getting endowment, still I thought it would be well for the Government to assist the outside local authorities in opening up the country. I think they should make some provision by which the people of Bundaberg would be enabled to do away with the necessity of having this toll-bar. I am quite satisfied that the Home Secretary could provide the means by which this toll-bar system could be done away with, as was done in the case of the Victoria Bridge.

The HOME SECRETARY: We have abolished it in the local authorities.

Mr. RYLAND: You have done it in Brisbane and in Maryborough, and if only one local authority would not fall into line, I think the Government should step in and say that that local authority must come into line, and an area would be defined so that the burden would fall lightly on all. To this extent I support the motion, and with the democratic Government we have at the present time, I think they ought to make it their aim to see that that old style of making roads and bridges, that is by a toll-bar system—in this instance the only one in Queensland—should be done away with.

Question stated.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. G. Appel, *Albert*): Mr. Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! I hope the Home Secretary will not again allow me to read right through the question before rising.

The HOME SECRETARY: I apologise, Mr. Speaker. I will not offend in this respect again. I do not propose to occupy the attention of the House for any great length of time, but in listening to what has fallen from hon. members on the other side of the House, it struck me what an extraordinary *rolte face* has taken place in connection with the sentiments which they express to-day and the sentiments which they at different times have expressed.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The HOME SECRETARY: Now we find that hon. members who are supporting this motion, which provides that these bridges, which are for the interest and benefit of ratepayers and freeholders of the State, should be made a national charge—a

[5 p.m.] charge upon the general taxpayer of the State, who in many instances has no interest in them, and who, so far as these works are concerned, had no representation as to whether they should be erected or placed in the position they are in or not—to-day we find hon. members opposite, perhaps because it is in their own particular locality, advocating that principle which on so many occasions they have condemned. I have been consistent—

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear! and laughter.

The HOME SECRETARY: I repeat I have been consistent—(opposition laughter)—in so far as my own opinion is concerned.

Mr. MAUGHAN: Whoever doubted that? No one doubted that for a moment.

The HOME SECRETARY: I hope not. I have been consistent in the opinion which I have always held, that any work which is constructed for the benefit of the ratepayer or freeholder, that that ratepayer should pay for that particular work. (Hear, hear!) And no portion of that cost or of that charge should be thrown upon the general taxpayer of the State by a grant of money being made from the national funds of the State. That is the position which I hold to-day. I have on different occasions, in addressing the local authorities on the subject-matter of a grant from the Treasury, consistently opposed such a grant on the principle which I have just stated—that the ratepayer and the property of the ratepayer which is interested and benefits by that particular work should pay for that work. That is the opinion which I hold to-day. I interjected just now that I did not father the imposition of tolls. I am opposed to it, and have always been opposed to it, because I consider it to be a relic of the past. (Hear, hear!) In connection with the Local Authorities Act, in one of the amending Acts—I think it was the 1902 Act—the power to levy tolls for work of this character was taken away from the local authorities—and quite properly too—and a provision was made in that measure whereby the local authority principally concerned can call upon other local authorities to bear portion of the expense of the erection of the work in the first instance, and in the second place in the cost of the maintenance of that work. They can call upon the adjoining local authorities in the area to assist them in that particular work.

Mr. RYLAND: I do not think that was carried.

The HOME SECRETARY: It was carried, and if the hon. gentleman will take the trouble to make himself acquainted with the enactments now in force in the State he will see that is the law. If any of those local authorities called upon refuse to agree, or refuse to take portion of the burden, it lies with the Home Secretary, as the administrative head of the local authorities, to compel them; and we had an instance of that the other day in connection with what is known as the Three-mile Bridge on a main road.

Mr. MAUGHAN: Where was that?

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. gentleman interjects "Where was that?" (Laughter.) I noticed that when the question of that bridge has cropped up the hon. member has remained remarkably silent. (Laughter.) The hon. member knows that the local authorities were called upon to contribute to the construction of a new bridge. Some of them agreed to it, but others refused to do so, and I then issued an order, which I am empowered to issue, naming the local authorities and the proportion that they should pay in connection with the money required for the cost of construction of the bridge. That is the case to-day. In connection with the Burnett Bridge, which apparently is aimed at—

Mr. MAUGHAN: There is no "apparently" about it. It is absolutely certain.

*Hon. J. G. Appel.*]

The HOME SECRETARY: Apparently the hon. member who moved this motion put up certain dummies to shoot at in order to attain his one particular object, which was the Burnett Bridge.

Mr. BARBER: Perish the thought! (Laughter.)

The HOME SECRETARY: I am afraid that so far as that hon. member is concerned, if he could free the Burnett Bridge his interest in the Victoria Bridge or any other bridge would cease.

Mr. BARBER: No.

The HOME SECRETARY: I have not the slightest doubt that if a matter came forward with the hope of relieving those ratepayers who have to contribute to the principal and interest of the Victoria Bridge, then the hon. member would be the very first one to rise up and object that the Treasury should have to contribute to such an object.

Mr. BARBER: No; perish the thought!

The HOME SECRETARY: With regard to the imposition of tolls, I quite agree with the hon. member, but apparently those who were interested in the construction of this particular bridge obtained the passage of an Act which gave them the power to construct that bridge, and which gave them the power, under section 13, to levy tolls. Now, the proper method to be adopted in connection with this matter would be for the different local authorities, or local authority which is interested, to approach the House with a measure for the purpose of amending this particular piece of legislation, and I may say this at once: That if the local authorities who are interested desire to bring in such a measure, I, as the administrative head of the local authorities, will be only too glad to assist in its passage through the House.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The HOME SECRETARY: That is the position. But I say once more that any motion which has for its object the purpose of relieving those who are interested, and for whose particular benefit, and for the benefit of whose particular property, a work is constructed, any motion which has for its object the taking away of these particular burdens, and imposing them upon the general taxpayer of the State, I say at once distinctly that I am absolutely opposed to any such proposition. (Hear, hear!) I repeat again that the action of hon. members on the other side can only be described as an absolute *volte face* on the previous protestations and professions which they have hitherto made in connection with this particular subject-matter.

Mr. RYLAND: We always voted against the imposition of tollbars in every provision in the Local Authorities Act.

Hon. R. PHILP: No; you only voted against bars and barmaids. (Laughter.)

Mr. RYLAND: I voted against every form of bar.

The HOME SECRETARY: Seeing that this provision was excluded in the 1902 Act, and seeing that we passed an amending Act last session, my only wonder is that hon. gentlemen opposite did not take the opportunity on that occasion to bring up this matter of tolls.

Mr. RYLAND: It was outside the scope of the Bill.

[Hon. J. G. Appel.

The HOME SECRETARY: It might have been brought up and ventilated, and the amendment of the Act might very well have been considered by the House this session.

Mr. BARBER: We would have been ruled out of order.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member for Gympie spoke of public highways. On this occasion he discovers a considerable amount of interest in the duty of the country to relieve the persons who are interested in the lands that are benefited by the construction of these bridges of their obligation in connection with bridges which he terms public highways. He suggests that the State should bear a proportion of the cost, and supports the motion of the hon. member for Bundaberg. Surely the hon. member must remember that the State has overtaken its obligation and its duty in that connection; for are not the railways of the State the public highways of the State, and has not the State built the necessary bridges to carry those highways over the waterways of the State? Every session are we not passing additions to those highways, and constructing the necessary passages over those waterways? To-day the members on the other side of the House are quite ready to swallow their principles—quite ready to assist in making a raid on the Treasury for the purpose of assisting the freeholders of the State. I sometimes wonder, but on this occasion I not alone wonder but I marvel, to hear such sentiments falling from the lips of the hon. members on the other side. They are anxious to help the "freehold sweater." I rather doubt their genuineness in the matter.

Mr. LENNON: Are they sweaters?

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member has said so repeatedly; and to-day the hon. member for Bundaberg is wanting to relieve them of their burdens. I would really like to discover his motive—I cannot see it yet; but I confess that I do not believe in the genuineness of the motion which he has moved. So far as I am concerned—and I think I can speak for the party sitting on this side of the House—they are absolutely opposed, in the first instance, to the imposition of tolls, and, in the second instance, they are not disposed to support any proposition which will have for its effect the relieving of the freeholders of a local government tax which they pay, and which should rightly fall upon them. All that these same local government taxpayers ask is that they shall be permitted to carry out their work of local government without any interference—that the State shall not interfere with them in the collection of the taxation on unimproved values which is necessary to carry out their local government. For that purpose and for that reason it has been the policy of this Administration and of the party sitting on this side of the House to oppose the imposition of a land tax upon the freehold lands of the State. Now it is a most extraordinary thing that, although the imposition of a tax by the State upon freehold lands is a plank in the platform of the party on the other side, to-day, for some reason—I wish I could discover what it is—they have a feeling of friendship for the freeholder. To-day they are anxious to relieve him of his responsibilities; they are anxious to help him; they are anxious to assist him in making a raid on the Treasury and upon the pocket of the poor worker who is not endowed or blessed with freehold

land. (Opposition laughter.) They are ready to-day to take something out of his pocket to help the freeholders of the State. Once more I doubt the genuineness of those hon. members; and I can only repeat that the local authority taxpayers of Queensland are perfectly willing to overtake the obligations which fall upon them so long as they are not interfered with in the means by which they obtain the necessary funds to carry out their works.

Mr. WHITE (*Musgrave*): As the member for the district of Musgrave, I can only speak for myself, and I say that I have never promised a free bridge at any election.

Mr. MURPHY: Hear, hear! Down with free bridges. (Laughter.)

Mr. WHITE: At the same time, I think that a bridge like the Burnett Bridge could hardly be constructed by a local authority without the assistance of the Government. It has cost a little over £70,000, and I do not think that any local authority could either borrow that amount or raise it. The Burnett Bridge is rather an exception to the general bridges of the State. It is built over a very wide stream—I think it is the longest bridge in Queensland. I have not been approached personally by any of my constituents and asked to get a free bridge. In fact, I was rather surprised when I saw the notice on the business-paper, because I have neither been consulted by the hon. member for Bundaberg nor have the people of Bundaberg or the people of Musgrave approached me with regard to the question now before the House. Before bringing forward this motion the hon. member for Bundaberg might very well have consulted the member for the district, and he might also very well have consulted the members for Maryborough and Brisbane, if he was going to take up the cudgils for those places—

Mr. BARBER: Why should I consult you on behalf of the Bundaberg electorate?

Mr. WHITE: Then he might have been able to get the assistance of those hon. members.

Mr. LENNON: Is the bridge in your electorate?

Mr. WHITE: It is not in my electorate, but I am very closely connected with it, and it is very much used indeed by the people of the Musgrave electorate, and therefore I am just as well entitled to speak on the question as the hon. member for Bundaberg or the deputy leader of the Opposition.

Mr. BARBER: There is no reason why you should be consulted on the matter, though.

Mr. WHITE: I think I am entitled to speak on the question, even though the bridge is not in my electorate. At the same time, I would not have risen at all but for something that fell from the Hon. the Premier and also from the hon. member for Bundaberg. There was a suggestion that the adjoining shires should be taxed for the upkeep of the Burnett Bridge and for the interest on the cost of construction of the bridge.

Mr. MURPHY: I suppose you are against that?

Mr. WHITE: I am against that—(laughter)—and for a very good reason. When the bridge was constructed, the people were quite willing, and stated they were willing, to pay

the toll. I knew perfectly well, however, that the bridge would no sooner be finished than they would be wanting a free bridge.

Mr. BARBER: Hear, hear!

Mr. WHITE: I quite agree with the hon. member for Bundaberg that the toll system is a bad one. I am against tolls. It costs something like £250 per annum to collect the tolls on that bridge, and that money could be better spent in keeping the bridge painted.

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: What is the amount of the tolls collected?

Mr. WHITE: Between £1,400 and £1,500 a year.

Mr. BARBER: More than that—just on £3,000 last year.

Mr. WHITE: It was a large amount last year. The bridge is very much used, and is a very great convenience to the public, but I am not at all sure that we should have a free bridge unless, as the hon. member for Bundaberg says, the State is going to take over all the bridges. If they do that, then it will be all right; but it would be unfair to tax people unless they are immediately benefited by the bridge, and the people who are immediately benefited are the people of Bundaberg. I have some diffidence in talking on the matter, for the reason that immediately I talk on the bridge question in Bundaberg it is said that I have a personal interest in the matter, as I happen to be a large shareholder in the foundry on the opposite side of the river. It certainly would be a great convenience to me to have the bridge free; and not only to me, but to the people of Bundaberg generally, and those in my electorate; but I would be utterly opposed to any Bill that would bring in shire councils not interested in the bridge. It would be much better—and in this I would be prepared to support the hon. member for Bundaberg—for the people themselves to decide upon an area that would benefit, and then bring in a Bill to abolish the tolls and put the liability on the local authorities actually interested as a joint local authority. That would save the tolls; and the amount saved would almost pay for the painting of the bridge. If the hon. member will do something in that direction he will get my support, and probably the support of hon. members on both sides. I do not think that Bundaberg or any other district is entitled to shirk the responsibility to repay money to the Government, and I hope that Bundaberg will not repudiate its responsibility in connection with the Burnett Bridge.

Mr. CORSER (*Maryborough*): This motion has been before the House for some time; and I may say that no person in my electorate has approached me to ask me to support it. I believe that as honourable men they consider there is an honourable obligation, and they do not want me to agitate for the removal of that obligation. (Hear hear!) The cost of the Lamington Bridge, which is a very long bridge and cost a considerable sum of money, has been met in the way suggested by the hon. member for Musgrave—that is, by taxation of the people who benefit by it. They refused to have a poll, and they met their obligations, though the Tinana Shire Council is a poorer council than the North Bundaberg Council, and I do not see why the North Bundaberg people and the Bundaberg people should not carry out a similar scheme as that

*Mr. Corser.*]

carried out in regard to the Lamington Bridge by Maryborough and Tinana. I have a strong objection to anything of this kind being done without the voice of the people being first heard. We are now agitating for the construction of a bridge across the Mary River. This bridge was authorised by Parliament at exactly the same time as the Bundaberg bridge. Then the Government granted one-half of the cost of a bridge at Granville, but they did not fulfil the conditions and apply for the money until very recently, and they were told by the Minister for Works that the money was not now available, and if they wished to build the bridge they would have to build it solely out of loan money. What hope have we to get this loan if there is an attempt to repudiate the engagements made in respect to the Lamington Bridge and the Burnett Bridge? Besides, I think it is really trying to get in the thin end of the wedge for the repudiation of their liabilities by people who have gone in for local improvements. Take, for instance, the question of railway guarantees. If there were enough of those guarantees throughout Queensland and members of Parliament might be induced to wipe out those guarantees, would that be a just thing? Would it be just to the taxpayer who has had to pay for years past, as in the case of Pialba, where they had to pay 4 per cent. for fourteen years while that amount was not earned by the railway? Would it be fair, seeing that the local authorities about Mackay and other places have paid the whole cost of their bridges, that other local authorities of more recent date should be relieved of their engagements, and no refund made to those people who have paid for their bridges? I say it would be absolutely unjust and unfair; and I think under the circumstances people should consider well before they approach the Government to remove these liabilities. When people have received these loans and have entered into engagements for a specified number of years they should be prepared to carry them out without repudiation. (Hear, hear!)

