

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**TUESDAY, 20 JULY 1915**

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

TUESDAY, 20 JULY, 1915.

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

### AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a report, dated 11th January, 1915, from the Auditor-General on Savings Bank securities, as at 31st December, 1914.

Ordered to be printed.

### PANEL OF TEMPORARY CHAIRMEN.

The SPEAKER: Pursuant to the requirements of Standing Order No. 11, I hereby nominate the following to form the panel of Temporary Chairmen during the present session:—

Thomas Foley, member for the electoral district of Mundingburra; James Larcombe, member for the electoral district of Keppel; Alfred James Jones, member for the electoral district of Maryborough; Thomas Robert Roberts, member for the electoral district of East Toowoomba; Harry Frederick Walker, member for the electoral district of Cooroora.

### PAPERS.

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

Annual report of the Acting Under Secretary for Mines for the year 1914.

Blue Book for 1914.

### QUESTIONS.

#### PURCHASE OF MALENY BUTTER.

Mr. STEVENS (*Rosewood*) asked the Premier—

"1. Is it a fact that the Government purchased 225 boxes of Maleny butter from the Farmers' Co-operative Distributing Company at 196s. per cwt. net, ex store?

"2. Has the butter been sold by the Government?

"3. If so, to whom, and what was the net price realised?"

The PREMIER (Hon. T. J. Ryan, *Barcoo*) replied—

"1. Yes.

"2. Yes.

"3. Two hundred boxes have been sold to McKeever and Company, Melbourne. 220s. per cwt. f.o.b. Brisbane. The remainder has been utilised by Government departments."

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*), for Mr. Morgan, asked the Premier—

"1. Is he aware that had the Government not purchased the surplus butter from the Maleny factory at 196s. per cwt. the company could have sold for

consumption in Victoria the butter so purchased at 220s. per cwt., ex store, Brisbane?

"2. Is it the intention of the Government to sell the butter so purchased for consumption in other States?

"3. If so, will the Government return all profits to the companies from which the butter was compulsorily purchased?"

The PREMIER replied—

"1. The company advised that they had an offer for the butter, 218s. per cwt., ex store.

"2. See answer to third question asked by the hon. member for Rosewood.

"3. The matter will be considered at some future time."

### WATER FINDING IN SETTLED AREAS.

Mr. CORSER asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

"Will he make provision on the Estimates for water finding in settled areas where the Public Estate Improvement Branch claims to have no funds to assist the selectors, though droughty conditions are hampering operations on their farms?"

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. J. M. Hunter, *Maranoa*) replied—

"The hon. member has not made his question very clear, but the Estimates will shortly be laid upon the table of the House, and information regarding the matter will then be available."

### COST OF SMELTING WORKS.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mivan*) asked the Premier, for the Secretary for Mines—

"1. What would be the cost of erecting a smelting works of the smallest size capable of treating economically, on a commercial basis, the ores of copper and the minerals generally found associated with them, and also lead and silver ores, and the minerals generally associated with them?

"2. The tonnage of these ores per annum necessary to keep such a works supplied?"

The PREMIER replied—

"1 and 2. The phrasing of this question leaves it uncertain what the hon. member really wishes to know."

### PAYMENTS FOR RAW SUGAR.

Mr. SWAYNE asked the Premier—

"1. In view of the fact that some mills are already crushing and many others are just on the point of doing so, will he inform this House as to whether the £18 per ton for raw sugar will be paid to the mills in a lump sum or under a system of deferred payments?

"2. Will the £18, or any part of it, be paid f.o.b. at port of shipment?

"3. Who is supplying the sacks for the raw sugar to the mills, and who is responsible for their cost?"

The PREMIER replied—

"1, 2, and 3. As certain details in connection with the transaction are still the

subject of negotiations, I am unable at present to supply the information desired. I might mention that sacks are now being supplied by refiners, and that a Commonwealth representative is expected to arrive in Brisbane shortly, when it is hoped all details will be satisfactorily arranged."

#### COAL PROSPECTING AREAS.

Mr. A. J. JONES (*Haryborough*) asked the Premier, for the Secretary for Mines—

"1. The number of coal prospecting areas held in the Torbanlea, Torquay, Pialba, and Urangan districts?

"2. The approximate area of each?

"3. The owners thereof?

"4. The amount of subsidy and grant applied for by each owner?

"5. The respective amounts granted?

"6. What arrangements, if any, have been made for repayment?

The PREMIER replied—

"I would ask the hon. member to be good enough to give notice to move for a return in terms of the question, as it is rather a long answer."

