

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 13 JULY 1915

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

TUESDAY, 13 JULY, 1915.

PRESENTATION OF SPEAKER.

The SPEAKER (Hon. W. McCormack, Cairns) took the chair at 10 o'clock, and said: I shall now proceed to Government

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House, there to present myself to His Excellency the Governor for His Majesty's Royal approbation.

The SPEAKER then, accompanied by several hon. members, left the Chamber.

On the House resuming at two minutes to 12 o'clock.

The SPEAKER said: I have to report that I have this day been to Government House, where I presented myself to the Governor for His Majesty's Royal approbation as the member chosen by the Assembly for the high and honourable office of Speaker, and that His Excellency was pleased to make the following reply:—

“Mr. SPEAKER,—

“I approve, on behalf of the King, of the choice which the Assembly has made in your person.”

After which, in the name and on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, I laid claim to all the undoubted rights and privileges of the House, and prayed that the most favourable construction might at all times be put upon their proceedings; to which His Excellency replied:—

“Mr. SPEAKER,—

“I recognise and confirm, on behalf of the King, the lawful rights and privileges claimed by the members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland in as full and ample a manner as they have been heretofore granted or allowed by His Majesty.”

GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH.

A message having been received that the Governor requested the attendance of Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly in the Council Chamber.

The SPEAKER and hon. members proceeded thither accordingly, and having heard the Opening Speech read, returned to their own Chamber, when the SPEAKER announced that he would resume the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

The House having resumed at the appointed hour,

COMMISSION TO ADMINISTER OATH.

The SPEAKER said: I have to inform the House that His Excellency the Governor has been pleased to issue a Commission under the Great Seal of the State empowering me to administer the oath or affirmation of allegiance to such members as may hereafter present themselves to be sworn, which I now direct the Clerk to read to the House.

The CLERK read the Commission accordingly.

MEMBERS SWORN.

Mr. A. J. JONES and Mr. W. F. LLOYD.

Mr. A. J. JONES and Mr. W. F. LLOYD, having taken the oath and subscribed the roll, took their seats as members for the electoral districts of Maryborough and Enoggera, respectively.

ELECTIONS TRIBUNAL.

JUDGES FOR 1915.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a letter from the Chief Justice, intimating that His Honour Mr. Justice Chubb and His Honour Mr. District Court Judge Macnaughton would be the Elections Judges for 1915.

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DESTRUCTION OF BALLOT-PAPERS.

The SPEAKER announced that he had received a letter from the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, stating that, pursuant to an order made by the House on 16th December, 1914, he caused all ballot-papers in his possession, the period for the safe custody of which had expired, to be destroyed. The ballot-papers were burnt in furnaces in the presence of the Clerk Assistant and himself, and before they left the ground they were satisfied that the destruction was complete.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of the following from the Auditor-General:—

Auditor-General's report, dated 11th January, 1915, on Savings Bank securities.

Auditor-General's twenty-first half-yearly report upon the balance-sheet of the Queensland National Bank, Limited.

Letter from the Auditor-General covering the Agent-General's half-yearly report, dated 6th January, 1915, on Savings Bank securities held in London.

Ordered to be printed.

PAPERS.

The following papers, laid on the table, were ordered to be printed:—

Return of all schools in operation on the 1st January, 1915, with the attendance of pupils and the status and emoluments of the teachers employed.

Fourth annual report of the University of Queensland.

Despatches conveying His Majesty's assent to Acts passed during the session of 1914.

Report of the Government Resident at Thursday Island for the year 1914.

Regulations under the Public Service Acts, 1896 to 1901.

Regulations under the Friendly Societies Act of 1913.

Regulations under the Printers and Newspapers Act of 1914.

Regulations under Chapter LXIVa (Habitual Criminals) of the Criminal Code.

The following paper was also laid on the table:—

Statements of various insurance companies under the Life Assurance Companies Act of 1901.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

The PREMIER (Hon. T. J. Ryan, *Barcoo*): I desire to announce that since the result of the recent electoral ballots held in Queensland the Denham Administration resigned, and His Excellency the Governor sent for and asked me to form an Administration, which I agreed to do. I now lay "Government Gazettes" on the table of the House containing the acceptance of the resignations of the members of the late Government and the appointment of the members of the present Government.

LEADERSHIP OF OPPOSITION.

Mr. MACARTNEY (*Toowong*): I beg to state that the Opposition have done me the honour of electing me the leader of the constitutional Opposition. I can only say, in addition to that brief announcement, that the Opposition have duties as well as our friends on the other side of the House, and those duties will be performed.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MACARTNEY: And so far as is consistent with the carrying out of those duties, I can assure the leader of the House that he will have all the assistance we can give him in carrying out the business of the House.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: I desire to offer my congratulations to the hon. member for Toowong on his appointment to the responsible position of leader of the Opposition. Having held that position for some years myself, I am well aware of the onerous nature of the duties which fall upon the leader of the Opposition, and I am very pleased to hear the hon. gentleman say that he will give what assistance he can—of course, consistently with his duties as leader of the Opposition—in passing the business which we may bring before the House. I think I am expressing the opinion of the majority of hon. members of this House when I say that we trust that he, and also the members of his party, may be long spared to occupy the positions which they now hold. (Government laughter.)

LEADERSHIP OF COUNTRY PARTY.

Mr. APPEL (*Albert*): I beg to intimate that I have been elected chairman of the Country party. (Government "Hear, hears" and laughter.) In carrying out the duties of that party, we do not propose to indulge in any capricious or captious obstruction.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. APPEL: Seated as we are on the Opposition side of the House, we propose to criticise measures which we are of opinion are not for the benefit of the electors of the State, but when the Government place before the House any measure which will make for the benefit of the people of the State, we are prepared to support it. (Hear, hear!) So far, Sir, as you are concerned, you will receive every assistance from the members of this party in carrying out your onerous and responsible duties.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MURPHY (*Burke*), who was received with cheers and laughter, said: Mr. Speaker, —While these announcements are being made I desire to state that I belong to no party. (Laughter.) Therefore I am not trammelled by any party ties or party tyranny. I hope that I shall be able to see realised those aspirations of a growing section of the community which are not realised with party government, and I agree with Pope that—

"Party is the madness of the many for the gain of the few."

Belonging to no party, I can deal with the measures brought in by the Government on their merits. I hope that I may be here to see the day when the question of elective Ministries will be brought before the Chamber and carried, in order that the Government of the country may be conducted by

the representatives of the people, who are the members of Parliament, and not by the Cabinet. (Hear, hear!)

The PREMIER: I rise to offer my congratulations to the hon. member for Albert for his appointment to the responsible position of leader of the Country party. I think that the remarks which I made with regard to the leader of the Opposition, the hon. member for Toowong, are equally applicable to the hon. member for Albert. I was also pleased to hear the announcement made by the hon. member for Burke—(laughter)—because with practically three leaders now opposed to the Government it will certainly assist in the passage of the measures which we may introduce. (Government laughter.)

Mr. MURPHY: There is more than one leader over there, too.

MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE.

The PREMIER: I desire the leave of the House to move a motion without notice, to allow of the immediate constitution of Committees of Supply and Ways and Means.

The SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the Premier be allowed to move the motion without notice?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS.

The PREMIER, in moving—

"That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended for this day as would otherwise prevent the immediate constitution of Committees of Supply and Ways and Means, the receiving of resolutions on the same day on which they shall have passed in those committees, and the passing of an Appropriation Bill through all its stages in one day,"

said: Hon. members will understand that the object of this motion is to enable us to make the fortnightly payments in connection with certain members of the public service. It is the usual practice to have the Standing Orders suspended at the beginning of the session when Supply has run out, as it has in this case. It is a case of urgent necessity.