Question put and negatived.

#### SERVICES OF OLD COLONISTS.

Mr. PETRIE (*Toombul*), in moving—

"That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable that something should be done for the old colonists of fifty years or more residence in the State, for the past services they have rendered, and that their claims, when proved, be appropriately recognised"—

said: I regret that I am in the unfortunate position of only being able to bring this motion forward on private members' afternoon. I did endeavour to see if I could not get the Government to take the matter up, because I felt sure that if they would do so I would be successful in obtaining what I am trying to get for these old colonists. I am very much in earnest in regard to this question—there are no fireworks in it as far as I am concerned; and I only hope that when we come to a division—as I hope we shall before the end of the session—the majority of the House will be with me.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Are not you an interested party?

Mr. PETRIE: I am not an interested party; I am a native. This matter has been going on for some years. In July, 1903, there was a deputation to the Acting Premier while the then Premier, Mr. Kidston, was away in

[*Mr. Corser.*

Lendon. It was thought that in Jubilee year it would have been an exceedingly graceful thing to do something for our old colonists; but nothing came of the deputation. I have had a good many of those old colonists seeing me, and asking if I would lay their claims before the Government and before the House; and I took the matter up. I suppose, being a son of one of the oldest colonists in Queensland—I do not know whether that is the reason why they came to me; but I was asked to arrange for a deputation to the present Premier. I was aware that we would not get much from him, because he told me beforehand that he could not do anything whatever in the matter. He received the deputation, however, and allowed me to bring in this motion. I would have liked the motion to have been different. I originally intended to bring it in as a question of money, but I would have to get Executive authority, and I was blocked there. I think that the services of our old pioneers should be recognised. First of all, I suggested to the Premier that to those old pioneers who are fairly well off there should be granted [5.30 p.m.] a free railway pass for the remainder of their lives; that to others there should be granted 160 acres of land unconditionally, to be selected as near as possible to the neighbourhood where they are at present residing; and that to others who are now supported by their children or the State, there should be given a small sum of money. The Premier, in replying to the last deputation which he received, said—

"The fact that they were pioneers gave them no claim above that of other citizens who had come later for any special pension. In fact, the thought often was that those who had come earliest had the best of the deal, and that they had had the opportunity of laying hold of and sticking to the best things."

I would remind the hon. gentleman that many of the old pioneers who brought money to the State invested that money in taking up land or forming stations, and, owing to droughts and other causes for which they were not responsible, they lost all their money, and now, in the latter days of their life, they are not able to do anything for themselves.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: They can draw the old-age pension.

Mr. PETRIE: Many of our old colonists are very averse to going through the form they have to go through in order to obtain the old-age pension, and I do not blame them. Under the State old-age pension we had a very much simpler system than that now in force under the Federal Government. The mere fact of a policeman in uniform going round to make inquiries about an applicant is enough to prevent people applying for the pension, and many persons who are entitled to the pension prefer to go without it to submitting to that kind of thing. I claim the sympathy of the Home Secretary, as well as other Cabinet Ministers, in the proposal I am now laying before the House. I mention the Home Secretary particularly, because of the quotation I am about to read from a recent issue of a metropolitan newspaper. It is as follows:—

"The Hon. Home Secretary can tell of the murderous assault by blacks on his pioneer grandfather, who, wounded well nigh to death, travelled through a long night of peril, and though bleeding from his wounds, waded through North Pine up to his middle in water, to fall at daybreak on the threshold of his "Nundah home" in a swoon of insensibility."

Those few words, written by a man who is

well acquainted with the life of the earlier days, show what the old pioneers had to put up with. The late Rev. Dr. Lang, in all good faith, gave to some of our old colonists land orders, but unfortunately the holders of those orders have never been able to obtain land with them.

Mr. MANN: Why?

The PREMIER: They were land orders on a trading company, not on the State.

Mr. PETRIE: I admit that the land orders were given on a trading company, but all the same I think the Government of that day should have recognised the claims of the pioneers. I should have liked to have referred this matter to a Select Committee for inquiry and report, and I had intended framing my motion in that form, but I have not been encouraged to deal with the matter in that way. I have scores of letters which I have received from people residing in different parts of the State, from the Tweed right up to the Gulf, and in other States of the Commonwealth. Those persons claim that they are entitled to some consideration from the Queensland Government.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You might read the letters.

Mr. PETRIE: I am not going to take up the time of the House in reading them.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: How can members get the information if you do not read them?

Mr. PETRIE: If I had a Select Committee we could get all that information laid before the House, but I cannot give it now, as my time is limited. I should have liked to have had a day or two set aside for the consideration of this important question, as I believe that members generally recognise that something should be done for the old pioneers. I should like to read just another quotation, for the benefit of the Premier. It is a letter which appeared in the *Courier* of the 19th July last, and is as follows:—

“All honour to Mr. Andrew Petrie and those gentlemen who attempted to stir up the sympathy of Mr. D. F. Denham. Surely the right to select 160 acres as a homestead would cost the State absolutely nothing, and would enable a great many to have a “home” in their declining years. Mr. Denham stated that these pioneers had no claim whatever, instancing the fact that they had all the chances, etc., of pioneers; but if the honourable gentleman will cast his memory back he can recall among his own friends many who have started afresh more than once, and droughts, falls in the value of stock, and other causes ruined them. These men opened this country up for the present population, and in the opinion of the majority of thinking men are entitled to a resting place for the few remaining years of their existence. Mr. Denham must know that pioneers in this world are not, as a rule, successful; it is those who come after who scoop the pool.”

I can speak feelingly on that subject, not as a pioneer, but as a native of Brisbane. I have invested a good deal of money in Brisbane and its suburbs—not, I admit, without expecting something for my own advantage—but, unfortunately, my speculations have not been successful, and I have lost a lot of money, as my people before me did. I am not advocating this matter for my own sake, because I am not in it. But I think these people who came here and bore the heat and burden of the day, and opened up this country and helped to

make it comfortable for those who came after them, are worthy of some consideration. (Hear, hear!) A year or two ago a letter was addressed to the secretary of the Labour party, the hon. member for Bundaberg, asking for the support of that party on this particular question. The hon. member replied, addressing his letter to Messrs. Buckland and Irwin. I may say that some of the old pioneers who were interested in this movement have passed away since its inception. We had over 500 applicants who claimed to be old pioneers. However, I would not, if anything was settled, give money away indiscriminately, until it was found whether these people had a good claim or not. In this letter from the hon. member for Bundaberg, he says—

“Your letter of 17th instant was brought before our party this morning, and I was instructed to acknowledge receipt of same and to intimate that we had deferred the matter until further action is taken by Mr. Petrie or the Government.”

That is the only reply which the secretary of the Labour party can give, but I have the sympathy of those gentlemen sitting in opposition now, and I trust I have the sympathy of a good many on this side. (Hear, hear!) My only regret is that opportunity has not been given to me to have a longer time on this question, so as to have brought the matter to a division. I hope the members of the Government will give me an opportunity before the end of the session to bring the matter before the House and have a division taken upon it. It is very little use for any private member to bring up private business on Thursday afternoon; even if it is carried through it remains there, and nothing further is done. Unless you have the Government with you on any Bill or motion you bring in here on private members' afternoon, I simply think it is almost waste of time.

Mr. MULLAN: How are the Government on this question?

Mr. PETRIE: I am not prepared to answer that question. I do not know how the Government are. The only thing I know is how the Hon. the Chief Secretary feels on this question—(laughter)—and I suppose, being the head of the Government, he speaks for the lot.

Mr. MURPHY: He is the Government.

Mr. PETRIE: However, there are a good many members who are sympathetic. The grandfather of the Home Secretary was a pioneer, and I think I have a right to claim his help. (Hear, hear!) I really did not think this matter was coming on this afternoon, or I would have been better prepared for it. I have left some information at home which otherwise I should have been able to give to the House. However, I do not suppose that if I spoke here all day, and also to-morrow, the result would be very much different. I wish to have these old pioneers recognised in some shape or form, and I hope that a majority of the House will support the motion. A great many of these old pioneers have now arrived at an age when they will probably not be very much longer with us, and I think they should get some little recognition for what they have done in the earlier days. I have very much pleasure in moving the resolution standing in my name.

The PREMIER: The hon. member for Toombul, in bringing forward the motion,

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expressed a hope that time might be given so that the question might be discussed, and eventually a division taken. As far as I am concerned, the division might be taken at once, or any subsequent time during the session. I told the hon. member when he brought the deputation to me that I certainly would, out of sympathy, afford a discussion on private members' day. That is a case of "Thank you for nothing at all." He has the right of utilising that time, and I certainly will not in anywise try to block it.

Mr. MURPHY: There is really nothing in the motion.

The PREMIER: No; it is a pious expression of opinion, and would not amount to very much even if carried on the voices. A few weeks ago I was invited to a dinner, and I think I never enjoyed an evening more; it was the annual dinner for old veterans of the Crimean and other engagements. There were there men who appeared to be in robust health, despite their age, and they were rejoicing in the days of their fighting. Many of them spoke in contemptuous terms of the iron ships, wishing they had the good old wooden boats to-day—(laughter)—and I verily believe, as they were enjoying their dinner, and subsequently their long churchwarden pipe, if the call for battle had come they would have rushed down the steps pell-mell to join in it. They were the genuine heroes of '54 and later years, men who fought the fight for the nation. As the hon. member was speaking about pioneers this afternoon, the recollection of these men came before me—brave old soldiers—they rejoiced in their scars of battle, and were only too eager to enter into it again if the opportunity presented itself; and I do not think that our grand old pioneers will thank this House for any kind of gratuities or largesse, or patting on the back. I think that the old pioneer would not appreciate this kind of thing. I am sorry that a kind of bacteria had been getting into the blood of some who saw me on that occasion, because I am quite sure of this: that a few years ago they would have spurned the thought of coming to ask for something. Because, after all, on what does the claim in the motion rest?

Mr. MAY: You have to thank them for the consolidation of the British Empire.

The PREMIER: It was a mutual obligation—they came to this country for better or for worse. In many cases it has been better, and perhaps in some cases worse. I recognise the tremendous disadvantages which our earlier pioneers had in opening up the country; they had disabilities to labour under, things which to-day would be looked upon as intense hardship, but they overcame them and won, and if there are some who for some reason or other failed, there is no reason in the world why this State should be called upon to make any special recognition, because they have failed in their effort. There are pioneers, not merely by comparison of years. There are other pioneers; there are pioneers of industry, and there are pioneers in other regards, and if we are going to recognise the pioneer because he happened to be here in 1859, then I think we ought to turn round and promptly recognise the pioneers in any industrial pursuit that prevails in the State to-day. It is only history all the world over that pioneers have fallen.

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Take our big squatting industry to-day, and I think it will be allowed that some of our very best men went down in that protracted drought which ended in 1902. Many men, in that unfortunate drought, lost their all—good men, and in a sense better men than those who followed, and who have been successful owing to the kindness of Nature and the good prices for wool and cattle, and they probably think themselves superior to their predecessors, and yet do we propose to give any station property to the men who went out there and suffered in that way? Few men, probably, have suffered year after year such great hardship, and in the end to find everything gradually whittled away from them, and they were powerless to prevent it. I suppose nothing could be more dreadful than to see your live stock hourly and daily passing away from you. Are we going to deal with those pioneers? Are we going to do anything for the pioneer timber-getter who may have fallen by the way? I say we are opening up a very curious and very perilous proposition.

Mr. MAUGHAN: And the pioneer miner.

The PREMIER: Yes; a number of those men who have gone out as prospectors come under the same category. I do not know whether the request has been made on account of charity, or whether it has been made as compensation. I think no man regards with more respect than I do those who have "borne the heat and burden of the day," and who have toiled hard in the early years of the State, but I cannot think it is a fair thing that the present taxpayer should be called upon in any regard to compensate them. Supposing they get 160 acres of land, such as the hon. member proposes. The letter the hon. member read spoke of forming a home—every one of those pioneers is to get 160 acres and go out and form a home. You would be doing him a distinct unkindness to ask him to go out and form a home. Then as to a free railway pass. What on earth is the good of a free railway pass to a person unless he has a fair amount of money with which to enable him to provide necessaries when travelling? If a free railway pass gave, as some people think, free dinners on the railway, there might be some sense in it. It does not appear to me that there is any business in the motion. It arose when the question was mooted as to how to commemorate the Jubilee of Queensland, and some genius thought about doing something for the old pioneers. I can see no business in it. I am quite willing that it should go to a division. My vote will be known; but if there are members who think there is any advantage to be gained by discussing the matter more fully, they are at liberty to discuss the proposition.

Mr. MACKINTOSH (*Cambooya*): I am just about a year behind the time, but upon my conscience I cannot understand the Premier. If it were not for us pioneers he would not be in the prosperous position he is in now, and other members of the Government, too. Just fancy, when I was out here forty-nine years ago, it took 102 days coming from Liverpool to Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I was 106 days.

Mr. MACKINTOSH: Perhaps it would have been a good thing if you never came at all. (Laughter.) What is it if you give a

free pass to those old men? What is it if you give them a free pass for the few years they are likely to live? Perhaps a great many of those pioneers who came here fifty years ago might have done better; at the same time, if we had not come here the Premier would not be in the prosperous position he is in now. Make no mistake whatever about that. There is the hon. member for Marano and myself—we are only one year from being entitled to that old-age pension and a free pass. The hon. member was born exactly a year too late, and I was a year too late in coming out; at the same time, to hear these men talk about the good times we had—just fancy when I walked from here to the Downs!

Mr. MURPHY: In your kilts?

Mr. MACKINTOSH: No. I had to take my trousers off—(laughter)—and I never forgot it. The roads were in such a state that often I was not sure whether I was on the right road or not. I say a great many who came out from the old country years ago did not do as well as they ought to do, but still they were of very great benefit to the country, and I am sorry the Hon. the Premier has spoken in the derogatory manner he has done in connection with the old pioneers.

Mr. MURPHY: He was not referring to you.

Mr. MACKINTOSH: Indirectly he referred to me. At the same time, I am supporting this motion, and I trust a division will take place and that it will be carried.

Mr. GUNN (*Carnarvon*): I do not know whether I should speak on a question of this sort, as I have been over fifty years in Queensland, and therefore I am an interested party. I can remember the time very well when the pioneers had a very hard row to hoe—when there were no railways and no shire councils. We did not have a great many of the things we have now; but what are you going to do with those old pioneers? It is very difficult to say, because there are others that have been here forty years. Why should not they get something too? It is very hard to know what to do unless we were to make them members of the Legislative Council and give them a brass plate. (Laughter.)