Mr. A. J. JONES: I give notice accordingly.

#### HIGH COST OF LIVING.

Mr. SWAYNE, for Mr. Bridges, asked the Premier—

"In respect of what commodities are lower prices ruling, as stated in his reply to Mr. Petrie's question of to-day, and in respect of what commodities does he expect lower prices to shortly obtain?"

The PREMIER replied—

"The list is being compiled, and when completed will be duly tabled."

#### ELECTION STATISTICS.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. D. Bowman, *Fortitude Valley*) laid on the table Return to an Order, relating to election statistics, made by the House on the 15th July, on the motion of Mr. T. L. Jones.

Ordered to be printed.

#### PRINTING COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the PREMIER, it was formally resolved—

"1. That, in compliance with Standing Order No. 298, a Select Committee be appointed to assist Mr. Speaker in all matters which relate to the printing to be executed by order of the House; and for the purpose of selecting, and arranging for printing, returns and papers presented in pursuance of motions made by members.

"2. That such committee consist of the following members:—Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, Mr. Barber, Mr. Bertram, Mr. Winstanley, Mr. Roberts, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Grayson, and the mover."

#### JOINT COMMITTEES.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Council, intimating that—

"The President, Mr. Dunn, and Mr. Hall be appointed members of the

joint committee for the management of the Parliamentary Library; that the President, Mr. McDonnell, and Mr. Fahey be appointed members of the joint committee for the management of the Parliamentary Refreshment-rooms; and that the President, Mr. Murphy, and Mr. Nielson be appointed members of the joint committee for the management and superintendence of the Parliamentary Buildings; and requesting that the Assembly nominate a like number of members, with a view to give effect to the 8th Joint Standing Order."

On the motion of the PREMIER, it was formally resolved—

"That a message be returned to the Legislative Council, intimating that the Legislative Assembly had appointed Mr. Speaker, Mr. Gunn, and Mr. T. L. Jones as members of the Joint Library Committee; Mr. Speaker, Mr. Booker, and Mr. May as members of the joint committee for the management of the Refreshment-rooms; and Mr. Speaker, Mr. Petrie, and Mr. Payne as members of the joint committee for the management and superintendence of the Parliamentary Buildings."

#### STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE.

The PREMIER moved—

"That the Standing Orders Committee for the present session consist of the following members:—Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, Mr. Macartney, Mr. Swayne, Mr. Gilday, Mr. A. J. Jones, Mr. Tolmie, Mr. Larcombe, and the mover, with leave to sit during any adjournment of the House, and authority to confer upon subjects of mutual concernment with any committee appointed for similar purposes by the Legislative Council."

Mr. MURPHY (*Burke*): I called "Not formal" to this motion because I thought an opportunity should be given, before it is passed, for the House to consider the position which arises during the election of Speaker. Now, Sir, when the recent nominations for Speaker took place, the Clerk called upon Lieut.-Colonel Rankin, the member for Burrum, to speak, or, when the Colonel rose, notified that he was in possession of the floor. Now, while the member for Burrum was addressing the Clerk, you were escorted to the Speaker's chair, the Premier having stated that the majority ruled. I think that is a position which the Standing Orders Committee ought to take into consideration, with a view to altering the Standing Order in order to prevent any member who rises on an occasion such as that from being sat upon by a majority. The Clerk has no power—he merely calls upon, or notifies, the speaker who is in possession of the floor, and yet Lieut.-Colonel Rankin has been placed in the position of being paraded through the Press as a member who created a scene on that occasion. (Government interjections.) He did not create a scene. If anybody was responsible for the scene which was created, it was the Clerk, who called upon him.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: No. Distinctly no.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The Clerk did not call on him.

Mr. MURPHY: The Clerk pointed his finger at him, which is equivalent to calling on him, just as he called upon any other member on that occasion.

Mr. FOLEY: You did not see the Clerk do so.

Mr. MURPHY: The hon. member must not think that we are all as blind as he is. Lieut.-Colonel Rankin was in possession of the floor, and was called upon by the Clerk to address the House.

Mr. GILDAY: That is as far as your opinion goes.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It is incorrect.

Mr. MURPHY: It does not matter whether it is incorrect or it is not. This is the time for the Committee to have their attention drawn to the matter, in order that they may take steps so that a scene like that should not take place.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: If there was no offender, there would be no scene.