Mr. MACARTNEY: I recognise the difficulty in which the Government are placed by reason of the late period at which Parliament has been called together. I do not, of course, blame the Government for that, as I recognise that there are special circumstances attached to it; and I also recognise the need of the motion, if the public servants are to be provided with their salaries at the due time. Members on the other side, in the past, when sitting on this side of the House, have usually strongly objected to a motion of this kind. It is not a practice, however, that I intend to follow when the circumstances are such as make it reasonable, as they are in this particular case. I do not know whether the hon. gentleman can see his way to inform the House, before the motion is actually put, as to whether any material alteration is to take place in the amounts to be paid.

The PREMIER: Exactly the same.

Mr. FORSYTH (*Murrumba*): With regard to the question before the House—the introduction of an Appropriation Bill without notice—it is somewhat unique, I think, in the history of this House; and if there is one hon. member who has protested more than another

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against such a course being adopted—which only shows how absolutely inconsistent he is—it is the leader of the Government. (Hear, hear!) In 1913, without going back any further, because this protest has always been made—but I wish to call the attention of the House to the statement that was made in 1913 by the hon. gentleman. Each year, when an Appropriation Bill has been brought forward, the hon. gentleman has invariably protested against it; and that, I am sure, he will agree with; and he has invariably called “Not formal.” I certainly thought that, instead of asking that this matter shall go on, without even a formal notice—which never happened before to my knowledge—the hon. gentleman might have given some explanation with regard to the opposition that he has invariably shown in this House with regard to Appropriation Bills. This is what he said in 1913. I am quoting from “Hansard” of 1913, page 323, when a similar motion was introduced—

“I called ‘Not formal’ to this motion because I am of opinion that the Standing Orders should not be suspended on any occasion unless there is some urgent necessity therefore, and I listened with some considerable curiosity to the proposition laid down by the Premier that this is a time-honoured motion, and, therefore, it should always be observed, even when the House has sufficient time to observe its ordinary Standing Orders. I, for one, feel that it is my duty to protest against the suspension of the Standing Orders unless some urgent necessity be shown therefor.”

The PREMIER: Unless there is “some urgent necessity.”

Mr. FORSYTH: Was not there the same urgent necessity last year, and in 1913? Just the same thing occurred then as has occurred now. What is the necessity? The hon. member could have got the whole of this business done before Thursday without showing his inconsistency.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Entirely different circumstances.

Mr. FORSYTH: Now, Mr. Speaker, this is what he then said—

“But the hon. gentleman himself, in moving it, has admitted that it is unnecessary, and, therefore, I think it becomes even more necessary to protest against such a practice being introduced. If this is going to be done, we may as well wipe out the Standing Order altogether if it is to become a time-honoured practice. There are many things that can be discussed on the various stages of going into Committee of Supply, and also on the various stages of Bills, the first and second and third readings, and so on, and I think that the practice as laid down by the Standing Orders should be adhered to. It might even be on an occasion like this that a Government might be wrecked, and, consequently, I do not think that a motion of this kind should be regarded as time-honoured or as a usage of Parliament, and it is for that reason that I rose to make the protest now.”

The Hon. the Minister for Railways also made a remark—

“I would like to have a word or two before we pass this Bill. I think it is

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a very undesirable thing that the Standing Orders, which are meant to safeguard the rights of members of this House, should be set aside without due reason.”

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: “Due reason” now.

Mr. FORSYTH:

“And the Hon. the Premier has given no particular reason this afternoon, at any rate. And it is also a time-honoured practice that there should be redress of grievances before Supply. I have one or two grievances that I want to ventilate.”

In connection with Appropriation Bills Nos. 2 and 3 last year, the hon. member also raised his objections and made his protests.

Now, I certainly thought, seeing [4 p.m.] he had protested so much against this procedure, that he would change it. But we find, now that he is in a responsible position, he finds it necessary to do exactly what former Governments have done. Appropriation Bills are introduced in every single Parliament in Australia, and it is generally done in the same way, and I can see no objection to it. What objection can we have to passing it, and passing it all in one day?

The PREMIER: Then why are you talking?

Mr. FORSYTH: I am raising no objection to it at all. I think the hon. member has done exactly what he should do, and whilst I approve entirely of the attitude he has taken, I am endeavouring to show his absolute inconsistency when we compare it with his former attitude.

The PREMIER: You think I am doing the right thing?

Mr. FORSYTH: I think the hon member is doing the right thing in passing this through to-day in one day—(Government laughter)—but it is a remarkable thing, although I think it is right and always have done so, that the hon. member never thought it was right until now. (Opposition laughter.) For on every occasion when other Governments did it, the hon. member thought it was wrong, but when the hon. member happens to be in a different position it is altogether right. It only shows, in my estimation, the absolute inconsistency of the hon. member, because he finds to-day, as he will find in lots of cases later on, that a great many things he could do when in Opposition cannot be done when he is in a responsible position. I therefore hope and trust that he will bear that in mind. So far as I am concerned—(interruption). I think I may have your protection, Mr. Speaker, from the interjections which come from the other side, and particularly new members. Instead of their keeping quiet for a little while, they seem to be talking even more than old members. I think it is objectionable, and I hope you will keep them in order. That is the position so far as I understand it. The hon. member will have to bring in other Appropriation Bills, and when he brings them in I do not think he will find that any objection will be raised from this side of the House. At the same time, I think it my duty to point out to the House the absolute inconsistency of the hon. member who to-day thinks the action of the late Government was a correct thing, but whilst he was in Opposition thought it a most abominable thing to do.

Mr. MURPHY: I have frequently, from my place on the Opposition benches, joined the then leader of the Opposition in protesting against the action of the Government in suspending the Standing Orders. The hon. member who has just resumed his seat apparently fails to realise that things have changed. Of course, the things that the Chief Secretary used to do as leader of the Opposition, are things on which he has come to have quite different ideas to-day. The hon. member need not have turned to the 1913 "Hansard" to have ascertained the attitude of the Chief Secretary upon this particular question, because if he had turned up "Hansard" for 1914, he would have found that the hon. member made the same protest then. He said—

"As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, I have always protested against this sort of thing. It may be suitable enough for the particular Government in power, but, in my opinion, it is not desirable that Parliament should have to pass large sums of money on such short notice as we are getting when the Standing Orders are suspended. I now wish to enter my protest again."

Of course, the Hon. the Chief Secretary does not believe that to-day.

The PREMIER: Read on.

Mr. MURPHY: I will read it all to you. He said—

"At the same time, I think that the Chief Secretary has given sufficient reason why he has followed that course on this occasion."

The PREMIER: That is what I have done to-day.

Mr. MURPHY: If the Chief Secretary had given that reason on that occasion, what reason was there for the leader of the Opposition to enter such a bitter protest? That is only the position that has been taken up to-day. The suspension of the Standing Orders is introduced by Governments in order that they may carry on the business of the country in their own way. Hon. members on the other side are to-day cheering the Chief Secretary for his action. When they were sitting on this side of the House, they joined with him in making a bitter protest and in pointing out to the people of the country that the functions of the Parliament were being taken away from the representatives of the people by a Cabinet. That is the position they used to take up then, and it is the position I take up to-day; and consequently, to be consistent, I have, like the Chief Secretary used to do for some years, to enter my protest against the suspension of the Standing Orders on this occasion.