*At 7 o'clock the House, in accordance with Sessional Order, proceeded with Government business.*

## COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY AND WAYS AND MEANS.

### FORMATION OF COMMITTEE.

The PREMIER: Mr. Speaker,—Under Standing Order No. 304 I move that the House, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Ways and Means for raising the Supply to be granted to His Majesty.

Mr. LENNON: I understand that the motion is in pursuance of the existing Standing Orders.

The SPEAKER: Yes, under the new Standing Order No. 304.

Question put and passed.

## SUGAR WORKS BILL.

### SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Mr. LENNON (*Herbert*): Mr. Speaker,—Before addressing myself to the Bill the second reading of which we are now considering, I think it might perhaps be proper for me to make a brief reference to the work of the Sugar Royal Commission. The Sugar Royal Commission were appointed, as you are aware, a few months ago, and they promptly entered upon their duties. They met with many difficulties throughout their work by reason of bad weather and floods, yet I venture to say that the commission did a very great deal of good work. I think they brought to bear on their work untiring energy, not a little amount of ability, and, I think I can add, strict impartiality. In some respects I do not altogether agree with them, and in their relations and dealings with struggling sugar-millers like the Colonial Sugar Refining Company and Drysdale Brothers—(laughter)—they perhaps show a tenderness altogether unnecessary lest they might conflict with these struggling sugar manufacturers. With this exception I can safely say that the work of the commission was carried out in an efficient and highly creditable manner. (Hear, hear!) I therefore think that the country is under a certain degree of obligation to that commission for the performance of a very onerous, very important, and very responsible duty. With regard to the Bill itself, the Treasurer has had the opportunity of introducing some very important measures into this House in recent years, but I think I may say that this measure is even of as much importance as any he has yet had the honour of introducing, because I consider that this Bill really marks a new era in what I might call the sugar industry of Queensland. It is, of course, in a measure a revival of the central mill system, which has been allowed to become and to remain latent for many years, and I am glad indeed to see that new life is introduced into the system, and that it is to be introduced in a very much improved form and under altogether better conditions. The Hon. the Treasurer, in introducing the Bill, spoke of it as being a "unique" Bill. No doubt in some respects it is unique. It is unique particularly in the fact that it proposes to rely chiefly—almost entirely, indeed—upon the suppliers of cane, and the owners of land will not at any time be able to exercise any of the undue influence that they were formerly able to exercise in regard to the central sugar-mills under the old system. (Hear, hear!) I think that this system of cane credit which is introduced in this Bill is one that we can commend. I think it will work out much more satisfactorily than the late plan, under which large owners of land in the vicinity of mills were, by reason of their influence and power, able to run these mills to some extent to their own advantage, and practically were in a position to dictate terms to the Government as well. I think it is a very good departure to get away from that kind of thing, and have no fetter of that kind at all. The Treasurer, in introducing the Bill, in that pleasant manner of his—I may say that he wore a smile that was "most childlike and bland"—said that the people of the North are in entire accord with the Government. I think that he is putting the cart before the horse. I think

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for some time past that this Government has not been taking much interest in Northern affairs, but after a long and regular amount of solicitation on the part of Northern members they have at last come to a sensible frame of mind. I would not like to be offensive and say that they are doing this in a lucid interval, but they are in a better frame of mind now, and are going about this matter in a business-like way, and they realise that Northern Queensland is the home of the sugar industry, and if that industry is to be extended at all, that is the place to extend it. Instead of the people of the North being in entire accord with the Government, if I may go the length of saying it, it is after long consideration and drilling and drubbing from members on the Opposition side of the House that the Government find it to its advantage to act in accord with the people of the North. So I therefore justify my statement that the Hon. the Treasurer has put the cart before the horse in this question. (Hear, hear!) In the course of his introductory remarks the hon. gentleman spoke about the workers, and of course he said he did not want to use that term offensively, and I am not going to tack anything on the hon. gentleman for saying anything offensive. But he said that they were birds of passage, and that he wanted to take away from them their migratory habits and make them part and parcel of the surroundings in a sugar area.

The TREASURER: Do you object to that?

Mr. LENNON: I am coming to that if the hon. gentleman will only curb his youthful impatience. I commend him for that, because I have been advocating it for a very long time, and one's natural vanity will always feel satisfied when he finds such a distinguished gentleman as the Hon. the Treasurer ministering to that vanity. I have advocated very strenuously in this House for years that there might be a system of sugar-workers' blocks, as I termed them, by which, and under which, we might be able to retain in the sugar districts a large number of men who would be content to remain and make their homes there. The hon. gentleman says that they are birds of passage, and under this Bill he expects that they will remain in the immediate vicinity of sugar areas. I have read the Bill through, and I cannot see any special provision under which workers are going to be induced or influenced to settle in the district unless they can do so by acquiring an interest in the farm, either by lease or purchase, and growing cane thereon. This Bill proposes to afford very fascinating facilities to growers of cane, because they will be very generously dealt with under this Bill. As I said, the starting of the cane credit system will mean that the growers will be the real owners and the managers of the concern, and the very people with whom the Government, the corporation, and the Treasurer will deal. But I do not see any provision whereby working people will be induced to come and settle in the neighbourhood of sugar areas. I am hopeful that when the North Coast Railway is built it will be of an enormous advantage, not only to the North but to the whole of Queensland, and that that railway will be the means of transforming the whole character of the place as regards population, and that in travelling from one district to another it might be the means whereby some of those engaged

in the construction of the line might perhaps finally settle and become permanent residents of these sugar districts. I agree with the Hon. the Treasurer that the Bill is quite unique in respect to the cane credits. In another respect, also, I think it is unique among measures that have been introduced by the present Government—that is, that it acknowledges the perpetual lease system. Its inclusion may not be due to a desire to give effect or to give a trial to that expedient; but, at all events, in the peculiar circumstances by which these sugar-works will be surrounded, by reason of the fact that the Government want to give a large amount of influence and power to the cane creditors rather than to the landowners, the Government are going to give the system a trial. The perpetual lease system will no doubt be preferable to any other in regard to the townships that will be formed adjacent to these various sugar-mills, and hon. members on this side can lay “the flattering unction to their souls” that the Government at length have done something that we can approve of, at all events so far as this Bill is concerned. No doubt we shall approve of other items in connection with the Bill too, but that is an experiment that we think it well worthy of a full and effective trial, and, without running the risk of posing as a prophet, I honestly believe, just as I sincerely hope, that the experiment will prove in every way successful. The Bill also has a very important provision providing for a more than usually careful classification of the land. After a thorough examination by an expert valuer, there will be shown on the plan provided under the Act what is really good cane land, and what is land not so described. Another very wise thing is done in the Bill. Proper safeguards are provided against fancy values being put upon land in the townships surveyed in the various localities. Such values are effectively blocked. No encouragement is to be given to speculators to buy up land in the hope that, after a mill is established, they will be able to get fancy prices for their land. That is a rather unusual provision, and in that respect also the Bill is somewhat unique. I am glad to see that, and I entirely approve of it. The Bill provides for the erection of sugar-mills, and for necessary works incidental thereto, such as tramlines for the purpose of acting as feeders to the mills, and for their management and control and extension in every direction that may be considered necessary. Furthermore—and that of course will meet with the absolutely unanimous approval of this side—the Bill preserves the White Australia principle. It is provided that the sugar-mill work and all the work carried on in connection therewith shall be controlled entirely by what is known as the white Australia principle. Everyone who is listening to me knows that that is a thing that this side of the House stands for. It is a thing that I have myself advocated in this House, not only in relation to the whole policy that is generally known as the “white Australia” policy, but particularly in regard to local government, where tramlines are owned wholly or in part by local authorities. I am glad to see that the white Australia principle is intended to be upheld in this Bill. I observe, however, as I have observed in regard to previous Bills, that there are certain exemptions. There are only two in this instance, I think; but it just occurs to me to inquire of the Treasurer what is the need for any exemptions. I have endeavoured to arrive at some reason for it, and I

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can think of none; but no doubt, under advice from his law advisers, the hon. gentleman will perhaps be able to give me some reason why there should be exemptions with regard to the employment of those who cannot pass the education test. The township areas are to be controlled by the corporation in the meantime, and all the rents derived from the township allotments—and that is where the benefit of the perpetual lease system comes in—are to be applied for the benefit of the township itself, and are to be expended within the area. I have great hopes for the success of this proposal. It is the first attempt that has been made in Queensland to do anything of this kind, and I feel very sanguine indeed of its success. I shall watch with considerable interest every one of these township areas that may be established in connection with sugar-mills, and I expect to see them go ahead steadily, and surely blossom into very great prosperity so soon as the mills are in working condition. In addition to that, for the purpose of safeguarding the industry, and preserving it from difficulties and objectionable features that have attended it hitherto, the Government propose to grant no publicans' licenses within 5 miles of any sugar-mill. To that proposal I give my hearty approval.

Mr. D. HUNTER: Not after 1917 either.

Mr. LENNON: I do not see the application of that interjection.

Mr. D. HUNTER: That is in the Liquor Bill.

Mr. LENNON: I am referring to matters that are preceding that. We have not come to that Bill yet. There is an old saying that "It is time to bid the devil good day when you meet him"; and when I meet the hon. gentleman in charge of that Bill I will bid him good day. That is a very wise provision. I have seen in many parts of the State the evils which it will prevent. I will instance particularly Nelson, which is the township adjacent to the Mulgrave Central Sugar-mill, and Proserpine. Those are the two worst instances that I can give of the way in which hotels seem to come clamouring all around sugar-mills. In that connection I might say, "Where the carcass is there will the vultures be gathered together." They are attracted by what they can get out of the men working in the mills. Licenses are granted by the licensing authorities, and in this connection I am glad that a change is going to be made, and that licensing benches will be done away with in the near future. Although I have been a member of a licensing authority myself in the past, I have not the slightest objection to being extinguished in that capacity. Licensing benches in the early days no doubt supplied a want when stipendiary magistrates were not available, but now the time has come when we can dispense with them, and the duty can be carried out much better in another way. With regard to the matter of hotel licenses, I would like to digress for a moment to speak about the hotel that already exists at Babinda. It is a very fine building, and we have the assurance of the Treasurer that as the building has been in existence prior to the introduction of this Bill and prior to the establishment of a sugar-mill there, the proprietor will be fairly and justly dealt with. This is an assurance that we would expect to get from this or any other Government. I do not think that any Government would be justified in closing that hotel, which has been erected quite apart

from any consideration regarding this measure or any legislation the Government might intend to introduce. It has been built in good faith by thoroughly respectable people, the building is one that will be a credit to the district, and it would have been most unfair to order it to be closed as a hotel without compensation. Now that the Government intend to pay compensation for the closure of that hotel under this Bill, the question naturally arises in my mind whether they will act in a like decent and honest manner in connection with their proposed liquor reform. I cannot expect the hon. gentlemen opposite to reply to my query, because, perhaps, they may be under a bond of secrecy, or if they are not under a bond of secrecy, they may be averse to give the information at the present time.

Hon. R. PHILIP: Have you read the Bill?

Mr. LENNON: Yes. I have more Bills to read than the hon. gentleman ever saw. (Laughter.) Seeing that hotels are not to be allowed around the mills, the Bill proposes that houses of accommodation or lodging-houses may be erected. It does not say that the Government will provide them, but that the Government will permit them to be there. I think that when the Government take the step—which I heartily approve—of doing away with licensed houses and forbidding the erection of hotels, they might go a step further and establish lodging-houses themselves. I would even go the length of establishing hotels where hotels are needed; but I would not be so inconsistent as to say they should be erected in these areas. They should provide sufficient lodging accommodation, until the work is fairly started, for people looking for land or looking for work; and after that it might be left to the public to establish lodging-houses. I think the Government would be wise, seeing that they have adopted the perpetual lease system, and they will not allow hotels within the area, if they were to establish good, comfortable, and substantial boarding-houses under Government supervision, with a reasonable scale of charges, in connection with every one of these central mills. Only three are likely to be proposed in the near future; but I hope there will be ten before long.

Mr. FORSYTH: It is provided in the Bill—clause 14.

Mr. LENNON: I have not seen where the Government undertakes this matter; and I am glad to have the information.

Hon. R. PHILIP: It is not boarding-houses; it is a mill.

Mr. LENNON: I am talking about boarding-houses. Hotels are forbidden in the area and within a limit of 5 miles.

The TREASURER: Only in the area.

Mr. LENNON: Is there no 5-mile limit?

The TREASURER: No.

Mr. LENNON: I repeat that as hotels are forbidden within the area, it would be a proper thing for the Government to provide a fair substitute in the shape of good, up-to-date, well-kept boarding-houses.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Clause 10 provides for that.

Mr. LENNON: It says they "may;" on the other hand, they may not.

The PREMIER: It would be the common-sense thing to do.

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Mr. LENNON: I accept that as an assurance that it will be done; and with that assurance I am content. Now, I would like to refer briefly to the terms on which these mills are to be erected. The term of the loan is proposed to be limited to sixteen years; and a sixteen years' loan involves a repayment of interest and redemption at the rate of £8 lls. 8d. per cent. per annum, which is a very heavy charge. This is establishing an industry of so much importance that it is a matter of the greatest astonishment to me that the Government of the day, the Kidston Government, and the Morgan Government before it, did not take their courage in both hands and determine to make Queensland the great sugar-producing State of Australia. It may be one of the greatest in the world eventually, but we do not expect it to get that far just yet. There has been an increase in population for some years past, and an enhanced ratio of increase must occur shortly. We know that for various reasons people are being attracted to Australia. I think the Commonwealth Government has advertised Australia very much more than it would have been advertised had we not been federated. I know that idea is not popular with many members on the other side; but it has been a great factor in advertising Australia and bringing to it people from every part of the world. Then we have a vigorous immigration policy. There is a similar policy in other States; and the visit of Australian legislators to the coronation will have done more than many other things to advertise Australia. Then again, we have our High Commissioner, Sir George Reid. What better man could we have to advertise Australia? Though I never did admire his politics, I say without reservation—without the slightest scintilla of reservation—that he is an ideal High Commissioner for Australia. Therefore, all the conditions are favourable to attracting a large number of people to Australia.

Mr. FORSYTH: What has that to do with the Bill?

Mr. LENNON: I will tell the hon. member, if he will restrain his impatience. I think we may put down the increase of population at the rate of 20,000 a year; and the consumption of sugar averages 100 lb. per annum for every soul in Australia.

Hon. R. PHILP: That is only £1,000 a year. That is not much.

Mr. LENNON: But that is not the only reason. I do not want to go back and quote speeches from *Hansard* on measures relating to the sugar industry during the past three years, or I could show that gentlemen sitting on the Treasury benches have always been whining about the danger of over-production. The facts are that, during the last ten years there has been an average shortage of 46,000 tons; and in the year 1909 we actually imported 99,000 tons of sugar into Australia. Certainly that was a record importation.