Mr. MURPHY: The hon. gentleman has been mixed up in many a scene; so have I, and so I will be again probably. The position I take up is that the Standing Orders Committee which is to be appointed should be given an instruction that they should so alter the Standing Orders that the Clerk will thoroughly understand his position, and that members also will understand their position, and that any member, whether he belongs to the Opposition or the Government, shall be privileged to express his opinion upon the occasion of the election of the Speaker. It should not be left in the hands of the Premier—no matter whether he be a Liberal Premier or a Labour Premier—to say that the majority shall do exactly as they like in connection with the election of the Speaker.

Question put and passed.

## ADDRESS IN REPLY.

### RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Mr. ARMFIELD (*Musgrave*), who, on rising, was received with "Hear, hears," said: In common with other members who have spoken, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your elevation to the high office you now occupy. From what I know of you, I feel certain that you will carry out the duties of your position with credit to yourself and to the House. I am pleased to note the legislation which is foreshadowed in the Governor's Speech, because if that legislation is carried into effect I am certain it will be a benefit to Queensland at large. First of all, I wish to say a few words with reference to the proposed amendment of the Electoral Act. The Act which was passed last session is the worst Act of that kind that we have had placed on our statute-books. It was a means, to my knowledge, of disfranchising thousands of electors in Queensland, more especially that class known as nomads—men who have had as much to do with the making of this country as any other class in the community.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. ARMFIELD: I do not know what many of our industries would do if it were not for the nomad class of workers. The pastoral industry and the sugar industry would fare very badly if they had to depend

upon the labour obtained locally. During the last election large numbers of these men were disfranchised by reason of the provisions contained in the Electoral Act. I trust that the Bill which is to be brought forward by the present Government will do justice to all men and women who are eligible to vote. (Hear, hear!) In my opinion, no person should have his name struck off the roll until such time as he has had a chance to get his name on another roll. The Electoral Act had, in my opinion, a great deal to do with the defeat of the late Government, many Liberals being so disgusted with the unfairness of its provisions that they voted against the Liberal party. I am thoroughly in accord with the principle of compulsory voting. The late Government thought that compulsory voting would deal a blow at the Labour party, but the elections proved that it did the Labour party a great deal of good, as it resulted in the rounding up of those Labour supporters who in the past had been too indolent to vote. Therefore, I hope that the compulsory provision will be retained in the new Bill which is to be introduced. The Bill which it is intended to bring forward in order to provide for the control of the supply of fish is a very necessary measure at the present time. Although the waters surrounding our coast teem with fish, yet the people have to pay a fabulous price for that article of food. I trust the Government will adopt something on the same lines as have been followed in New South Wales, and not allow the fish, when it is caught, to go into private hands, but establish depôts in Brisbane and its suburbs where people will be able to purchase fish at first cost. (Hear, hear!) Now I come to a matter which perhaps interests my constituency more than any other question, and that is the sugar question. I compliment the Government upon the stand they have taken with reference to this matter. I can assure them and the members of the House that the different persons to whom I have spoken in my constituency in regard to this matter thoroughly approve of the action of the Government.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. ARMFIELD: The Government will have to be careful in dealing with the sugar question. While they give the miller a fair price for the raw sugar, they should pass such legislation as will give the farmer a fair share of the profits derived from the sugar produced. (Hear, hear!) In the past the farmer has not received a fair share of the profits. (Hear, hear!) The whole of the sugar industry, as hon. members know, has been dominated by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, and until such time as the Government pass legislation which will check that company the farmers will not get a fair share of the profits arising from the growing and manufacture of sugar. I do not know what is the nature of the measure which the Government are going to introduce, but I suppose it will take the shape of a measure providing for cane price boards. (Hear, hear!) Then, even with the cane price boards we shall have to be careful that they are so constructed that only those who are interested on the growing side shall be represented on the board on that side. There are numbers of men who are engaged in the sugar industry as millers who are also growers. To my mind, those who are in the milling industry should not have a voice on the