Question put and passed.

ACTING CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES.

APPOINTMENT OF MR. COYNE.

The PREMIER: I desire to move a motion without notice, by leave of the House, to appoint a Chairman for the day.

The SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the Chief Secretary be allowed to move the motion without notice?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: I beg to move that Mr. John Harry Coyne do act as Chairman of Committees for this day.

Question put and passed.

SUPPLY.

COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the PREMIER, it was resolved that a sum not exceeding £1,050,000 be granted, on account, towards defraying the expenses of the various departments and services of the State.

The House resumed. The ACTING CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a resolution.

The resolution was received and agreed to.

WAYS AND MEANS.

COMMITTEE.

The PREMIER moved that, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, there be granted a sum not exceeding £650,000 from the consolidated revenue fund, exclusive of the moneys standing to the credit of the loan fund account, £100,000 from the trust and special funds, and £300,000 from the loan fund account.

Mr. MURPHY said he knew the Treasurer was indisposed, and he should like to know if the Premier could tell the Committee what was the amount of the loan money available when the late Government left office.

The PREMIER replied that he understood the information had been made public, but he had not got it beside him at the moment.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed. The ACTING CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to certain resolutions.

The resolutions were received and agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL No. 1.

FIRST AND SECOND READINGS.

The PREMIER presented a Bill founded on the resolutions, and it was read a first and second time.

COMMITTEE.

(Mr. Coyne, Warrego, in the chair.)

Clauses 1, 2, and 3 put and passed.

On clause 4—"Short title"—

Mr. FORSYTH asked the Premier how long the £300,000 to be appropriated from the loan fund was expected to last.

The PREMIER: I am asking for Supply for two months.

Mr. FORSYTH: Then that was at the rate of £150,000 per month. He hoped the Government were not going to maintain that average rate of expenditure throughout the year. They were led to understand by the late Treasurer that there was sufficient loan money in hand to last until the end of September. He was not making these remarks in any spirit of captious criticism, but he wanted to find out where they were. If there was only sufficient loan money in hand to last until the end of September, then the Government were going to be in a very parlous state with regard to loan expenditure, unless they could arrange to float another loan for public works. He advised the Government not to exceed an expenditure of £2,000,000 a year, because money was going to be very dear. He did not know whether the Premier was aware that within the next two or three weeks the whole of the meatworks in Queensland would be closed down, as they could not get stock, and there

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would then be 4,000 or 5,000 men thrown out of work. That was the information he had got from men at the head of more than one meat company. It would be the duty of the Government to render assistance, as far as possible, to those men, and that tended to make the position more serious with reference to loan money. He hoped the Government would be able to raise more money, so that they would be able to carry on the affairs of Queensland normally.

The PREMIER said that the information that he had was that the loan fund would last, at all events, to the date mentioned by the hon. member—to the end of September—perhaps longer. Aneut some of the hon. member's other remarks, he might remind the hon. member that the late Government had not accepted £2,500,000 from the Commonwealth.

Mr. FORSYTH: Would the hon. gentleman be good enough to tell them for how long the £2,500,000 was offered by the Commonwealth? When the hon. gentleman had answered that question, he might be able to reply to the hon. gentleman's statement.

The PREMIER: I am not here to be cross-examined. (Government laughter.)

Mr. FORSYTH: He had asked the question before, and, if he could not get an answer from the Premier now, he would ask it in the House. He did not know whether he had been correctly informed or not, but he had been given to understand that the Commonwealth Government offered the money to the Queensland Government for two years. Now, what was the use of granting a loan with a currency of only two years? The Government would have a great deal of trouble in raising another loan to repay the Commonwealth Government at the end of two years. If it was true that the money was only offered for two years, then the late Government acted wisely in refusing to take it. A loan was no good unless it had a currency of at least ten years. If the Government had had to find another £2,000,000 in twelve months, and then meet the loan of £2,000,000 from the Commonwealth, they would have been placed in a parlous position.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The other States accepted loans from the Commonwealth.

Mr. FORSYTH: The other States were, perhaps, in a parlous position.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Not at all.

Mr. FORSYTH: The hon. gentleman did not know much about it. They certainly were in a parlous position in New South Wales. If the late Government had accepted the money offered on the terms he had mentioned, then the present Government would have found themselves in an awkward position next year. He thought that, under the circumstances, the late Treasurer acted wisely.

The PREMIER: Are you wanting information?

Mr. FORSYTH: Yes; he was going to get the information. If he could not get it now, he would ask the question in the House.

The PREMIER: I would suggest that the hon. member should give notice of a question.

Clause 4 put and passed.

Preamble put and passed.

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The House resumed. The ACTING CHAIRMAN reported the Bill without amendment.

THIRD READING.

The Bill was read a third time, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council for their concurrence, by message in the usual form.

NOTICE OF QUESTION.

Mr. FORSYTH gave notice of a question with regard to the loan of £2,000,000 recently offered to the Queensland Government by the Federal Government.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: The time for questions has passed.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: I think, at the present stage of business, the hon. member for Murrumba is perfectly in order in giving notice of this question.

The PREMIER: The question time is exhausted.

The SPEAKER: There being at present no Orders of the Day on the paper, the question is in order.

THE OPENING SPEECH.

The SPEAKER: I have to report that the House this day attended His Excellency the Governor in the Council [4.30 p.m.] Chamber, where his Excellency delivered an Opening Speech to both Houses, of which, for greater accuracy, I have obtained a copy, which I shall now read to the House. (Vide page 8 of Legislative Council's proceedings.)

ADDRESS IN REPLY.

Mr. T. L. JONES (*Oxley*), who was received with Government cheers, said: Mr. Speaker,—I rise, Sir, to move that the following Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor, in reply to the Speech of His Excellency on the opening of this the first session of the twentieth Parliament of Queensland:—

“MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

“We, His Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, in Parliament assembled, desire to assure Your Excellency of our continued loyalty and affection towards the Throne and Person of Our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to tender our thanks to Your Excellency for the Speech with which you have been pleased to open the present session.

“We avail ourselves of this opportunity to offer Your Excellency a cordial welcome, and to express the belief that you will perform with eminent success the duties of your high office.

“The various matters to which Your Excellency has referred, and all other matters that may be brought before us, will receive our most careful consideration, and it shall be our earnest endeavour so to deal with them that our labours may tend to the advancement and prosperity of the State.”