Mr. WHITE: There was a reason for that.

Mr. LENNON: There is generally a reason for everything. But what was the reason for the average annual shortage of 46,000 tons during the past ten years? [7.30 p.m.] The reason for that was that there was a shortage in production. I say we are justified in expanding the sugar industry, that the Government should shake off their timidity, and that they should take hold of the thing firmly and say,

[*Mr. Lennon.*

“Queensland is a place which will become famous for its sugar industry, and we shall do our best to assist its development.” I am glad to see that an attempt is being made in this Bill to give effect to an idea of that sort, and I hope that as soon as the Bill has passed both Houses—as I hope it will pass both Houses—they will set to work to carry out the recommendations of the Sugar Commission, and establish the various mills recommended by that commission. Of course, a few of those mills are in my own district.

Hon. R. PHILP: Three.

Mr. LENNON: Two are in my district, and one is in the electorate represented by the hon. member for Cairns. But that is a small matter, because those are the places where sugar should be grown. Anyone who reads the evidence given by Mr. Knox before the Sugar Commission, or the opinions of other sugar authorities, will see that the Northern part of Queensland is the place where sugar-cane can be most successfully grown, and that that is the proper place to grow the cane. The Sugar Commission make no strong recommendation that I can discover to erect sugar-mills anywhere in the South. They say that in the North, particularly between Mackay and Cooktown, sugar-cane can be grown with very great advantage. And when those districts peter out—if they ever should do, which I very much doubt—there are areas north of Cooktown, along the Batavia River and other parts, where enough sugar-cane can be grown to supply the greater part of the world with sugar. But we are not now going into a scheme of that sort; we are now dealing with the places where sugar-cane is grown or may be grown if sufficient inducements are offered to farmers. We want those mills recommended by the commission established—and established quickly. We do not want the work delayed, and have people going to the expense of planting cane which they expect to have crushed at those mills. I hope that the Government will not be deterred from going on with this work, and assisting in developing and expanding the sugar industry, the like of which is not possessed by any other State in Australia. I can assure you that were it possessed by any other State, they would use every care and every effort to see that it was expanded and succoured in every possible way. Attempts have been made in Victoria in the past, and will be made again, to raise a considerable quantity of beet for the manufacture of sugar.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Attempts are being made now.

Mr. LENNON: I know the district—Meffra—where they have raised beet, and have raised it successfully, but not profitably, and I find on inquiry that it costs something like £14 an acre to cultivate the soil for the production of beet for sugar purposes. Some persons may think that this is a menace to the sugar industry of Queensland, but I do not believe it is any menace at all. I feel quite satisfied that the second attempt at manufacturing sugar from beet in Victoria will fail, and that beetroot sugar in Australia will never successfully compete against cane sugar. I, therefore, exhort the Government with all the power I can not to hesitate in this matter, but be energetic and show to Australia what Queensland can do in the production of a very valuable and profitable commodity such as sugar is. Now, to continue my remarks with regard to the

term of the loan, from which I was drawn off by some interjections, I would suggest that instead of allowing only sixteen years for the repayment of the money the Government will make the time twenty-five, or at least twenty years. If they make it twenty years, instead of paying £8 lis. 8d. per cent. per annum, the farmers will have to pay—I have not had time to work it out, but I think it would be in the neighbourhood of £7 odd.

Mr. FORSYTH: £7 10s.

Mr. LENNON: I should say it would be about £7 10s. The difference in the amount is not great, but it might mean a great deal to struggling farmers who have to contend with bad seasons occasionally, and who should therefore receive a great deal of consideration. I hope that the Government will be prepared to accept an amendment from this side of the House, or, better still, to propose an amendment themselves, extending the term from sixteen to twenty-five years, or at least twenty years. The land is always there, and the very fact that the Government show confidence in the industry will do a great deal in the direction of making those who are engaged in the industry satisfied that it is on a sure foundation. We have heard a lot of talk about what the Federal Government might do, but we know that in heated times like those in which that talk was indulged in—times when people talk a little more excitedly than they do in normal times—statements are made which they do not really mean. Probably those statements were made for the purpose of inducing the farmers to properly recognise their position, and to emphasise the contention that the sugar industry should not be left solely to the control of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. But I shall not pursue this line of argument, as if I do I shall be reminded that I had an opportunity of speaking on this subject a few weeks ago. I hope that the Government will put the sugar industry on such a firm foundation by the encouragement they will give to it per the medium of these central sugar-mills erected on this apparently new and improved plan, that people all over the world will feel that they can come to Queensland with perfect confidence, and engage in the sugar industry with the absolute certainty of making a decent return from their enterprise. South Australia and Western Australia are very fortunate in having a splendid wheat yield. So far we have not developed our wheat areas, but we know that Queensland is the home of the sugar-cane, and that all that is wanted to develop and expand the industry is for the Government to give proper help at the present time. The Government should assert themselves, and let the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, and every company which endeavours to control this industry, see that the Queensland Government, under the Commonwealth Government, of course, are the real masters of the industry. If the Government do assert themselves, and establish the two or three mills recommended by the Sugar Commission, and then carry out the very excellent idea so ably advocated by the hon. member for Bowen last week, they will have as a corollary to the central mill system an up-to-date State refinery. The Government also proposes to protect itself by making a levy on those in the benefited area to make up any shortage, and when the Government finds that that can be done,

that in itself, I think, is an argument why they might with all reason extend the term from sixteen years to twenty. When the time comes that cane credit has been established by suppliers of cane to such an extent that they may take over the mill and form a company, then a very wise provision is inserted too—that the company shall not at any time declare dividends above 5 per cent. We know very well that sometimes a venture or an investment or a business might be very profitable in a few good seasons, and it is very undesirable to divide all the money and leave them stranded when bad times come. But under this provision the Government will exercise such supervision over the mills that even if they had a run of three, four, or five good seasons they would not distribute more than 5 per cent., and consequently might establish good reserves for the upkeep of the machinery, for supplying new rails, and what not, in regard to the tramlines, which is always the subject of wear and tear. I would like to refer very briefly to what appears to be a strange anomaly in regard to the price paid for cane by the various mills. From the Auditor-General's report for last year I find that the prices paid for cane vary to an extraordinary degree. Of course, I understand that some sugar-cane is paid for under one system and in some cases under another—sometimes by weight and in another case by analysis—but it seems a strange thing that there should be such a great disparity in the prices of the cane, as will be disclosed by my briefly running down the price paid by these various mills: North Eton, 14s. 1½d. per ton; Racecourse, 15s. 3d.; Gin Gin, 12s. 1½d.; Isis, 12s. 3d.; Mossman, 17s. 8½d.; Mulgrave, 19s. 5d.; Mount Bauple, 14s. 1½d.; Nerang, 12s. 5d.; Plane Creek, 15s. 8½d.; and Proserpine, 14s. 1d. It is a remarkable thing that there should be such a difference as there is shown here of from 12s. 1½d. to 19s. 5d. per ton.

Mr. FORSYTH: Cannot you account for it?

Mr. LENNON: I cannot account for all the difference, neither can the hon. member; he may account for some of it, but he cannot account for all of it. Why I mention this is to suggest that the Government ought to endeavour by some scheme of supervision to try and bring about as nearly as they can a certain degree of equalisation in the prices paid for sugar-cane. I know cane differs very much in the sugar contents. I know that sugar is worth a great deal more per ton than it may be 50 miles north or south, as the case may be. I am only mentioning this for the purpose of urging the Government to try, as far as may be, to equalise the price paid for cane, because it will give immense satisfaction to those engaged in the sugar industry. I have received complaints from correspondents in various parts of Queensland—not only within the last few days but prior to that—of the various conditions which men have to work under in supplying cane to the mills. For example, in some cases, land which yields what is called "highland cane" secures a better price than does cane grown on the lowland.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It has better sugar contents.

Mr. LENNON: Exactly so. I have explained before that that is a reason to some extent for the difference in the price. In

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some districts the practice has been continued, and has become to some extent permanent, that the highland cane yields a better price than the lowland, and it is only right that that should operate from the question of higher sugar contents, because it is more costly to work this broken country, and costs considerably more for taking cane off it, and they should get a higher price. But I have a letter here from a district—I am not going to name the district, but I am willing to show the Treasurer if he is curious enough to see it—a complaint from a district where, after weeks of experiment to ascertain the sugar contents of the cane, the highland of this district has been proved after a long series of analyses to be worth as much as 2s. a ton more than the lowland cane, yet by reason of the fact that the men now in charge of this particular mill are not only the owners of lowland properties from which they send cane to the mill, but are managers or directors of the mill, they wipe out the extra price and give the men for highland cane, which is worth 2s. a ton more, not one farthing more than they pay for the lowland cane. I am willing to show this letter to the Hon. the Treasurer. I do not desire to have it published nor any of the names disclosed. There is one other matter before I finish that I had overlooked when dealing with the hotel question. I know that provision has been made for compensation in regard to the hotel at Babinda, but I have been informed—I hope that the Treasurer will listen to what I am saying—I have been informed that in some other districts quite recently provisional licenses have been granted. I am not told, and I am not sure, whether it was immediately prior to the publication of the Government's intention in regard to these hotels in sugar areas, but, at all events, quite recently, provisional licenses have been granted in some districts in the North, and that hotels are at the present time in course of erection.

The TREASURER: They were warned not to do it. I am not at all aware of what the hon. member mentions.

Mr. LENNON: The only object I had was to elicit that information if I could. I wanted to urge the Government to warn such people.

The TREASURER: They will certainly get no compensation under such conditions.

Mr. LENNON: My object in mentioning it is so that the Government could warn the people.

The TREASURER: They have been warned.

Mr. LENNON: So that they would have no claim upon the Government. They are not in the same circumstances as the people who have erected fine hotels before the Bill came in at all. My object in mentioning the matter was to urge the Government to warn these people that the hotel will not be permitted in the district, so that they will not lose the money.

The PREMIER: Such information went from the Home Secretary's Office in June.

Mr. LENNON: I am glad to hear it. The people who informed me are a representative body of Rechabites—they are not Temperance Alliance people—and I think they are doing what they can to prevent the extension of the liquor trade; they are acting entirely within their rights. They happen to know me personally; they do not regard me as a member of their body. I have never belonged to such a body, and I have no intention of ever becoming

[*Mr. Lennon*

ing a member, but I do think many of their desires are worthy of being pushed forward as far as practicable, always within the limits of justice, reason, and common sense. Now, I have said much more than I intended to say on this Bill. The records of the House will show that I have battled unceasingly for an extension of the central mill system in North Queensland. I am delighted to think that the Government have taken the step of getting a report such as has been furnished by the Sugar Royal Commission, which justifies every utterance I ever made on the question, and if the Government are going to act upon it, I repeat once more that they will not only act upon it, but act upon it quickly, and I am satisfied that the whole of Queensland will be benefited, and Australia will be benefited by a very considerable expansion of the splendid sugar industry of this State. (Hear, hear!)

HON. R. PHILIP (*Townsville*): I will not occupy the time of the House very long. Last session Mr. Kidston promised the hon. member for Herbert and myself a Sugar Royal Commission. He carried out that promise, and I am very pleased to see that the Government are bringing in a Bill to deal with the report of that commission. I do not agree with the Bill altogether, and I hope it will be amended in Committee.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: Don't spoil it, I hope.

HON. R. PHILIP: I won't spoil it. What I complain of first of all is, that the whole management of these mills is in the hands of the Government.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear! Oh, oh!

HON. R. PHILIP: I do not approve of that.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: That is where you are going to spoil it.

HON. R. PHILIP: The Government may put a mill up, and unless the owners of the land will come in and the people will grow cane, it will be of no use to them; and I say there ought to be a joint management. Let the Government have the biggest control if they please, but the owners of the land and the canegrowers ought to be on this corporation, which practically is the Treasurer. I am sure of the Treasurer's honesty, probity, and his keen desire to do the best he can with this Bill.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: Divided control.

HON. R. PHILIP: It would not be divided control. They would all be anxious to make the mill a success; but under this Bill the whole of the management is with the Government.

Mr. RYLAND: Is it not a corporation?

HON. R. PHILIP: The corporation is the Treasurer. The deputy leader of the Labour party was wonderfully pleased over this perpetual lease. He thought it was a wonderful thing—something unheard of before. I may tell that hon. member that we had perpetual leases on our goldfields forty years ago—the homestead leases.

Mr. FOLEY: They were not perpetual.

HON. R. PHILIP: Yes, they were.

Mr. FOLEY: They are not now.

HON. R. PHILIP: Because the owners of those leases were not satisfied with their tenures.

Mr. COLLINS: The banking institutions were not satisfied.

HON. R. PHILP: Members representing goldfields sitting on both sides of the House when that Act was put through were clamorous in their desire. They said, "We have been paying 1s. a year for thirty years, and it is time we got our deeds," and they got their deeds with a peppercorn rental. I say, under this perpetual lease system, if you have a mill and they have not a public-house, there will be a very small township about the mill. Most of them have a town near them, and the rental the Government will get out of this will never pay for the greasing of the machinery one week.

Mr. HARDACRE: It will prevent monopoly, though.

HON. R. PHILP: There are no monopolies now.

Mr. LENNON: What about the town of Nelson and the town of Proserpine?

HON. R. PHILP: What is the size of those townships? If you take the hotel out of those townships there is very little left.

Mr. LENNON: It would be a very good thing to take them out.

Mr. FERRICKS: You go to buy an allotment there and you will see.

HON. R. PHILP: If the deputy leader of the Opposition suggested some means whereby working men will get a piece of land to grow cane there might be something in it. The future of the sugar industry in Queensland, if it is to be a success, is going to be the small men cultivating their own areas right throughout Queensland. (Hear, hear!) But there is no provision in this Bill for that, and the deputy leader of the Opposition makes no suggestion as to how it could be done.

Mr. LENNON: You were the leader of the Opposition a long time; why can't you make a suggestion?

HON. R. PHILP: When I was leader of the Opposition I was just as anxious to get these mills built as the present leader—just as anxious.

Mr. LENNON: When you were leader of the Government you did not build them.

HON. R. PHILP: Every mill built in Queensland was built by the Government of which I was a member. I think it will be a mistake to hand over the control of these mills solely to a Government nominee. We have examples in Queensland to-day. I say the Government mills now in Queensland are not the best managed mills in Queensland. Only look at the list of payments made for sugar-cane read by the deputy leader of the Opposition. Who are paying the biggest price for sugar-cane? The Government mills? No. The central mills managed entirely by the owners of these mills.

Mr. FERRICKS: Do you know they give all their profits to the canegrowers?

HON. R. PHILP: When I am finished, the hon. member for Bowen can speak.

Mr. FERRICKS: You know that, don't you?

HON. R. PHILP: The best managed mills in Queensland are the mills where there is private management. I do not want to say anything about the time the late Dr. Maxwell was here, but we know his management was not a success, and I do not think the four mills managed by the Government are anything like as well managed as the central mills managed locally by a board of

directors. I think it will be a mistake for the Treasurer to take on himself the management of these mills. I certainly think the Government should be represented on the board, and if there are five members, I would give them a majority on the board, but I certainly say the landowners and canegrowers should also be on the board.