Mr. Speaker, in moving this motion, I wish first of all to refer to the remarks of His Excellency regarding the fearful and calamitous conflict now being waged by several of the European Powers, including our Great

British Empire. It is not my desire to deal with this subject, further than to say that there has arisen a feeling of horror in the minds of the people of this country, as well as the people of other countries, at the prolongation of a war which is destroying thousands of men, among them the flower of humanity, and at the distress and suffering which has been brought upon thousands and thousands of women and children. It is undoubtedly quite true to say that this brutal war is the result of the insatiable ambition of Germany, and the aggressive militarism of at least a strong section of its people, and that the dominant and ruling class who—to gain their ends—did not hesitate to make a brutal and unprovoked attack upon a neutral and peaceful neighbouring State. Humanity is paying a fearful price for the lesson that no one class and no one people shall dominate the human race, and that the future is with a democracy vigilant and militant in defence of its liberties and rights yet determined to see that those liberties and rights are shared and enjoyed by every other people.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. T. L. JONES: It is, I fear, quite true, to quote His Excellency's Speech, that many of us do not appreciate to the full extent the nature of the struggle that is in progress. The happenings of the last few weeks in Gallipoli, where many of our gallant young Australians have given their lives to their country's cause, have brought it home to us as never before. (Hear, hear!) The shadow of the angel of death is, indeed, over the land, and sorrow and grief are brought to the homes of many of our people. I am sure that every member of this House will join with me in expressing our deepest heartfelt sympathy to the families of those who have fallen.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. T. L. JONES: It is satisfactory, Mr. Speaker, to know that this Government intends to do the fair thing by those of its public servants who have volunteered for the front, in that they intend to keep open their positions for them on their return. That is, after all, only a fair thing, and I trust that the example will be followed by others, as I am sure it will be by every reputable firm in the State. (Hear, hear!) It is also satisfactory to know that the Government intends to take some action to provide land under most favourable conditions for those of the returned soldiers who are anxious to settle upon the land. I turn now to the question of the drought, which has received mention in the Governor's Speech. There is no doubt that the position is very serious, but I share the gratifying feeling of optimism expressed in the speech of His Excellency, that this State will rise above all the difficulties with which it is faced. We have had droughts before, and we have realised the wonderful recuperative powers of this State. We must, I suppose, anticipate a falling off of revenue if the drought continues, and, in face of the inevitable financial stringency in respect to loan moneys, I suppose it is almost too much to expect that the Great Western Railway linking up the various trunk lines can be pushed forward at an early date. But, in discussing the question of the drought, that proposal comes vividly before us, and we can realise how advantageous it will be in the removal of

stock from one centre of the country to another that we can overcome the drought-stricken conditions of portion of the country by the removal of stock from those districts to other districts where the conditions are not so bad. But there is another question that also strikes us in connection with the drought; and that is the question of the conservation of fodder. This question is applicable more to purely farming areas in the coastal districts. It is unfortunately quite true—and it has been the case right through past years—that very little has been done systematically towards the conservation of fodder. I believe I am right in saying that in this State there are no more, perhaps, than 100 silos, all told. I question—even including those on Government farms—whether the number is any greater than that; and that alone is sufficient commentary on the lack of forethought and foresight on the part of farmers in regard to the important question of the conservation of fodder. Very often, indeed, maize crops are at the point of ruin, because of the failure of rain just at the critical moment. I do not want to pose as an authority on farming in this House. We have a party over there who, I dare say, will represent those interests very ably and well, but I think it is evident and apparent to all that the possession of a silo to save crops which otherwise would be a total failure, if rain did not fall at the critical moment, is most desirable. It is to be hoped that the Department of Agriculture will take up this important question, as I believe it will under its present control. I look forward to the most active administration in that department. It is a department that, I think, calls for great initiative—perhaps more than any other department. I hope to see that done, because agriculture and all its allied industries are of the greatest importance to this country. (Hear, hear!) It was inevitable that the Speech should make some reference to the question of the high price of the necessaries of life.

Mr. GRAYSON: That is what we want.

Mr. T. L. JONES: In connection with this point—

Mr. MORGAN: Butter.

Mr. MURPHY: He is a new member.

Mr. T. L. JONES: I want no consideration as a new member. This question is referred to in the Governor's Speech in the following terms:—

“The want of effective machinery to protect the community from persons who contrive unduly to inflate prices, and to amass large profits out of necessary commodities, makes it incumbent on my advisers to seek your authority for measures to regulate trade and cope with trusts and combines, and for a further extension of public ownership and the establishment of State enterprises.”

It has undoubtedly been a mandate of the electors that this question should be dealt with. (Hear, hear!) And undoubtedly this Government and this party are not going to shirk the issue.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. T. L. JONES: The question as it appears to the worker—the man in the street—is that he is not getting the benefit of the increased productivity of labour power which has resulted from the application of machinery and inventions, the division of labour, and other forces that have

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been introduced at the present day, as compared with fifty or a hundred years ago. Wages are somewhere near the bare subsistence point. I admit that the standard of living has increased, but relatively the statement is absolutely true. Now we set out with a proposed remedy. We have had some experience of prices boards, and I say here, most plainly and definitely, that I do not pin my faith to prices boards, except as a machine of advantage and benefit in a time of crisis, such as the outbreak of war, when prices have tended to soar higher—far higher than they have any right to be. As an instrument to prevent that, prices boards, effectively and properly constituted and well administered, may be of advantage to the community, but prices boards as a final and conclusive answer to the question which I have put before you, and which this party and the Government put before the country—the question of the increased cost of living—are not going to be finally effective. But the Government do not stop there. They go a step further in their proposed legislation, and speak of a further extension of public ownership and the establishment of State enterprises.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. T. L. JONES: They establish the principle of nationalisation—a principle that has been advocated by this party, and the Labour movement in the country which this party stands for, for something over twenty years. Now, Sir, what is the principle under which nationalisation must be constituted? There must be some guiding principle—something to establish the necessity for the interference of the State and the taking over of certain industries, and, generally speaking, giving effect to the principle of nationalisation. The principle I suggest is: directly competition ceases to operate as a factor in controlling prices. Although I am not prepared at this stage to discuss the point of the existence of trusts or combines, I am prepared to state the proposition definitely and emphatically that competition as a controlling factor has almost ceased to exist in almost every commodity of the daily life of the worker and the man in the street. Orthodox political economy predicated that wealth was the produce of three sections of the community—land, labour, and capital, the land controlled by the landlord, capital by the capitalist, and labour by the worker—and the theory was that competition between these various classes and the competition of one class with another caused prices to fall to a just and proper level; but the fact is that that theory is abrogated. It has gone by the board. It has been ignored for a great many years. Practically we have not recognised it, and the principle should have been effectively relegated to the limbo of the past. It is a fact that competition has practically disappeared as I say.

Mr. MORGAN: Is it ownership or co-operation?

Mr. T. L. JONES: I will have a word to say on co-operation directly. I have said that competition as a controlling factor has reached almost disappearing point. It would be a mistake to recreate competition. This day ought to recognise that competition is unscientific, that in human evolution and social evolution there is a greater factor than competition—there has been all along a greater factor than competition—I speak of the factor of co-operation or mutual

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aid; and I say that the day has arrived when a Government sits in this House which definitely promulgates that principle as the guiding principle of future legislation. Now, Sir, there is the co-operation of our friends, the Farmers' Union party. I just want to show where that differs from the co-operation advocated by this side of the House. The co-operative movement of our friends, with which I have considerable acquaintance, and with many phases of which I have considerable admiration, is a class co-operation just the same as trade unionism is class co-operation. Neither the co-operative movements of the farmers nor the trade unions of the workers take cognisance of the consumer.

[5 p.m.] That is the vital point; that is the vital difference. Legislation directed to the nationalisation of industry and the establishment of State enterprise recognises that vital point.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Is that co-operation?

Mr. T. L. JONES: That is true co-operation. It visualises the community as being all consumers, and in considering the interests of the consumers it considers the interests of the whole of the community. As an application of that principle, we have the action of the Government in regard to the sugar industry as a direct and concrete example. They have acted, and it is proposed to validate their action—

“By an arrangement with the Commonwealth Government, they are taking steps which they believe will secure a better return for the worker, the farmer, and the miller, while at the same time protecting the consumers throughout the Commonwealth.”

It is not my intention to dwell at length upon this question of sugar. The same principle is recognised in the Government's proposal regarding the fish supply, and just here I would ask the House to recognise the failure of private enterprise in respect to the fish industry; and I say here that that is true not only of fish, but true also with respect to a great many other commodities, if the truth were only known and recognised. There are no details of the fish proposal before us, but I take it that there will be some definite and constructive scheme for the distribution of fish, such as they propose in New South Wales. The experiments there have been very successful, and I understand the Government intend to open depôts in the city and suburbs of Sydney, and other cities of that State, for the distribution of fish. The proposal is to take it out of the hands of private enterprise, which has made it a failure, and place it under public control, so that it will have a chance of becoming a success.

Mr. MORGAN: Will it be made self-supporting?

Mr. T. L. JONES: Certainly. It is not a charitable institution. It is simply a measure for the people to do something for themselves. Once again, it is true co-operation.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. T. L. JONES: I wish now to make some slight reference to the electoral laws. The existing electoral laws are unsatisfactory. I hope that the proposed alteration in the franchise will be to adopt the Commonwealth franchise—the basis of Australian citizenship—which goes a step further than any other electoral law we have had in Queensland. We recognise Australian citizenship here—

and that means six months' residence in Australia and one month's residence in the particular electorate for which the individual seeks to become an elector. I hope also that the very valuable reform of joint electoral rolls may be made possible by this electoral amendment.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. T. L. JONES: The next matter upon which I wish to touch briefly is the matter of arbitration, to take the place of the existing Industrial Peace Act. I hope that the new Act will officially recognise the principle of collective bargaining. Preference to unionists is anathema to many members of this House, but it is in active operation successfully in almost every large industry in Queensland. It is a strange thing that that is not generally known or recognised, and it surely is a proof of its goodness that almost every large industry freely adopts it, and in my experience I have found it works well. A person who has to do with the control of an industry employing a large number of men will very soon find the advantage of dealing with that body of men in a collective way, recognising their rights as a collective body, and bargaining with them on a collective basis. If that is so successful in private life and enterprise, I think it is a good principle for the Government to take up and establish in the public service. The development of true unionism increased the status of the worker, and it has given him greater dignity, and I am sure it has undoubtedly led to increased efficiency, and the logical outcome of a belief in trade unionism and its benefits is a belief in collective bargaining, and the recognition of dealing with the union as a body controlling the whole of the men in that union. Before I leave the question of the public service, I wish to advocate the necessity of appeal boards in the Police Force, the Education Department, and other branches of the public service where there are large numbers of employees.

Mr. MURPHY: Such a board is wanted in the police service.

Mr. T. L. JONES: I am advocating that, and for any other group of public servants. It is also wanted for the asylums' employees. It is very seriously wanted there, and I hope the Government will see their way to introduce legislation giving that very important point effect before the session closes. Now, I wish to come to the land question, and there is no doubt at all that it is the most important question that can come before this House.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. T. L. JONES: There is no matter that affects the future prosperity of the State to such a great extent as the settlement of land on a proper basis. When I say "a proper basis," I mean a basis that ensures usage. The sound principle of land settlement and occupation is land usage. Simple land alienation stands for nothing. It is no asset to a State to part with its land to private hands if it is not used, unless the holder becomes a user. Unfortunately, land has been alienated very largely indeed in this country without that question being realised, and the position in regard to cultivation is most unsatisfactory. I do not intend to deal with these points at any length from the statistical standpoint, but I have here some figures extending over a three-year period. I

am quoting from Knibbs, page 306. In 1910-11, the area under cultivation in Queensland was 667,113 acres. Three years later, in 1913-14, it had increased to 747,314. Included in those figures are those representing the sugar lands, no less than 147,743 acres. That is by the way, but the point I wish to emphasise is that the increase was only 80,701, including the increase in the area under sugar-cane.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: All on freehold.

Mr. T. L. JONES: I am drawing the moral. The increase was only 80,701 acres, whilst in New South Wales the increase in the same period was 1,181,575 acres, in Victoria 459,251 acres, in South Australia 423,225 acres, and in Western Australia 682,899 acres. It just shows that Queensland, as far as cultivation is concerned, is the Cinderella of the States.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The climate is different.

Mr. T. L. JONES: I am not prepared to speak in such derogatory terms of the country of Queensland as to say that the climate militates against the progress of cultivation.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: No, but you would not go on the land, all the same. You leave that for somebody else.

Mr. T. L. JONES: I expect I have a bigger farm than the hon. member who interjects. The increase in the area under crop during the past thirteen years has been most marked in the case of New South Wales, Western Australia, and Victoria, the respective increases being 2,122,028 acres, 1,336,585 acres, and 1,277,189 acres. During the same period an increase of 799,879 acres was experienced in South Australia, 290,417 acres in Queensland, and 39,768 acres in Tasmania.

Mr. BARNES: Will you give us the reasons for that?

Mr. T. L. JONES: The figures respecting maize are also rather illuminating. In 1910-11 the area under maize was 180,862 acres; in 1911-12 it was 153,916 acres; in 1912-13 it was 117,993 acres; and in 1913-14 it was 156,775 acres—no increase whatever in the growth of maize. The figures with respect to hay show a similar position. In 1910-11 the area under hay was 98,558 acres; in 1911-12 it was 61,299 acres; in 1912-13 it was 87,643 acres; and in 1913-14 it was 76,469 acres. In each case there is a distinct falling off in the area under cultivation. The figures respecting potatoes and other crops are equally unsatisfactory. Those figures require some explanation.

Mr. MURPHY: How many members here are cultivators of the land?

Mr. T. L. JONES: The position respecting land cultivation all over Australia is unsatisfactory, but the position in Queensland is a long way behind that in the other States, which is bad enough. I am merely stating a case for the consideration of this Government, particularly the Lands Department and the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Cultivation does not pay some of us; it is the middleman who gets the profit.

Mr. T. L. JONES: I cannot conceive why interjections should be so continuous, unless it is that hon. members opposite are afraid of facts. (Hear, hear!) Closer settlement is necessary in this country; land monopoly is rampant throughout Queensland. Any man who has any knowledge of country districts, who has travelled over the good

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lands in Southern Queensland, must know that there is far less land under cultivation than there should be. The figures I have given show that the progress in cultivation is exceedingly slow, and it is reasonable to assert that land is held out of occupation for speculative purposes. This remark applies not only to speculators in land but also to farmers, many of whom possess more land than they are prepared to cultivate; and they are just as bad as the land speculator who does not put a stick or a plough into the land. I look forward to the present Government giving effect to the system of leasehold tenure. I believe that one result of that system will be that land will be held for use and not for profit, because it will not pay a man to hold a lease unless he uses the land. He will have no opportunity of holding it for speculative purposes and fattening upon the unearned increment which accrues from the industry of the rest of the community. This matter is one which is just as much in the interests of the farmers as a class as it is in the interest of the community as a whole. The farmer suffers largely from land monopoly, as by it he is driven from the railway line into the back country, where he loses all the advantages of social life, instead of being settled more closely on the land and getting the benefits of association with his fellow-men. That is the position which exists after years of Liberal legislation, and it is satisfactory to know that the people of Queensland are prepared to give another set of men—another Government—actuated by another set of opinions, an opportunity to give legislative effect to their opinions. In dealing with crops just now, I did not refer to wheat. The cultivation of wheat is a most important matter, particularly in view of the fact that the British Empire is anxious that increased quantities of wheat should be produced. A good deal of propaganda work with regard to increasing the area under wheat has been done among the farmers of Queensland, but the progress of wheat cultivation is exceedingly slow. I find that the return from an acre of wheat in Queensland is more valuable than the return in any other State except Tasmania. According to Knibbs, page 317, an acre of wheat in New South Wales yields £2 2s. 4d., in Victoria £2 7s. 1d., in South Australia £1 7s. 5d., in Western Australia £2 2s. 6d., and in Queensland £3 6s. 8d. Yet, in face of this fact, we lag behind the other States in the cultivation of wheat. The area under wheat in Queensland in 1912-13 was 124,963 acres, and in 1913-14 it was 126,880 acres—an increase of only 1,917 acres. During the same period the increase in New South Wales was 1,193,388 acres, in Victoria 778,319 acres, in South Australia 422,997 acres, and in Western Australia 304,097 acres.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: What is the relative cost of cultivation?