Mr. LENNON: What security would the Government have if it was open to the canegrowers?

HON. R. PHILP: I think myself these men should hand their deeds over for security. I understand the men at Babinda are prepared to hand their deeds over as security for the erection of the mill. The terms are the same as was made previously—5 per cent. interest and 5 per cent. redemption. In five years it was found impossible for them to carry out their obligation, and an extension to twenty years was given, and the rate of interest reduced to 4 per cent. The recommendation of the commission is that for the first three years there shall be no interest at all. I would say give them five years to make a start; because anyone who knows anything about sugar knows that it will take at least five years to get sufficient cane grown to keep the mill up to its full capacity.

Mr. LENNON: Quite right.

HON. R. PHILP: We also know that in connection with the mills there are very many new things required, and the Government would be wise if they said: "For the first five years we will charge you nothing, and during the following twenty years we will expect you to pay interest and redemption for the whole amount." Of course, charge them interest for five years back. That would give the mills a good chance, and if the unfortunate landowners and the canegrowers cannot pay the £8, how is it possible for them to pay a levy to the Government? If the mill does not pay, it will no doubt be because there is not sufficient cane.

Mr. LENNON: That is the penal clause.

HON. R. PHILP: If the mills do not pay interest and redemption in one year, then the Hon. the Treasurer will make a levy on the canegrowers and the landowners to make up the deficit. I say it is far better to recognise that it will take four or five years before those mills can be in working order. That was our experience before, and we can only be guided in the future by what has happened in the past. In the case of the first two mills built by Sir Samuel Griffith—the Racecourse Mill and the Eton Mill—for many years they could not pay anything at all.

Mr. COLLINS: That was in the time of black labour.

HON. R. PHILP: Sir Samuel Griffith was very anxious to provide white labour for growing sugar. They tried it and failed, and they came and asked permission to use black labour to make those mills pay, and they did so. I am very pleased indeed there are to be no public-houses round the mills and no liquor sold. It will be a very good thing for the canegrowers and all about the mills. I think it is a sad thing to see men working all the week, and a public-house right outside the mills to take all their earnings. It will be a very good thing indeed when we can stop the supply of liquor at sugar-works, and other works as well. I am very anxious to see some of these mills started with a number of small

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growers. In the scrub land in North Queensland about 30 or 40 acres will keep a big family well, and as it is small [8 p.m.] it is handy to cultivate. I think that in the future we shall be able to get plenty of labour to cut the cane, but we cannot get enough to cultivate it. We will have no trouble with men working in gangs in the fields. It would be a very wise provision for the Government to make in connection with some of these mills that landowners should cut the land up in small blocks, let a family occupy each block, and let each family cultivate their own land.

Mr. LENNON: That is what we want.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: That ought to apply to all agriculture.

HON. R. PHILP: Sugar-cane is different from ordinary agriculture. A man can grow 300 acres of wheat and take it off with machinery, but you cannot grow 300 acres of sugar-cane. Some say that 10 acres is sufficient, and others say that a man cannot grow more than 20 acres, or at most 30 acres, of cane.

Mr. MANN: He cannot harvest it.

HON. R. PHILP: No; he cannot harvest it. If we want to make sugar the big industry we would like to see it, we must have smaller areas. Queensland can grow all the sugar that Australia wants. (Hear, hear!) I do not think that we will be able to export it, but certainly we will be able to grow all the sugar required for Australia in Queensland. We have got the land, and if private employers will not put up mills, then the Government should do it for them. I would not advocate the Government putting up mills if the private companies would put them up, but I know, of my own knowledge, men on the Johnstone River who have been trying to get cane contracts with the mills there, and they were not able to get them. They tried unsuccessfully for years to get their cane crushed, but they could not get it crushed, and they came to the Government, and that is why I believe in the Government stepping in there and erecting a central mill. North Queensland is the home of the sugar-cane. (Hear, hear!) If the Government would alter this clause about the corporation, and give the landowner and canegrower—they are likely to be the same people—some say in the matter, it would improve the Bill. The Government should also give them longer time to pay their debentures to the Government. It is not possible to pay them in sixteen years. It is not possible for them to pay the interest and redemption for the first four or five years.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: The Government cannot pay their own loans back in that time.

HON. R. PHILP: It will take four, five, six, and even seven years for a central mill to get properly on its legs. I know that from the experience of other central mills. The Government took some of them over. Whether that was wise or not I do not know; but I think they would have done better if they had been left to go on their own account. I do not wish to detain the House. I am very pleased to see the Bill introduced, and I hope that in Committee the Government will accept amendments to improve it. This is the best agricultural industry we have in Queensland, and it is the best agricultural industry in Australia. We have a monopoly in Queensland of the canegrowing of Australia, and no matter what wild threats are

made by hon. gentlemen in high positions about starting a refinery in New Guinea, and doing away with the protection on sugar, I am satisfied that the people of Australia will always give fair protection to our own sugar under present conditions. It was a bargain made with Australia that if we did away with coloured labour reasonable protection would be given, and I believe that the people of Australia will keep to that bargain, notwithstanding what Mr. Hughes, the Acting Prime Minister, says about doing away with protection, or what Mr. Bamford says about establishing a sugar refinery in New Guinea.

Mr. FOLEY: No; have the sugar refinery in Queensland, and grow the sugar in New Guinea.

HON. R. PHILP: Yes, and bring the cane over, I suppose. (Laughter.) We have a monopoly of sugar-growing in Queensland, and we ought to keep it. (Hear, hear!) I am pleased that the Government brought in the Bill, because it shows that they have faith in the future sugar-growing of Queensland. I hope some means will be devised to settle small farmers around the mills that are to be erected, because I am satisfied that you will have a difficulty if you have large areas, as no one can cultivate 400 acres of cane in Queensland. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. MANN (Cairns): Like the hon. gentleman who has just resumed his seat, I desire to congratulate the Hon. the Treasurer on introducing this Bill, and also to say that the Government have shown a certain amount of alacrity in dealing with the establishment of central sugar-mills after the deputation to the late Premier consisting of the hon. member for Townsville, the hon. member for Herbert, and myself. Like the hon. member for Townsville, I also trust that the Hon. the Treasurer will be prepared to accept amendments in the Bill, because I think that he will find it will be greatly to the advantage of those concerned if amendments are made in the direction indicated by the hon. the senior member for Townsville, Mr. Philp. I do not agree altogether with what that hon. gentleman said with regard to the control of the mills. Personally, I would have preferred the Government to have bought back the land from these landowners, then erected the mill, and then leased the land to the growers who would come along to grow cane for the mill established by the Government. But as the Government are not going as far as that at the present time, and later on they intend to hand over the mill to the farmers and landowners, I think it would be wise if they allowed these farmers and landowners to acquire some knowledge of manufacturing sugar by allowing them to have a joint control with the Government over the mill. That is the only method whereby they can acquire practical experience, as managers of mills, like poets, are born and not made. I may say that even our most successful mills to-day have passed through a period of depression in the very early days, and the Mulgrave Central Mill—one of the most successful mills in the whole of Queensland—at its inception paid as low as 7s. 6d. per ton to the canegrower. I am in favour of the Government taking control of the whole concern, because our past experience has been that in the management of mills the landowners had the big end of the stick. We have had the spectacle in the past of the canegrowers

[Hon. R. Philp.]

being crushed out and squeezed by the landowners in a manner which I do not think was in the best interests of the mill itself. (Hear, hear!) For example, take the Mulgrave Mill. Although now managed very well, there was a great deal of trouble and friction at the start owing to the fact that seven of the shareholders in that mill held a bigger voting power than all the rest of the growers. It is a very unfortunate thing that even shareholders can put their heads together and say, "This is going to be the policy of the mill," and force that policy upon the other growers, who far outnumber them.

Mr. WHITE: It would be all right if it is a good policy.

Mr. MANN: It will be all right if it is a good policy, but if it is a bad policy it will be all wrong.

Hon. R. PHILP: The Mulgrave Mill is a very successful one.

Mr. MANN: It is very successful now. One or two of the directors are business men, and they are also growers, and they found it was to the interests of the mill to get as much cane as they possibly could to crush, because the longer the mill works while the density of the cane is in any way high, the cheaper they can produce sugar, and the bigger the price they can pay the grower. As in this case all the directors are to a certain extent growers, and they are reaping the benefit of their better management. There is very little friction indeed now, and they are pulling along together despite the fact that seven shareholders in the past controlled the policy of the mill to a large extent. I believe that all the growers are with them in what they are doing, and the mill is now a very successful one owing to the fact that they have a very good manager in the person of Mr. Davids. The trouble may arise in this way: The landowners may wish to pay off the debt to the Government at a very early date; and, if they are running the mill, they will advocate paying a very small price for cane, and in order to get the mill into their own hands they may harass the growers who are unable to buy their land from the landowners. If their policy is successful, in a very short while they will own not only the mill but also the land. It is to guard against that policy that I advocate that the Treasurer should own both the mill and the land, and, failing that, later on I mean to propound another scheme whereby I think that the growers will be safeguarded. Hon. members can clearly understand that if the Government are running the mill they will treat all fairly. If they own the mill the manager will act as far as possible in the best interests of the mill, and give every grower a fair deal. Even if you have the growers and the landowners conjointly managing the mill, the directors being themselves canegrowers will naturally—it is only human nature that they should do so—give themselves and their friends the best of the deal. There may not be so much of that as there has been in the past, but I have heard complaints of that sort of thing in connection with various mills. I have heard it said in connection with the mills at Pleystowe and Nambour and other mills that the directors favoured themselves and their friends.

Mr. WHITE: Was it true?

Mr. MANN: I have had it from growers. If the hon. member or any other hon. member

can deny that there has been any favouritism of that kind, I am not going to press the point; but I just wish to impress upon the House that I believe in the Government appointing their own man to manage the mill, as he is likely to give a fair deal all round, because he is not interested in the same way as a directorate elected by the votes of the growers. But, as the Government intend in the future to hand over the mill to the growers and landowners, I am advocating that they should allow these growers and landowners to acquire a knowledge of the manufacturing processes before they take over the mill.

The PREMIER: When they have discharged their liability?

Mr. MANN: Yes; but I advocate that in the meantime they should be allowed to acquire a knowledge of the business of manufacturing.

The PREMIER: They can take over the management at the start.

Mr. MANN: I have also heard it said, and with a great deal of justice, that the method of leasing the land is very unsatisfactory. That has been clearly proved in the sugar industry more than in any other industry, because the grower putting his crop into the ground does not reap it all in one year. He may leave the land without further tillage of the soil, and gather successive crops for from five to ten years. Hon. members can quite clearly understand that if a grower who leases his land goes out of the farm on the termination of his lease before he has taken off all his crops, there will be a great deal of trouble in settling the amount of compensation due to him for the ratoons left in the ground. I wish to impress upon the Treasurer the urgent need there is for, as far as possible, providing for compensation to leaseholders who go out of their farms and leave improvements and crops behind them. The alternative is that every lease shall contain a purchasing clause to allow the small man to acquire his own homestead.

Mr. WHITE: Hear, hear!

Mr. MANN: Every hon. member who has spoken has said that it is a very good thing to permit the small man to acquire his homestead, and I think the only effective way in which that can be attained is either by insisting that every landowner who puts his land in to the mill shall be compelled to pay compensation to the grower who leases land from him on the expiry of his lease for the unexhausted improvements, or else give the grower the right of purchase on the time-payment system. I rather favour the latter alternative, because the grower who intends purchasing his land will take care to return to the land, as far as he possibly can, all the fertility he is robbing it of. If, on the other hand, a man has only got a short lease, he will try to get all he can from the soil and leave it in an impoverished condition. That is why I do not altogether favour the idea of the Government leasing these lands to the growers, unless by some means you can bind the growers down to remain a certain time on their farms and produce cane, and not take the first few years of the rich new scrub, when it is perfectly fertile, and then throw it up and leave it on the hands of the Government, dirty with weeds, neglected, and unstumped. The Government might then find great difficulty in procuring another tenant.

*Mr. Mann.]*



The PREMIER: Will you have a look at the Agricultural Holdings Act of 1905?

Mr. MANN: I have read that Act, but we have passed more stringent provisions in other Acts, because we found that they did not quite fill the Bill. I remember the measure the Premier refers to quite well. I helped the hon. member for Mackay, the present Secretary for Railways, to pass it, and I got an amendment inserted providing that when a man cleared the land that should also be regarded as an improvement. The Act is a good one, I admit, but we want to make assurance doubly sure by providing for the protection of the interests of the grower who is leasing land.

The PREMIER: Hear, hear!

Mr. MANN: It may be asked how we can prevent land speculation in connection with these mills, and I intend to submit a proposition with that object in view. I hope it will meet with the approval of the Treasurer. My proposition is that when the Government establish a mill they shall ask each and every landholder who is putting in his land into the mill to make a valuation of his land, and that valuation shall be handed to the Treasurer. I wish the Government to have the power to take over the land at the owner's valuation, and the selling price shall be the owner's valuation, plus the value of the improvements, and plus that land's moiety of any moneys paid into the Treasury to redeem the mill. I think that is a fair proposition, and nobody can cavil at an arrangement like that.

Mr. HARDACRE: How are you going to get them to carry that out?

Mr. MANN: Of course, you can pick holes in any law placed on the statute-book; but I think that if that proviso was made it would be effective. Many people do not care to override the law; many are honest, and do not seek to avoid compliance with the law; and I think it would meet to a great extent the evil of land speculation in connection with our sugar lands.

Mr. HODGE: Would you be prepared to accept that condition on your own part?

Mr. MANN: Yes. I have a piece of land which I hope soon will be included in a mill area, and I will sell it to the hon. gentleman at what it is worth now.

Mr. HODGE: I will talk about it in the morning.

Mr. MANN: The deputy leader of the Opposition commended the Government for their action in putting in the provision precluding undesirable aliens from working about a mill or a tramway unless they first obtain a certificate that they can write from dictation fifty words in the English language; but I will go further than that; and I hope that the Treasurer will accept an amendment to prevent the leasing of land to any undesirable alien until he gets such a certificate. I claim that if it is a fair thing—which I think members generally will agree that it is—to prevent any undesirable alien from working about a mill or a tramway, it is also desirable to prevent him from making a profit from the growing of cane.

The PREMIER: It is intended to introduce a Bill dealing with the leasing of land to aliens.

Mr. MANN: But that may not come on till the end of the session; and I would like to see the provision in this Bill which we are dealing with now.

[Mr. Mann.]

The PREMIER: Then submit the amendment early, so that we can see how it will work.

Mr. MANN: I will get it printed and circulated as soon as I can, so as to prevent the leasing of land to aliens for what is after all the most profitable form of agriculture in North Queensland—the growing of sugar. We want to prevent it from getting into their hands, and reserve all the profit for people of our own race. (Hear, hear!) Now, I just wish to turn to the Bill; and first I will deal with a matter with which the Treasurer is familiar to a certain extent. I asked him a question the other night, to which he could not give an effective reply on the spur of the moment, as to the area in connection with the Babinda Creek Mill. I asked him if it would be necessary for those people to make application now to come under the Bill, because if they made application, there is ample power in the Bill for the Treasurer to see that none of the settlers in that neighbourhood are penalised by being kept out. I want to let the House know the position; and I will read a copy of the resolutions carried at a meeting of the Russell Farmers' District Association held at Harvey's Creek on the 17th June this year—

"1. That the action of the Aloomba delegates in putting the boundary at Harvey Creek be repudiated, as they had no authority to do so, and the Treasurer be told so."

I may explain that certain growers at Aloomba had met the Sugar Commission, and asked for an area to be declared around Aloomba suitable for the erection of a central mill, and pledged the growers now petitioning the Treasurer to put in their lands.

The TREASURER: I told you their request would receive the fullest consideration.

Mr. MANN: I found the Treasurer most sympathetic; and I am asking him if the Babinda Creek people must make application under this Bill in order to receive the necessary money for the erection of a mill there. If he will take it into his hands to declare the mill area, I am sure he will not leave out of the area any of the Babinda settlers.

The TREASURER: I shall be anxious to make it a great success.

Mr. MANN: You will understand that there has been some trouble in this matter. The second resolution reads—

"2. That the attention of the Colonial Treasurer be directed to the fact that the benefited area of the Babinda Mill, whilst taking in a large area of private land at the extreme south on which nobody has been living for the last twenty years, has excluded the lands held by a number of farmers who have for years been living here, struggling along in the expectation that they would form part of the Babinda Mill, and now find that they are cut out. The areas taken are 323, 322, 321, and 436, parish of Bellenden Ker, of about 1,280 acres each, and the areas excluded and on which people have been living for many years are situated between Junction Creek and Pig-tree Creek."

The PREMIER: The recommendation of the Royal Commission in that respect is subject to amendment.

Mr. MANN: I hope that it will be amended. I have a map to show the land which they want to have included in the area. It is alongside the tramway, and there is no insuperable difficulty in getting cane to the mill. I intended to move an amendment to meet the case, providing that any land within a reasonable distance of the mill, and where

there is no insuperable difficulty in getting cane to the mill, should be allowed to be included in the mill area.

The PREMIER: There is also power in the hands of the Governor in Council to amend the boundaries.

Mr. MANN: The third resolution was—

"That Mr. Eastwood's report of his interview be sent down to the Treasurer through Mr. Mann along with our petition."

That has been done. The fourth resolution was—

"That Fig-tree Creek be the north boundary of the area we wish to be added to the Babinda area."

I have other correspondence here which I do not intend to deal with at any great length, because the time is pressing; but just to show the position these people would be in if they were not included in the mill area, I may mention that I have a letter from one who has been twenty-four years in the district, one who has been twenty-eight years there, another eighteen years, another who went there twenty-two years ago, and has three sisters born on the area; and it would be a hardship indeed if, while new settlers are allowed to come in, these people were to be left out. Now, I wish to say a word or two with reference to some re-

[8.30 p.m.] marks which fell from my hon.

friend, the hon. member for Herbert. He dealt with the report of the Sugar Commission, and I agree with him entirely when he says that the commission has been somewhat conservative in their report. They have taken too much notice of the evidence given by the representatives of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, and have been rather conservative in their opinion as to the number of mills that we can now afford to establish without overtaking the Commonwealth's sugar demand. I think that if we established three or four mills this year we should still find ourselves very much behind the demand. It is only an odd year that we get a bumper crop, owing to frost or some other cause, and it will be a great while at the present rate of progress before we manufacture enough sugar to meet our own requirements. Personally, I should have liked to have seen the Government pursue a bolder policy in the establishment of central mills. With regard to labour for the cane field, it is a fact that the bulk of the workers in our fields are drawn from the Southern States. They come up for six months in the year, the cutters earn good money, and that money is taken or sent out of the State, so that the earnings of those men do not benefit Queensland to any appreciable extent. Of course you cannot expect the men to stay in Queensland unless there is something for them to do. The idea has been mooted that they might get smaller areas of land on which to grow cane, but if those men are wanted to cut cane, you cannot afford to give them blocks where they themselves will grow cane, because if they go in for that work at the very time that their services are most required by other growers they will be busy on their own farms, if they have any area worth speaking of. If a man has 10 acres of cane land he can spend all his time upon that.

Mr. MULLAN: Couldn't his family help him?

Mr. MANN: Some of them are not married. There are no doubt some industrious

men who could harvest 16 acres of cane, but the average man could not look after a crop on that area. With an average crop of 20 tons to the acre, that would be 203 tons of cane, and a man having that crop to harvest would have to cut during the whole season, and would be unable to help growers who required his services. The only solution of the problem that I can see is to give the cane-cutter land on which he can grow some other product than cane. For instance, in the Cairns district, a man might take up a farm at Atherton and endeavour to earn a living by its cultivation. He could plant maize early in January, stay on the farm and work it until the harvest, which would be about the end of May, and then when the maize was harvested he could leave his family to do the husking and other work in connection with the sale of the crop, and he could go down to the tropical coast and engage in cane-cutting. Of course in the cane-growing districts you might get blocks of land where a man could cultivate some product other than cane, but usually all the land around a mill which is fit for cane-growing is used for that purpose. In Mackay you will find men growing cane even on town allotments, and some of them have a fairly nice patch. By manuring their land they produce fairly good crops, and if a man can raise 30 or 40 tons of cane he realises a very nice addition to his yearly income. I would advise the Government as far as possible to provide those men with land a few miles from a sugar district—within easy distance of the district, of course—where they can employ themselves in growing other products than cane, so that their services may be available to planters in the cutting season.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Doesn't cane-growing pay the best?

Mr. MANN: I admit that cane-growing pays the best, but a man has to pay a big price in order to get hold of a piece of land of any value for that purpose, and that is sometimes beyond the means of the man with little or no capital. I should like to see a system of peasant proprietorship established—a system which would result in the establishment of men on farms of from 10 to 40 acres.

Mr. MULLAN: That would solve the labour problem.

Mr. MANN: Yes; that would settle the labour problem, and that is the only means that I can see by which it can be settled, because you cannot expect men to go up to the canefields year after year to harvest the cane unless they can get work in the district during the slack season. Unless they can get work during the slack season they will only go there if they are assured of making a good cheque during the cutting season. A man must earn good wages in order to remunerate himself for the loss of a month at sea coming up from and returning to Sydney or Melbourne. In the Northern districts the cane-cutter can generally rely upon getting about six months' work. Of course there are times when the mill breaks down, and then he is idle, but if the mill does not break down he can turn out every day and work hard during every hour of daylight for about six months. I realise that if we are to get men from Sydney or Melbourne to cut cane, and we find them work for only a few months, we

*Mr. Mann.]*

shall have to pay them good wages. The deputy leader of the Opposition spoke of what he called "fancy values" put upon lands. I could not quite make out what he meant by that, because I recognise clearly that if the Government erect a mill they should put a value on the land within that mill area similar to the value of other lands of the same quality in the same district. Take the Babinda Mill, for instance. I believe it is to be of 15,000 tons capacity. It will take a very big sum of money to start that mill. If you have 10,000 acres under cane, with an average crop of about 15 tons to the acre, which is a very small quantity, the total yield will be 150,000 tons of cane—the quantity required to supply the mill. If the land is valued at, say, £2 an acre, you would require an area from 60,000 to 70,000 acres in order to get the sum required to establish the mill, put down the necessary tramways, and provide a certain sum to make advances to growers in order to enable them to put their farms under crop. I would advise the Government to put on the land such valuation as is put on similar land in the same district. Land in a mill area may be worth from £10 to £15 an acre, but land outside the mill area, equally as good and perhaps a good deal better, may be obtainable for from £2 to £4 an acre. The Government will find that as soon as they erect a mill the value of the land will go up very materially, and that their security is not so much in the land as in the men they get on the land to grow cane for them.

Mr. FORSYTH: That is the whole risk.

Mr. MANN: I dare say the Minister for Railways remembers what absurd values Dr. Maxwell put upon our cane land; he practically told the Government that they had no security at all. As a matter of fact, the land might only be worth £2 or £3 per acre, but the fact that the cane growing on it was in the gross worth £20 or £30 an acre shows that it is not so much the land that is the security, but the fact that there are men on the land who are growing the cane and making a good living out of it, and intend to keep on growing cane, and that is the only security the Government can have to redeem the mill. I contend that it is a good security, because men will continue to grow cane as long as the Government will take it, and they can grow it at a profit. If the land is thrown up and nobody will grow cane upon it, all the land given in as security to the Government would hardly be worth anything. In Northern Queensland we have only found two crops that will pay—sugar and bananas—and if the land has been cropped with sugar, and has become to a certain extent exhausted, no one would take it up for bananas, and the Government would have the land thrown up. The only security that the Government could have for the mill is that if they are willing to pay a sufficient price for the cane they will find growers to grow cane for them. I notice further on that the corporation—which is the Treasurer—has power to take any cane from outside the sugar area. I trust they won't put that into operation until such time as they have exhausted all their means of getting cane within the area.

The TREASURER: There is provision in case of necessity.

[Mr. Mann.

Mr. MANN: I realise that, but I want it to be understood that they will not seek for any cane until they have exhausted the cane in their own area.

The TREASURER: It is essential that the mill must be worked at its full capacity.

Mr. MANN: Yes, but it may have a tendency to cause people to say, "I won't put my land in the mill; I won't risk my land."

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: If they don't risk their land, they won't get a mill.

Mr. MANN: That is so. I quite realise the fact that they have got to risk the land, but there is always one or two who may hang back and not put their land in, and thereby spoil a good scheme. We often see in Northern Queensland as much as 1,200 acres of scrub held by one individual, and if there are two individuals like that, there may be sufficient land in that block to prevent a mill being worked at a profit, and I would like it to be understood that if these people do not come into the mill area the Treasurer will not take their cane until he has exhausted every other method of obtaining a sufficient supply. The deputy leader of the Opposition dealt with the closing of the hotels in the mill areas. There is a difference of opinion about the wisdom of that. Personally, I agree with it, although I have heard one or two mill managers say that it is very handy to have a "pub." at the mill gate, because your men never go away. If they go 6 or 7 miles to a hotel, they may be absent when the whistle blows to start work.

Mr. CORSER: They may not have enough money to go away.

Mr. MANN: Oh, yes; if there is a hotel along the railway line 10 or 12 miles away, it won't take much to induce a man to go there who is in the habit of drinking. But I must say that within the last three or four years we have had a sober, steady set of men as cane-cutters. (Hear, hear!) While I do not wish to bring any temptation in the way, I wish the Treasurer to realise that this might not be the good thing he thinks it is. However, it is an experiment which I sincerely hope will be a very great success.

The TREASURER: It will be a very great success.

Mr. MANN: There is another hotel at Harvey Creek which ought to be closed as well as that at Babinda, because this hotel will be in the mill area, and I think it would be unfair to close one and leave the other out. With the hon. member for Herbert, I believe the Government should pay compensation in this case, because it is a special case, but I do not believe in money compensation when we come to deal with liquor generally. But in this case two hotelkeepers are to have their licenses taken away, and I think it is only fair for the Government to give ample compensation for the loss of what may have been a lucrative business.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It will not be the Government which will pay compensation, but the mill area.

Mr. MANN: I understand. I wish also to support the hon. member for Herbert and the hon. member for Townsville in their contention that the period of repayment is too short. Everyone who has had anything to do with sugar-mills will realise that it takes some years for the mill to be able to work

up to its full capacity. It takes a lot of time and money to get an area of land under cane. In the Babinda district I know one grower who has spent as much as £40 an acre on his land already, and the Government can quite clearly understand that that grower at least will not be in a position to pay back anything to the Government for some considerable time.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: His crop is not the best one there, either.

Mr. MANN: No; his crop is not the best one there. I quite realise that that grower will have a loss on that crop, and he can only recoup himself if his cane ratoons well, and he gets a cutting the third, fourth, or fifth time; but if he spends £40 an acre on the cane crop and it gets lost through floods or grubs, then the grower is in a very unfortunate position indeed, and is clearly unable to pay back the Government for interest and redemption. I was pleased to hear what the hon. member for Townsville said, because I think the same thing, that to allow a period—

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member has exhausted the time allowed by the Standing Order.

Mr. MANN: I would like an extension of time.

Mr. MULLAN: I move that the hon. member for Cairns be further heard.

The SPEAKER: The question is—That the hon. member for Cairns be allowed a further extension of time.

Question put and passed.

Mr. MANN: I won't trespass much longer on the good will of the House, but I want to impress on the Government the desirability of extending the period of repayment. It will take five years before the mill is working up to its full capacity. There may be a strike, which I hope will never happen again; but it may happen, and it would be very unfortunate if the growers had to pay back the interest to the Government if they were unable to harvest the crop. I think we should allow a period of five years; collect nothing for the first three years, and then allow them another two years if required. If the millowners or the landowners were desirous that there should be no repayment owing to unforeseen circumstances, the Government should not insist on any repayment for five years during the currency of the loan—that is, three years at first, and two years during the rest of the period that they could get a remission of the payment for the time being if it is so desired. I thank the House for the hearing I have received. I am pleased to support the Bill, and I trust that the Treasurer will accept amendments in the direction indicated by the hon. members for Townsville, Herbert, and myself. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. WHITE (*Musgrave*): While I believe the Bill is a good one, I do not think it is by any means a perfect Bill, and I will have a good deal to say when the Bill gets into Committee. The commission have brought in a very exhaustive report, but I do not agree with everything said in that report, and the recommendations of the commission. I think the central mills have done more to populate the districts of Queensland than anything else. A great deal has been done by them to create settlement in the district I have the honour to represent, and a great deal has been done in

the North. When I was travelling in the North recently, I was met by many people who wanted central mills, and in many places the land where the central mill was wanted belonged to large corporations already, and I do think, if the Government are going to erect central mills—if they are going to increase the value of the land—they should first resume the land and then let it out in small areas from 40 to 50 acres, as suggested by the hon. member for Townsville, and have it put under intense cultivation. That is the only thing that will make these mills a success. If you reserve the land, or take Crown lands, the increased value of the land, owing to the erection of a mill, will almost pay for the entire cost of the mill and the tramways. This would be a very good principle to establish, and it would enable the mills to start on a better footing, and enable the growers to start on a fair and equitable basis if they had not to pay so much for the land. The hon. member for Cairns stated that anyone who goes into the townships or on to the land should only get the amount expended on the land in the way of improvements and the original valuation. I do not agree with that, for this reason: The men who went on to that land in the early days have suffered all the hardships and have gone through the trying period of early settlement, and they should be entitled to the fruits of their labour, and sell the land at the best price they can get for it.