Mr. T. L. JONES: I cannot deal with that point now. I should like to see some definite action taken by the Government to foster the growth of wheat in districts further west than it is now cultivated. I believe it may be possible to bring large areas of that country under wheat cultivation if more economic conditions prevail than at the present time. I quite recognised the importance of the point raised by the hon. member for Lockyer. I admit that the cost of production is an important point, but I would

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remind hon. members that machinery can be economically and successfully applied to this industry.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Where the cultivation is in large areas.

Mr. T. L. JONES: Yes, and I hope to see large areas held under a system of leasehold tenure. I hope also to see introduced a system of prepared farms, such as we heard about to some extent from the late Minister for Lands—a system of prepared farms under which the land will be almost ready for the application of the plough and machinery. These farms may be worked in groups with tractors and large machinery, controlled either by co-operative bodies of farmers or by the Government. Such a system is worth a trial, and I hope that the Secretary for Lands and the Secretary for Agriculture will give some attention to the question.

Mr. MORGAN: People tell you that the system of working by machinery has been a failure wherever it has been tried.

Mr. T. L. JONES: I have often heard of the failure of machinery in agriculture, but it would not have done for the pioneers of the great industries to have taken up that position regarding machinery. One failure should not damp further experiment. I think it is quite possible to do something of an instructional nature in the direction I have indicated. I am glad to see that the Government intend to deal with the Agricultural Bank, and that the Act is to be liberalised. There is considerable room for improvement in the administration of the bank. I would like to see it become a true farmers' bank and become of much greater material assistance to the farmers than it is at present. I am not going to minimise the good work that has been done by past Governments through the institution, but from what I have heard, it is too slow in its operations, and its terms are not sufficiently generous.

Mr. TOLMIE: Its terms are more generous than in any other State in Australia.

Mr. T. L. JONES: Well, when you compare the results in Queensland with those in Western Australia you find that the farmers of Western Australia have availed themselves of the assistance of the Agricultural Bank to the extent of thousands of pounds more than they have done in Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Millions more.

Mr. T. L. JONES: The proof of a thing is its success or its failure; and, if it is more successful in Western Australia, we may reasonably assume that there is something wrong with the administration of the system in Queensland.

Mr. MORGAN: The administration here is rotten.

Mr. T. L. JONES: The points I have raised in connection with agriculture and land call for vigorous action on the part of the Lands Department and the Department of Agriculture, and I am not a bit sorry to see in this House a recognised farmers' union party.

Mr. COLLINS: They are on this side, so far as the sugar industry is concerned. (Laughter.)

Mr. T. L. JONES: I do not wish to say for a moment that there are no members on this side who are pledged to safeguard the interests of the farmers.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: You have got no farmers on that side, anyhow.

Mr. T. L. JONES: I do not know that there is anything very wonderful in prating all the time about being a farmer. After all, what we do is what counts, whatever avocation you may follow—whether you are a bricklayer or a banker. I look forward to that party giving valuable assistance to this Government, and I think that in the future, when it has lost its fear of the rural workers' log, which is the present "bee in its bonnet," it will recognise that the work it is doing is practically identical with the work that is being done by the party on this side of the House. (Hear, hear!) I think that may reasonably be looked for in the course of time. At any rate, the farmer is going to benefit more than any other man in the community by the social legislation which is to be brought in by this Government. The improvement in the social conditions of life, the increase in wages, and the general betterment of the whole of the people, is going to give the people greater purchasing power, and that class in the community that is chiefly engaged in the production of food-stuffs is going to benefit more quickly than any other class, and the farmer comes in that category. In that respect the interests of the farmer are absolutely identical with the interests of this party in its social legislation. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. BEBBINGTON: When you take his stuff at your own price.

Mr. T. L. JONES: I notice that the Workers' Compensation Act is to be consolidated and amended. It has been found very necessary to amend that Act, as it contains a serious blot, in that there is no schedule prescribing specific compensation for certain specific injuries, and much injustice has been done. Many workers who have been injured have been unable to obtain a fair amount of compensation simply because of the way in which the Act was framed. I am sure that there is a great class in the community that is looking forward most anxiously to the introduction of that legislation, which will, I am confident, do a great deal of good. There is also the question of the establishment of a public curator, and the question of legal aid. In fact, the whole legal position wants overhauling. I think it is quite true that law may be purchased, but it is very difficult to secure justice. That is a dictum which almost goes without contradiction. I think the question of local government is of the greatest importance to the community as a whole, and especially to the dwellers in cities. Referring back to the question of the increased cost of living, it is impossible to transfer the functions of government to the municipalities under our present system of local government. It is proposed to create a Greater Brisbane, and extend the system to other cities in the State, giving the local authorities power to control a great many public utilities, such as gas, water, trams, markets, and similar subjects. Under a Greater Brisbane scheme we can have a system of decentralisation and local control. The position with respect to electric power and electric lighting around Brisbane is not satisfactory. I observe

that the South Brisbane City Council was dealing only yesterday with an electric lighting proposal, and it is a fact that certain suburbs close to Brisbane—suburbs such as Yeronga and Chelmer, in the Oxley electorate—are quite unable to obtain any facilities for lighting, either by gas or electricity. A Greater Brisbane scheme would be able to devote its attention to such matters, and would be able to obtain the best professional skill and advice in dealing with all public utilities, and would have a chance of carrying them out successfully for the good of the whole of the people. Passing the question of the extension of the system of medical and dental inspection in the schools—of which I highly approve—I come to the question of the nationalisation of hospitals, which I am sorry does not find a place in the Governor's Speech, or in the proposals of the Government for this session; but I hope to see the Home Secretary in a position to give effect to his expressed belief in this direction, and that the country may have the benefit of a nationalised medical service and hospitals before many years pass over. There is also the question of factories and shops. I wish to refer particularly to the conditions and wages of girls in the cities. It is a crying shame that conditions should be such as they are, and I hope that this factories