Mr. MANN: What about the land on Babinda?

Mr. WHITE: As far as Babinda land is concerned, I certainly would not give a mill at all to the Babinda people.

Mr. MANN: Why?

Mr. WHITE: For the reason that a great deal of that land is held by large owners of land, and unless the Government is going to resume that land at a reasonable price and let it out again at a reasonable price, I do not think a mill should be built at Babinda Creek at all. When that proposal comes before the House I intend to oppose it. A suitable place for a mill is on the Inkerman Estate, where the land absolutely belongs to the Crown. It would be a good thing for settlement if two mills were erected at Inkerman and the land let out in small areas of from 40 to 100 acres. That would help those people, and the mill should be under joint management, as suggested by the hon. member for Townsville. Coming to the Bill, I do not see anything in it where the farmers are to guarantee a certain amount of cane land—sufficient cane to keep the mills in full work. I think the Government should be protected. The deputy leader of the Opposition spoke of the variation in the price paid for cane. The variation in the price of the cane is caused very often owing to the small amount of cane supplied. If the mill has a particularly good year and there is plenty of cane, then they can afford to pay a high price. I remember one year at Gin Gin the cane was paid for at about 7s. per ton, and the cost of producing the sugar for the year was £21 a ton of sugar, and they were only getting £11 for it. That is a case where it would not pay, and if a mill of 40,000 or 100,000 tons capacity has only a small supply of cane, then certainly they would not be able to pay a big price for the cane. There is another matter I would like to mention, and that is in reference to the accommodation-houses that have to be provided by the corporation. I am rather inclined to think,

*Mr. White.]*

as a member knowing what sugar-mills are, that the idea of doing away with liquor of all kinds, perhaps, will not act as well as the Treasurer expects it to. I remember reading about the corporation of Manchester who were erecting waterworks right away back in the Welsh mountains, and they had great trouble owing to the hotels there. They shut up all the hotels but one, and the men had to go across a creek to get to the place, and they had very great difficulty in getting back, and instead of having accommodation-houses with absolutely no liquor, they allowed the accommodation-houses to let a man, after his hard day's work with the pick and shovel, get one glass of beer or one glass of spirits, but not any more. The men were absolutely satisfied, and there was not a single man who went to that place who was not pleased he had gone there, and felt very much better when he went away, owing to the temperance principles. If the accommodation-houses are to be run by the Government it might be a good plan to allow the men to have one glass of beer at night before going to bed. Have a separate reading-room attached, where the men could get a glass of beer, have a pipe, and read, and I believe such a system would work successfully.

Mr. BRIDGES: What size glass? (Laughter.)

Mr. WHITE: I think the suggestion is worth the consideration of the Minister, because I think it would be much better, and the management of the mill would have a much better opportunity of carrying on this work successfully if this system were adopted. The question of the price of cane has come up in the House. I was just looking up the speech of the hon. member for Bowen and taking out the figures. I must congratulate that hon. member on the very able speech he made on the question, but I think he made some rather egregious blunders in regard to the cost of the cane.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member will not be in order in referring to the question of a State refinery.

Mr. WHITE: I was replying to the statement made by the deputy leader of the Opposition, that this Government should go in for a State refinery, and I thought I would be perfectly justified in bringing in the figures I have in regard to that, because in my opinion no State refinery could be successfully carried on by the Treasurer when the Federal Government have absolute control of the import duties, and also control the wages that should be paid in the cane-fields. I will not take up the time of the House in going into these figures, as I might have an opportunity of getting them in on another occasion. There are at least one or two mills that I intend to oppose [9 p.m.] if they come forward, because I believe in the principle of central mills, because I believe that if these central mills are conducted, as the hon. member for Townsville said, by a joint board it will give these men an interest in the mills. I believe in the Government appointing the general manager of the mill and not the farmers.

The TREASURER: Joint boards have not been a success in Queensland in the majority of cases. Take the harbour boards, for instance.

[Mr. White.

Mr. WHITE: But the controlling of those boards is not in the hands of the Government, but in the hands of the members of the boards. In this case the controlling power will be in the hands of the Government, and they will appoint a manager. In clause 27 I notice that it says that at the end of the period the farmers can take over the mill, and there is a strange provision which sets out that in the event of no company being formed and taking over the mill within two years then the Government can come in and sell the whole of the assets and keep the money itself.

The TREASURER: There must be some provision like that, though it is unlikely to be used.

Hon. R. PHILP: That will never occur.

The TREASURER: No; it will never occur.

Mr. WHITE: It seems a strange provision, though I do not think it likely that a company will not be formed.

The TREASURER: If the mill is paid for, a company will be formed all right.

Mr. WHITE: I agree with the hon. member for Townsville that four mills should be allowed for, the mills to go without paying any interest and redemption, and then they should be allowed to pay it off in twenty years. I think the period of repayment set by the Minister is quite right. The period should be as short as possible to pay off the mill, because we may have some visitation of grubs or other vermin in the North that would annihilate the sugar industry, and I think that the sooner the Government get clear of responsibility the better. After the first four years I think that a mill that cannot pay the interest and redemption set down—£8 11s. 8d. for every £100—must be very badly managed indeed.

The TREASURER: The payments do not commence till 1913.

Mr. WHITE: Under the old Sugar Works Act there was no payment to be made for the first two years.

Hon. R. PHILP: We found that was too soon.

Mr. WHITE: The crux of the difficulty was that two years was not sufficient. I believe that if this period were increased to four years it would give them a better start. They could extend their tramways in that time. The Government will find that if they do not do this they will have to advance more money for the equipment of the mill and tramways. That is the history of the old mills, whether private mills, Government mills, or central mills. The extension of tramways, unforeseen expenditure, and improvements all come in the first four years, and I hope that the Minister will agree to allow the first four years.

Hon. R. PHILP: That is peculiar to all new enterprises.

Mr. WHITE: Yes. I hope the Treasurer will accept an amendment in that direction, which I trust will be proposed by the senior member for Townsville.

Mr. CORSER (*Maryborough*): I have also great pleasure in complimenting the Treasurer on this Bill. I think that it is a very good Bill, though probably in Committee there will be some amendments which will improve it. I have no objection, like some hon. members have, to that clause in

reference to no licenses being granted. I am pleased to be able to assist in giving the Treasurer an opportunity of testing this question and seeing how it pans out. Some commencement of this kind will have to be made some time, and it is perhaps better to start here. I am not one of those who wish to extend the time for repayment over sixteen years. I do not agree with the senior member for Townsville in his comparison with what was done in years past, when the first central mill was established. At that time we did not have the whole of Australia as a market, as we have now, and we have now better machinery and more information as to the growing and manufacture of sugar than we had then. I do not think we should make such a great difference between the different agricultural industries. In connection with the farmers' other productions we have the Agricultural Bank, in which the farmers seek assistance, and they have to pay 5 per cent. interest from the start if they borrow any money. They do not have to pay any redemption for the first five years, but they have to pay interest, and I am not one of those to let four or five years elapse under the Sugar Works Act during which no interest will be charged. I do not believe in the distinction between two classes of the agricultural industry. Then again, something has been said about the difference in price that has been paid by the various central sugar-mills. One must take into consideration that all mills cannot pay the same price for sugar-cane, because, even with the price they are paying, they are hardly able to meet their own engagements. Then with regard to the cane growing on the highlands and the lowlands, it is not so much whether the cane is grown on high or low land as the thickness of the crop. On the lowlands the ground is very much richer and yields a very much heavier crop, hence the density is not so high. We know that the density is not taken from the ground but from the atmosphere. We had the experience again and again at Pialba of being paid the highest price for cane on analysis owing to the fact that it was lighter than in other scrub districts. There is another matter we should consider before launching out into too many central mills. Last year, according to statistics prepared by Mr. Weedon, I find that we manufactured in Australia 210,000 tons of sugar. The requirement of the whole of the Commonwealth is, I think, about 220,000 tons. We can only account for about 107 lb. for each adult that we may increase in population. It appears to me that the private mills are likely to be constructed. Take Drysdale Brothers, for instance, with a new mill of 15,000 tons capacity, and another new mill is talked about, and I believe is likely to be built near Mackay, with a capacity of 10,000 tons, and if we go on at this rate we will very soon produce a great deal more than we can consume in the Commonwealth.

Mr. HARDACRE: What will you do then?

Mr. CORSER: I consider the man who advocates over-production an enemy to the industry, because it is quite clear that when more is grown than can be consumed in the Commonwealth it will mean a distinct loss of £7 per ton on the sugar produced in Queensland. The loss cannot be passed on to anyone else but the producer. The manufacturers will have to pool their loss, and they, in their turn, will pass it on to the grower.

Mr. HARDACRE: Automatically the growers will stop growing it if it does not pay them.

Mr. CORSER: They cannot stop growing it when it does not pay without rendering the asset of the Treasurer so much less in value. At the present time we have no less than £577,867 19s. 3d. invested in central mills in Queensland, and when we know that some of those mills are not paying interest now, we must take care that we do not bring into existence more mills, and render that state of affairs worse than it is at the present time. I am quite prepared to admit that these central mills should not be erected in any other part of Queensland than the North, for the reason that we want population in that part of the State. As far as one can gather from visiting the North—on the seaboard, at any rate—nothing else can be grown at a profit except cane, and it is essential, in the interests of defence, that we should place as many white men as we possibly can in the Northern part of the State. I was pleased to hear the remarks of the hon. member for Cairns as to the way in which he would suggest settling the labour we require in the Northern part of Queensland and elsewhere for the purpose of harvesting the cane crop. At present not only is the wealth that is produced in the State taken out of it by these people who belong to other States, but, what is worse, their families reside in those States, and we are not only losing £1 5s. per capita for the labourers themselves, but for their wives and families. All that money would be retained here if we could find, as suggested by the hon. member for Cairns, some work for them to do, either for themselves or for somebody else, during the off season. There is another matter that I hope the Treasurer will not lose sight of, and that is that when these mills are to be constructed, however many they may be, they will be manufactured in Queensland. It is admitted by those who are engaged in the sugar industry that sugar machinery can be manufactured just as well, if not better, in Queensland, and the difference in cost between the imported and the locally manufactured article is very little indeed. The local article also has this undoubted advantage: that when there is a breakdown the patterns of all the parts are in the hands of local firms, and the broken parts can be easily and speedily replaced. Although the average deficit for the last six years has been stated at 40,000 tons, it must be remembered that during that period we have had one very bad season. In our own districts there was a loss of 50 per cent. that year owing to the most severe frost that has been known in twenty years. Although I do not wish in the slightest degree to discourage the construction of more mills to supply sufficient sugar for the requirements of the Commonwealth, I certainly do not wish to be one to take part in the construction of more mills if their construction means the production of more sugar than can be consumed in the Commonwealth. It would be bad business to do that. The Treasurer is a cool, calm, capable man, and I feel sure that he will bear this in mind when ordering the various mills. Then, again, I think we should get some assurance from the Federal Government that there will be no more threats—and that those threats will not be put into execution—in connection with the breaking down of the duty on sugar. I do not fear anything on that score about New Guinea, because I do not think the people of Australia would for one moment consider it advisable to allow sugar to be grown and manufactured by black

labour in New Guinea when black labour is withheld from those engaged in the industry in Queensland. But I see that the Federal Government have it in their power to tamper with the duty on sugar, and I realise that there are a great number of people in the Southern States who have very little sympathy indeed with the growers of sugar-cane in the North of Queensland. It is therefore necessary that every care should be taken in that direction before we launch out into any very large expenditure in this direction.

Mr. BRENNAN (*Rockhampton North*): In common with other hon. members who have spoken, I compliment not merely the Treasurer but the Government on the introduction of this Bill. It must be highly gratifying to the Ministry to find that not only members on this side, but also the deputy leader of the Opposition, have spoken so favourably of the measure. The speech of the deputy leader of the Opposition and also the report of the Royal Commission would lead most people to imagine that from Mackay north is the only home of sugar in Queensland. Now, it is a fact that in the Central district there are very large areas of land suitable for the growth of sugar-cane. In my own district there are large areas of such land. At Yeppoon twenty years ago there were 1,200 acres under cane, and the average yield was 40 tons per acre.

The SPEAKER: Order! I must ask hon. members to converse in lower tones if they wish to converse. The hon. member for North Rockhampton does not speak in a loud tone, and I have some difficulty in hearing him.

Mr. BRENNAN: Unfortunately for the Central district there was the labour trouble coupled with the difficulty of transit. Now there can be no trouble either in connection with labour or with transit.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: There used to be black labour.

Mr. BRENNAN: Black labour is done away with now. At that time there was a difficulty in getting to a market; but now we have railway communication. There are several places in the Central district suitable for sugar-growing; and in Rockhampton there is an effort being made by the people to start a company and build a mill of their own; but I do not see why the Government should not give us a central mill there. As some members have said already, the commission have been too conservative in their recommendations, and have placed too much faith on the statements made by a representative of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. Our district seems to have been ignored altogether, and I make these remarks that the Treasurer may understand that the Central district expects it shall not be overlooked in this matter of sugar-mills.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. RYLAND (*Gympie*): I must say that this Bill is an improvement on existing legislation in regard to sugar-mills; at the same time, I would like to see the principle carried out more fully than is proposed in the Bill. We should be guided by the weakness of past legislation, and I think the experience of the past showed one great weakness, which was ably dealt with three years ago when the question of central mills was under consideration. It was then agreed that they should be put under the direct control of the Government, the Hon. the Treasurer being made a corporation for that purpose. The word

"corporation" is contained in this Bill, and it practically means the Treasurer. Considering our experience in the past, I think it would be much better if the Government, in building mills under this measure, were to build them as State mills to be worked by the Government and kept under Government control, and not allowed to go into the hands of companies.

The PREMIER: There are safeguarding provisions that will apply to the mills when they get into the hands of companies.

Mr. RYLAND: I admit that there are safeguards here that were not put into previous Acts; still I think that it would be better for these mills to be erected and run as State mills. It has already been said that sixteen years is a very short time in which to pay off the money advanced.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That dates from the completion of the mill—from the time it is ready to crush cane.

Mr. RYLAND: That means that they will have to repay £8 11s. 8d. per cent. interest and redemption, which will be a very heavy expense on the canegrowers.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They will have the mill in the end. It is their profits on the cane that will buy the mill.

Mr. RYLAND: They may not own the mill.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They must in the end.

Mr. RYLAND: They may not be able to accomplish it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You need not be afraid of that.

Mr. RYLAND: If there is a run of bad seasons the small man working 30 or 40 acres of his own will be crushed out, and the small farms will go into the larger holdings; and at the end of the time these mills, instead of belonging to what may be called a lot of peasant proprietors growing cane on their own land, will be in the hands of four or five large owners of land.

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. RYLAND: And these men may be renting farms to men working on halves, or some other system. There is nothing in the Bill to stop the aggregation of farms.