[5.30 p.m.] and shops' legislation will be introduced at an early date, as the earlier these evils are dealt with the better will it be for the workers involved, and the good fame of the community as a whole. Reviewing the Government programme as a whole, I think I am safe in saying that it is, perhaps, the most democratic, advanced, and practical that has ever been put before this House, and, perhaps, before any Legislative Assembly in the world.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. T. L. JONES: It aims at improvement in the social conditions of the great masses of the people. The Government are faced with strenuous times. There is no question that the position is a difficult one, and the work that they have undertaken is an arduous task. It calls for the co-operation of every member, not only of this party, but of this House, and of every citizen in the community. The Government have a hard task to perform to so administer the finances that we shall keep on the right side of the balance, and at the same time carry on our public works, and meet all the necessary expenditures which are involved in this programme. Any progressive programme involves finance and heavy expenditures. That is the position to-day in respect to this Government. I hope that in the arduous task which the Government have set themselves they will have the cordial co-operation of the whole community. I am confident of their ability to administer the affairs of this country. I believe that the legislation now set forth will lead to the development of this country, so that economic conditions will be good, so that we shall not have on one hand a great mass of poor people, of workers under poor conditions, but that we shall so develop the community that there will be a more equal and equitable distribution of wealth, giving good conditions to the great mass of the people and equal opportunities to all. I beg to move the motion which I read at the opening of my address.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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Mr. SMITH (*Mackay*), who was received with Government cheers, said: It gives me very great pleasure to second the motion so ably moved by my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Oxley. Before reviewing the splendid programme of progressive legislation placed before the House by the Government, it might be well to review briefly what led up to the triumphant return of the Labour party at the recent election. Various causes have been attributed as the reason for our success, but I would place as the primary reason the fact that we are now reaping the harvest sown by Labour men and women in the past, some of whom are still in this House, many are now dead, and many others there are whose names we do not know; men and women who gave of their best, gladly conscious of the fact that future generations would reap the benefit of their sacrifices. Another reason is the fact that during the present world's crisis the beliefs and ideas of "all sorts and conditions of men" are going into the melting-pot, and there is, I think, a quickening of the social conscience, and men are now seeking the common good—in a word, are beginning to think collectively. They recognise that the old system of "everyone for themselves and the devil take the hindmost" is not a good one, and that no society is stable in which idleness sits at the banquet and industry is forced to gather the crumbs of despair. We of the Labour party recognise that that country is greatest which contains the greatest number of happy men and women, and the programme outlined in the Governor's Speech contains many of the necessary steps towards that objective. The failure of the Denham Government to recognise the spirit of the times is another cause of their failure at the polls, and even their loading of the dice by means of the present Electoral Act recoiled on their own heads. I note with pleasure that an Elections Bill is well to the front in the Labour programme, a Bill which will ensure to all adults in Queensland the right to record their votes without let or hindrance throughout the length and breadth of our great State. To the people we represent the franchise is a most important weapon. By means of its intelligent use they can create whatever economic and social conditions they so desire. In the old days of Conservative rule the workers had not the vote; it was attached to property. So long as a man owned land and remained outside the asylum or prison, he could have a number of votes, but the man who had only his labour of brain and hand to sell, had no vote, no matter what his intelligence may have been. With the introduction of Labour into politics adult suffrage was secured, in the teeth of relentless opposition on the part of our opponents, and to-day we find their lineal descendants, no longer game to oppose adult suffrage openly, but with cunningly worded clauses in their Act making it difficult for nomadic workers to get on the roll, and still more difficult to remain on. We can look for a change in that system, and a new Act shall be placed on the statute-book ensuring to every bonâ-fide adult the elementary rights of citizenship. I shall now have the pleasure to deal with the action taken by the Government with regard to what I consider is the most important agricultural industry in Queensland—I refer to the sugar industry. (Hear, hear!) This industry has been the

shuttlecock of past Liberal Ministries, which from time to time passed legislation dealing with it. Their success, however, can be judged by the fact that up to the action taken by the present Cabinet, the position of the growers was rapidly becoming untenable. The past Administration made various promises to the growers, but never redeemed them, and it was left to a Labour Government to accomplish what their predecessors in office never attempted to do.

Mr. COLLINS: Hear, hear! They only talked about it.

Mr. SMITH: The action taken by the Ryan Ministry, acting in unison with the Federal Government, in securing all the available raw sugar, is an act of statesmanship which has evoked nothing but praise from the canegrowers throughout Queensland, and which ensures a fair deal to all interests concerned, protecting, as it does, both producer and consumer. Contrast this capable handling of a difficult question with the action taken and proposed by the late, but not lamented, Denham Government. Bounty and excise were abolished by agreement between the Federal and Queensland Governments on the latter agreeing to do three things: First, they were to ensure that the industry was carried on by white labour; second, that the grower was to be paid a sum equal to the old bounty plus the difference between bounty and excise, and that the workers were to be paid 8s. per day pending an award that might be made by an Industrial Court. Unfortunately, owing to the shuffling of the late Government, and the return of a fusion party under Mr. Cook to the Commonwealth, the former were enabled to defeat the spirit of the compact made with Mr. Fisher. As a result, we find that 1,727 exemptions were granted under the Act to coloured aliens, many of whom never worked in the industry before; and thereby endangering the future of the industry. During the recent campaign, the hon. member for Burrum, speaking no doubt as the mouthpiece of the Liberal party, stated that if returned to power the Government intended holding all the raw sugar in Queensland until such times as the Southern prices boards agreed to pay the price they demanded. Such a policy is too absurd for words, and fortunately the growers in all the sugar districts turned down the followers of the gallant colonel. Let us consider what would have happened had such a policy been put into operation. The sugar industry is only maintained by the tariff of £6 a ton, and the people of Australia under normal conditions pay that price to enable the industry to be carried on by white labour. The result would have been an immediate clamour for the abolition of the tariff, and if that was done it would be next to impossible to get it back. For a doubtful immediate advantage, therefore, they are prepared to sacrifice the whole of the future of the industry. They made a demand that the price of sugar be raised to a parity with the world's markets, where the prices are high owing to the abnormal situation created by the war. They ask that the prices be fixed by that standard alone; if that were done when conditions become normal again, they would have to accept prices too low to carry on the industry here. I am sure that no intelligent grower in Queensland will agree to that. Conscious of this fact, the Ryan Ministry acted in the best possible and most statesmanlike way in acquiring this year's crop

[*Mr. Smith.*

at an average price of £18 per ton. By doing that it provides for a fair return for all the interests concerned. Before leaving the sugar industry, I must refer to the proposal in the Governor's Speech for the establishment of a board to regulate prices on an equitable basis. This House has some experience of this proposal, in fact it was proposed by the present Chief Secretary when the Sugar Growers Bill was before the House, and on a subsequent occasion a Bill was presented to the House with that original purpose in view. This Bill was one of the slaughtered innocents of the Liberal party, and, despite the support of the Labour party, its sponsors only carried it to its second reading. The Labour party supported the Bill on that occasion, not because it was going to bring a new heaven and a new earth so far as the sugar industry is concerned, but because it laid down a vital principle in the Labour platform—that the producer should have a say in fixing the price of the particular commodity he produces. At the present time the canegrower has no say whatever in fixing the price of his product. It is of a heavy and perishable nature, and he is compelled, whether he likes it or not, to accept the price dictated by the owners of the nearest mill within a given area of his farm. In my district, for example, which I might refer to as the most important sugar district in Queensland, a few weeks ago the farmers' association asked the millers to send representatives to discuss the price of cane for the forthcoming year; and only two of the mills in that particular district had the courtesy to send representatives. As a result, that conference was abortive. Therefore, it is necessary, in the interests of the growers and in the interests of this particular industry, that cane price boards be established, to ensure that the grower shall receive the full benefit of the sugar contents of his cane, and reap the benefit of the enhanced price which the Labour Ministry has seen fit to give for raw sugar.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. SMITH: Another matter of much interest is the proposal to amend the land laws in the direction of doing away with large freehold estates, and of making it easier for the man of limited capital to make a much better living than he does at present. It is, in my opinion, a matter of extreme importance, for only by a just land system can we hope to develop our State along sound lines, and put a stop to the growth of the economic evils which are the primary cause of poverty. There are three values in land—the economic value, the monopoly value, and the speculative value. By means of the two latter men who produce no wealth are able to sit back and levy a tax on the whole community. The factor of monopoly and speculative value in land is well realised by all when we consider that that value is a community created value; and when we consider this monopoly and speculative value means a tax levied on every article in common use, for the benefit of a privileged few who happen to own areas of land where it is necessary for our industry to develop, it is well to provide against the exploitation of the people in that particular line. It is also on account of the large incomes reaped from city blocks and town areas that the opponents of the leasehold system seek to persuade the farmer that his interests are opposed to the leasehold system, and that it is against his interests that land tax proposals are put forward from time to