The PREMIER: It provides that they cannot get more than 5 per cent. on their investment.

Mr. RYLAND: I do not attach any weight to that argument. I am against the wages system altogether. I am against men living on a piece of land away from a mill—a piece of land on which they can [9.30 p.m.] not make a living—so that they may be handy when they are required to cut cane. Our object should not be to settle men in that way, but to settle them on an area on which they can make a living. We should not give a man a piece of land merely to bind him to the place where his services may be required during the cutting season. That is about the worst position we could place any man in.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Those who have workers' homes do not say so.

[Mr. Corser.

Mr. RYLAND: They do. That system is condemned in Ireland, and the agitation there is for a living area. What is the good of a man living in a two-roomed house, with half an acre of land attached? What is the use of giving a man here 4 or 5 acres of land on which he cannot grow anything? Yet that is the idea that we have heard propounded in connection with this Bill. I have seen some of the areas which have been allotted to men in the Isis district. They were on a barren ridge, and I said to some of the sugar-workers, "That land will not grow cane." They said that it would not grow cane. Apparently it was not desired that those workers should grow cane, but simply to provide them with a piece of land which would keep them in the district where their services could be utilised in cane-cutting. I hold that a man should be given an area sufficient to make a living on. That is what I advocated in connection with the central mills over thirty years ago. I wrote letters at that time advocating the establishment of State mills and State refineries, and settling men on areas of 30 or 40 acres, or whatever area was required to make a living on, so that they could cultivate their own land and not have to work for wages. Sugar is a crop which exhausts the land, but if there is a rotation of crops, the strength of the land will be renewed, and men cultivating land in that way, instead of getting a job at cane-cutting for a few months of the year, would have work all the year round. I am against the wages system entirely, and am just as anxious to do away with wagesdom as some men were anxious years ago to do away with serfdom and slavery. I wish to see a system inaugurated under which men will be able to acquire land of their own, establish homes for themselves, each man being able to sit down "under his own vine and fig-tree, none daring to make him afraid." But that will not be accomplished under this Bill. This measure proposes a sort of arrangement under which in sixteen or twenty years the mills will become the property of men holding large areas of land. The result will be that the mill will become a proprietary mill, owned possibly by half the men who are supplying cane to it. Why not have a State mill? Why not keep it a State mill? The late Premier told us on one occasion that it was a great mistake that the Government allowed the central mills to go out of their control. I have been looking for the passage in *Hansard*, but have not found it so far. I believe, however, that I could find it if I had another ten minutes to search for the speech. The hon. member for Townsville, Mr. Philp, stated that the mills which are under the direct control of the Treasurer at the present time were not in a position to pay as good prices for cane as the other mills were paying. How could they be in as good a position as the other mills? Anyone who knows anything about the matter knows that some of those mills were built in districts where they should not have been built, and that their management was unsatisfactory. But what happened when the mills were worked by the Government? As soon as the Nambour Mill came under the direct control of the Treasurer it became a paying concern. Then the shareholders came along, and got the mill into their own hands again.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: After the Government got them out of the mire.

Mr. RYLAND: Exactly; after the Government got them out of the mire. There are four mills at the present time under the control of the Government, and those are the mills which went from bad to worse under the directorship of the shareholders—that is, the owners of the land. They appointed their own directors. Look at the position they are in! It is doing far better now. But then they expect that that should pay as well as other mills that are better manned. I think we were hardly justified in building a mill at Gin Gin, considering the land and everything else. There was far better land up North. In the first place, Gin Gin is subject to frost, and the best land—the low-lying land in the area that runs along the lower banks of the Burnett—which is splendid country, gives the lowest density of any sugar grown in Queensland. The Secretary for Railways will admit that, and practically it is hardly suitable land at all for a sugar-mill. These mills which the Government have now could not be made to pay under the old management; and then they do not give as good a price for cane as the other private mills. I think that they are doing very well. The evidence is all in favour of Government control. I say the Government mills do pay a better price for the cane than the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. A central mill gives from 3s. to 6s. a ton more than the Colonial Sugar Refining Company.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You are quite mistaken.

Mr. RYLAND: I am not. The prices have been published in the Press. I am entirely in favour of the Government building the mills and running them themselves. As regards the point raised by the hon. member for Cairns—the question of the Government resuming the land at the present values—if land speculation was practised I do not think it will be practicable to resume the land afterwards; it should be resumed before. If you follow my line of reasoning there would be no land speculation, because the Government would own the mill, and they would always have control of the land and working of the mill. I think these mills will never be a success unless something is done in connection with the refining of sugar. Our mills in some cases turn out valuable sugar, but it won't fetch a good market price without having to send it on to the Colonial Sugar Refining monopoly. According to the returns the Colonial Sugar Refining Company makes a net profit of over £4 a ton in connection with it. (Government laughter.) Could many industries pay like that? The Government should have a State refinery to treat sugar in connection with these mills, so that the sugar could be placed on the market without having to go through the hands of such a monopoly. Another thing in connection with these mills: If the Government have State mills I want to see something done in the way of fair wages and hours in connection with the industry.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The wages boards must prevail.

Mr. RYLAND: What is our experience of the determinations of the wages boards? We have no data; they may be right or they may be wrong. Last week they made one determination. They summoned themselves to come and alter it inside a fortnight; they may come together again within a month and give another determination.

*Mr. Ryland.]*



We have had no experience for any length of time of the wages boards as regards the sugar industry. I have not much faith in the wages boards.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You would not have faith in the angel Gabriel.

Mr. RYLAND: I would go in for a wages board to-morrow for any industry in Queensland, if you will let me appoint a chairman. (Laughter.) That is just the weakness in connection with wages boards. I remember some hon. gentlemen who were prepared to hand over everything to the wages boards—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. RYLAND: Yes, I will pass on. (Laughter.) At the same time we do not expect to get everything righted by wages boards under existing conditions; but I think we should provide, seeing the State is going to find the money, that the workers should be protected. I notice that the application for a mill must come from a majority of the owners and occupiers in the areas of cane planted, and must represent a majority in acreage of the land. I do not know if there is any machinery provided by which this is to be carried out by ballot or not. Provision is also made that anyone may object. It is only quite right that men in the area who do not want a mill should be in a position to object to it. A provision with regard to accommodation-houses comes in here. It may be all right, but at the same time it only refers to provision for the employees working at the mill, as far as I can see. I think in connection with the housing and accommodation of mill hands, it is just as good to be part or parcel of the mills, if the Government keeps them under their control. As has been advocated by the deputy leader of the Opposition, that accommodation should be provided at these mills. I know that at some of the mills there was a dearth of accommodation even for the employees working at the mills. At one of the central mills which came within my experience, there was practically no accommodation. In one case, the engineer had no accommodation, and the manager built two or three houses himself near the mill, and rented these houses to the employees. I was talking to the manager at the time—a very good man, for whom I have the greatest esteem—and I said to him, "Don't you think there is a weakness here in connection with this matter? You rent these houses and are getting a fair rent from these employees, and you are the manager of the mill. Don't you think it might bias you in some way, or there might be room for suspicion that you, as a Government servant, in getting a fair rent from these employees, might be influenced in giving a better wage than they are entitled to?" "Well," he said, "I did it simply to meet a want. These men had not accommodation, and I built the houses on my own responsibility, and the primary object was not to get a profit out of them, but to provide accommodation for the good servants and employees of the mill." "Well," I said, "This is a weakness," and it was not very long afterwards I saw in the newspapers that those houses were disposed of, and I understand it was because of what I had said to the manager about him being in a false position. I think the Government, in building these mills, should provide accommodation-houses for the employees, and not put the manager

[Mr. Ryland.

or anyone else in a false position. As regards making up any deficiency, I see a rate is to be struck on the unimproved value of the land. I think in striking a rate, that rate should only be struck on the enhanced value that is produced by the erection of the mill, and there is no mistake, from what we have heard to-night and from what I know, that we will enormously enhance the value of the lands. As the hon. member for Cairns said, land that was only worth £2 or £3 an acre, as soon as a mill was built and the land was brought into touch by a tramway, it was worth £15 to £20 an acre. Therefore, we have an increased value from £12 to £18 an acre, and I think the enhanced value should be the value on which the rate should be struck. I think if the Minister will give this question a little thought he will see it will be an injustice to tax a man for an advantage he did not get, while you let the other man who reaps the advantage go untaxed. We know, in connection with our railways, a grave injustice is being done by levying the tax in the benefited area upon the value of the land before the railway was built. It should be confined to the enhanced value, and it should be equally so when making up the deficiency or paying for the erection of these mills. There is one thing in connection with the principle of constructing the mills. I see it is five years before interest is charged.

The TREASURER: That is not in the Bill.

Mr. RYLAND: Is that not in the Bill?

The TREASURER: I have not seen it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The interest is 4 per cent.

Mr. RYLAND: It is £8 11s. 8d. interest and redemption. As regards appointing the farmers as directors of the mills, I do not think it would be well for them to go and try their apprentice hands in that way, as they know very little about the business. I know that is one of the chief reasons for the breakdown of the central mill system—that they put a lot of men on the directorate who knew nothing at all about sugar. They were the owners of the land and farmers, and they had enough influence to get on the directorate, and they knew nothing about running a mill and nothing about sugar. I do not know that I have anything more to say. If I had time to go through the Bill more carefully I dare say I could pick out other weaknesses, and when the Bill gets into Committee I will be only too pleased to help the Treasurer to socialise it as much as possible. I have faith in the Treasurer of Queensland, no matter whether he is a Labour Treasurer or whether he is a democratic Treasurer, or whether he is a progressive Treasurer we have at the present time, I am quite satisfied to trust these mills to that Treasurer sooner than have a directorate that would be elected by the owners of the land. I have every confidence that the Treasurer will run these mills better than any man that can be elected by the landowners.

Mr. GUNN (*Carnarvon*): So far as this debate has gone everyone has praised this Bill more or less. They found defects in certain clauses, but the principle has been looked on as first rate. Everyone [10 p.m.] has praised it up, and it has been a sweet debate all through. (Laughter.) It has been nothing but sugar. It is sugar-plums in your mouth all the time, judging by what everyone has said about the Bill. Everyone is well pleased with the Bill, and the Treasurer may be congratu-

lated on the excellent features it contains. No doubt it is a splendid Bill for our sugar-growers and for the settlement of our waste lands along the coastal districts of Queensland, and I hope it will be the means of settling people on those lands. At the same time, we must look at it from a careful point of view. I am afraid that the Minister's heart is bigger than his head. (Laughter.) He wishes to benefit the sugar-growers at the expense of the rest of the State. There is no doubt that the sugar industry is an artificial industry. It is a bolstered up industry, and lives only by protection, and Queenslanders—and I am one among the number—are willing to pay more for their sugar so as to encourage sugar-growing in Queensland. This industry is controlled by the Commonwealth of Australia. What about the people of Melbourne and Sydney, where there are millions of people who have to pay more for their sugar for the benefit of Queensland sugar?

The PREMIER: They do not have to pay more. It is just the same. The only difference is that the duty is £6 per ton instead of £5.

Mr. GUNN: If we had no duty we would have cheaper sugar.

Mr. LENNON: And if we had no duty on jam we would have cheaper jam.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: And we would be down to the dead level of the Asiatic.

Mr. GUNN: There is no duty on tea, and that is cheaper.

Mr. LENNON: It is no cheaper than it was before.

The SPEAKER: Order! These continued interjections, coming from all over the Chamber, are disorderly, and I must ask members to cease from interjecting.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. GUNN: It was only the other day that one of the Federal Ministers suggested that it would be advisable to erect sugar-works in New Guinea. That sugar would come in and compete with the sugar in Queensland and compete with the mills we are about to erect.

Mr. LENNON: That would suit you, as you would get cheaper sugar.

Mr. GUNN: What about the poor little children in Sydney and Melbourne who stand outside the lolly-shops licking the windows and not able to get the lollies because of the sugar being so dear? (Laughter.) How pleased they must be that there is a duty on sugar! We must think of other people besides ourselves. There are many people in the Southern States who would be glad to get cheap sugar, even if it is grown by black people in New Guinea. Members of the Federal Parliament suggest that this might be done, and there is no reason why it might not be done. The sugar industry is supported so far by the Federal duty and the Federal Government, so why do not the Federal Government take a hand in the erection of these central mills?

Mr. FERRICKS: Because you refused to give them the power on the 26th of April last. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. GUNN: Apparently they have the power to erect sugar-mills in New Guinea. Is not that a dependency of Australia?

Mr. FERRICKS: You refused to allow them to control trade and commerce.

Mr. GUNN: If they have the power to erect mills in New Guinea, they have the power to erect mills in Queensland. (Hear, hear!) I have seen copies of Mr. Hughes's and Mr. Bamford's speeches, and they said they would grow sugar in New Guinea and dump it into Queensland, just as we grow sugar in Queensland and dump it into New South Wales and Victoria. I hope that this matter will turn out as well as the Treasurer wishes it will. I wish everyone success in connection with it, but I point out that it savours too much of spoon-feeding. We are always apt to "sool" on the Government to spend money instead of saving it.

Mr. LENNON: You were advocating the cultivation of the rabbit the other night. (Laughter.)

Mr. GUNN: It was the cultivation of the opossum that I was advocating and not the rabbit. (Laughter.) It was in answer to an interjection from the hon. member that I said I believed in one man one rabbit. (Laughter.) The cultivation of sugar is a very laudable thing, but we must remember that once the cultivation of sugar overtakes the consumption in Australia we shall have to stop. We shall not be able to supply the outer world with sugar when we overtake the Australian demand, and we shall then have to do something else with our sugar. I do not know what we will do with it unless we turn it into rum. (Laughter.) We will have an excise duty on it then. I do not see how we can turn it into rum either, because there is a Liquor Bill coming along under which all the "pubs." will be shut. (Laughter.)

Mr. FOLEY: Feed the 'possums with it. (Laughter.)

Mr. GUNN: I do not know that 'possums are fond of sugar, but I believe they are. I must say that the duty on sugar has been a great thing for the States, because the sugar is much superior to what it was in the early days. I remember when the sugar came from Mauritius, and it was a very inferior article. It used to ooze out of the bags when they brought it out, and it was a common thing to see treacle coming out of the bags. You would often pick up a lump like a cockroach. In fact, we called them "cockroaches," and it was often said that if a man had some "post and rail tea" and some "cockroaches" he could live anywhere. (Laughter.) In considering the spending of so much public money, we must remember that the Federal Government might step in and ruin the sugar industry. I sincerely hope they will not do it, but if the Federal Government take away the duty the whole thing will fall to the ground.

Mr. FOLEY: You would get your cheap sugar then.

Mr. GUNN: Members do not take me seriously, although I am quite serious, and we never know the time when it will be interfered with by Federal legislation.

Mr. FORSYTH (Moreton): I beg to move the adjournment of the debate.

Question put and passed.

The resumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

The House adjourned at ten minutes past 10 o'clock.

Mr. Forsyth.]