time by democratic Governments, while nothing could be further from the truth. The Labour party recognise that the system of land tenure advocated by us is a much better one than the present one, and is peculiarly adapted to improve the farmer's position. I will compare the two systems. Let us assume that a man wishes to start canegrowing. We will assume that he purchases a farm with the desire to make it freehold. He pays a deposit on the purchase price. He has to pay interest and redemption on the remainder of the value of that land. His small capital is therefore sunk at the beginning of his operations as a farmer. In order to procure implements and the necessary stores to sustain life for himself and his family he has to get long credit from the stores, and on that he has to pay further interest. Immediately the crop is above the ground he probably requires a lien from the mill or from some financial institution on his crop, on which he pays a further interest. Add these three interests together and you will find that the man is carrying a much larger burden than he ought to be called upon to bear, and one which probably takes a lifetime to get rid of, even if he does so at all. On the other hand, take the proposals put forward by the Labour party to enable men to take up land on advantageous terms. As the hon. member for Oxley has stated, a sound land policy is that the land should be used, and under our system, so long as the settler uses that land, he will have security of tenure. Any small capital he may have at the commencement of his operations as a farmer would be at his disposal at the time when the farmer and settler most requires help. The next matter I propose to deal with is the reform of the Local Authorities Act. This is a matter I am greatly interested in, and have been for some considerable time. The Local Authorities Act of Queensland is one which is peculiarly beloved of the conservative type of mind.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. SMITH: We have the property franchise now. We have here men who are able to exercise the plural votes. No matter how intelligent a man may be he is not entitled to a vote unless he owns or rents certain property. That is altogether opposed to the way we claim the right to vote under any administrative act. The right to vote should be the common basis of manhood. (Hear, hear!) If it is a good thing for adult suffrage to return members of Parliament, then it should also be a good thing with regard to electing members of local governing bodies. (Hear, hear!) In addition to that fact, the choice of the electors would become wider than it is at the present time. Under the property vote we have now, our choice is limited, and we are compelled to accept candidates for local government who represent property interests. But with an extension of the franchise such as we intend to bring about we will be able to have a much larger choice, and therefore be able to find more men with public spirit and some conception of the basic principles of citizenship than we have done hitherto. (Hear, hear!) Another point which I notice with pleasure is the proposed amendment of the Industrial Peace Act. This Act, in the first place, I believe, was passed by the Liberal Government in somewhat of a panic. They sought, by means of that Act, to shackle and put in chains the type of man whom they were pleased to term "agitator." After a time

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they found that the Act was not operating altogether along the lines which they anticipated, because coercive action of any particular kind, or at any particular time, has never been of any avail, and men have gone on from victory unto victory in the teeth of opposition, as the pages of history will reveal. We are glad of the fact that the unionist movement is a movement which has come to stay. At its inception it recognised the identity of interests of workers, and was brought into being to improve their conditions. They have been particularly successful in so doing, and the progress made in any country can easily be measured up if you realise the amount of action the workers have taken for themselves in industrial and political matters. Another thing I would like to refer to with regard to that Act is the administration of it. It was not administered in a proper spirit at all. For example, we find that unions were forced to institute prosecutions on their own behalf under that Act. I wish to draw the attention of the House to the violation of the Macnaughton award. In the sugar districts, various mills commenced to pay lower wages than the Industrial Court set out, and on inquiries being made of the department which was supposed to administer this Act, it was pointed out that they did not intend to institute proceedings, and as a result the unionists were forced to go to the trouble and expense of instituting proceedings against those mills, and, as a result, a test case was made, and they were fined before the court. We consider that that is not a good thing. The man or company who violates an industrial award is committing a breach of the law just as much as a man infringing the law in any other respect, and the whole force of the administrative power ought to be behind these awards, and the department ought to administer the law in such a way as to secure that these awards, when once given, shall be carried out, and any attempt to violate the awards should be punished with the utmost rigour of the law. The next matter I propose to deal with is in regard to trusts and monopolies. I note with pleasure that it is proposed by the Government to take action in that respect. Now, I consider that this is one of the most pressing problems before the people at the present time, because bound up in that problem are many of the causes of poverty and unrest from which the world is suffering at the present time. It might be well to review, somewhat briefly, the industrial development which has taken place up to the present time. At one time the worker, who was also a craftsman, and had need of very few tools, had always the chance of setting up for himself, but the improved methods of production discounted his manual skill, and the prohibitive cost of tools and material compelled him, no matter how intelligent, to hire himself with others similarly situated, to perform tasks which are arduous, monotonous, and dangerous, and occasionally his soul revolts and he gives lurid expression to his dissatisfaction. Then a change in the state of affairs made it no longer possible for the private capitalist to start out upon his own behalf. Most up-to-date labour-saving machinery was required, and as a result we find the evolution of the joint stock company. These joint stock companies, after operating for a little while, began to recognise that competition between them was wasteful. They recognised that by entering into "honourable understandings" one with another, they

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were able to control production, and by controlling production could dictate whatever price to the people they so desired, and from that stage in the course of evolution we come to trusts and combines, which, in many instances, are a distinct success from their point of view. The position is this: these trusts and combines can produce more effectively and with more economy than private firms, but the power which they wield is not one which is good for the community as a whole. It means that the means of life are thereby secured in the hands of a few who can dictate to the many the terms on which they shall live. It is the recognition of those and similar facts which has prompted this Government's policy at the present time. It is a significant fact that at the time of any great crisis the people turn to the Labour party to get them out of the trouble. We find that at the outbreak of this horrible and calamitous war that a general election took place in the Federal arena, and the people throughout the length and breadth of Australia returned the Labour party to power. The same thing also holds good with regard to Queensland.

Mr. KIRWAN: And South Australia.

Mr. SMITH: The same thing, as I am reminded, took place in South Australia, and at a later date in Queensland. And in the old country also we find ideas and principles which have been advocated by the Labour party for years, and scouted by their opponents as impossible, being put into operation. The point I wish to make is this: That if it be a good thing to do these things in times of crises, and in times of great [7 p.m.] national sorrow, how much better would it be to do them in times of peace? It is owing to the recognition of these things that the Ryan Ministry have placed their present policy before you. I feel confident that that policy will be carried into effect, and I also feel confident that the people will not have the slightest cause to regret the trust they reposed in this party, and at the end of three years the Labour party will be recognised as one loyal to its obligations and faithful to its promises. I have much pleasure in seconding the motion proposed by the hon. member for Oxley. (Government cheers.)

Question put.

Mr. MACARTNEY: I beg to move that the debate be now adjourned.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER: I beg to move that the resumption of the debate stand an Order of the Day for Thursday next. I do this to suit the convenience of the leader of the Opposition.

Question put and passed.

The SPEAKER: I shall resume the chair at a quarter to 8 o'clock.

At the hour named, the Speaker resumed the chair.

APPROPRIATION BILL No. 1.

RETURNED FROM COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Council, returning this Bill without amendment.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER: I beg to move that this House, at its rising, do adjourn until Thursday next at 3 o'clock p.m.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at twelve minutes to 3 o'clock p.m.