*Mr. Arnfield.]*

side on which the grower sits. At the present time, not only is there a monopoly in the refining, but there is also coming to be a monopoly in many cases in the milling of raw sugar. Some few years ago in the Woongarra portion of my electorate there was a fair number of mills, which caused competition for the cane, but the Millaquin Company have absorbed the last mill in that portion of the electorate, thereby to that extent forcing the farmer to sell his cane at one particular mill. In a season like this there is no doubt that that mill will be able to deal with the whole of the cane from the Woongarra portion, but should at any time a good season like we have had two or three years ago come round, I feel certain that with the present equipment the Millaquin Mill will not be able to deal with the farmers' cane, for the reason that the season will be so long and the crushing will extend to the early portion of the following year, and that the position will be that the farmer will not be able to harvest his cane crop in the succeeding year. Therefore, I think the time has come when the Government should take control of the sugar industries. They should control the whole of the industry for the benefit of the grower and the worker, and also for the benefit of the consumer. (Hear, hear!) In the past the consumer has been paying more than he should do for his sugar, and the farmer and the worker have been getting too little for their labour. Already, although it is known that certain legislation is likely to be passed, certain millers are offering prices to get the cane this coming season, which, to my mind, are not at all adequate considering what the Government is paying for the raw sugar. At Bingera, the mill owned by Messrs. Gibson and Howes, they last year paid £1 1s. 7d. with 10 per cent. p.o.c.s. This year they are offering 2s. 6d. per ton extra, but they are raising the percentage to 11 per cent. p.o.c.s., and are refusing to take cane at 8 per cent. p.o.c.s. That simply means that the price paid at that mill this year will be £1 4s. 1d. They are receiving, as I said before, £18 per ton for their raw sugar, and, to my mind, they are not paying the farmer sufficient considering the price obtained for the raw sugar. (Hear, hear!) That is a matter which I hope will be dealt with by legislation. That legislation should be retrospective, and no contracts at the present time should be valid when the legislation is passed, for, if they are, considering that it must be now two or three weeks before the legislation will be passed, it simply means that the miller to-day will be gaining an advantage which he has no right to gain. The sugar industry right through, to my mind, should receive thorough investigation at the hands of the Government. (Hear, hear!) At the present time there is an experimental farm in Woongarra which has been in existence for something like two years, and the superintendent, Mr. Easterby, has not the confidence of the farmers in that district. There is more interest taken in experiments by the farmers themselves than in any of the experiments undertaken by the superintendent of the farm. I have had instances given to me where this gentleman has lectured on the sugar question, and when questions have been asked of him by the various farmers as to what they should do with regard to certain soils, or what variety of cane they should plant in certain positions, his answer has invariably been that they should try certain sorts and see which will do the best.

[Mr. Armfield.]

If we have a man in this position, the farmers have a right to get direct information; they should not be required to experiment but should have the information given to them so that they could go on right away. (Hear, hear!) I hope the Government will make inquiries into this matter, and see that the gentleman who has charge of the experimental farm is qualified for the position. I know that the farmers in my electorate are not satisfied with, and have no confidence in, the superintendent, and I think myself that it would be as well if something were done so as to find out which is right—the farmers or the gentleman who holds the position. I am pleased to see that the Government intend to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the public service. I do not know whether they intend to deal with the Police Force, but, in my opinion, it should be dealt with. (Hear, hear!) I have had conversations with men in the force, and they have informed me that they work for seven days in the week without any Sunday off, and have no holidays. They are not in the same position as the men in the railways, whose holidays are allowed to accumulate, and can be taken advantage of at certain periods of the year. These men should not be asked to work seven days a week. We know they receive pay for the seven days, but that is not the question. A man has no right to be called upon to be away from his home for seven days in the week. The police want their recreation as well as other men. I trust that when the commission is appointed it will inquire into the condition of the Police Force as well as other matters. There is another question in connection with the Police Force that I wish to refer to. If a man in any district should be treated harshly by his superior officer, the man has no redress unless he goes to that particular superior in that district; but I think that a man should have the right to be able to approach the head of the Police Force, and not have to go to the person who he considers is not treating him justly. I know of a case which occurred some little time ago in Bundaberg, in connection with which, had it not been for myself and a member of this House, a man would not have had the satisfaction of getting justice. I allude to a case where a gentleman was robbed in broad daylight by two men, and when word came to the police station four members of the Police Force set out. There was a senior sergeant, two other officers, and an ordinary policeman. Strange to say, when these men were captured, although the lowest on the rank and file did more work than any of the others, he was never recognised in any shape or form. The other three men got promotion, but he was not even mentioned. Living in the district, I felt that the man had been unjustly treated, and took it upon myself to communicate with a member of this House, who approached the then Home Secretary, Mr. Appel, and I am pleased to say that through him the man got justice. (Hear, hear!) Even Inspector Short in Maryborough, who had charge of that district, never knew that Constable Ferguson was ever on the scene at all. I think there is something radically wrong when there is one man left out, as he was in that case. The only recognition that he got was that he was told that it was known that he had done his duty. A man like that has no redress at all in the Police Force. He could not have gone to his superior officer in that district, and if it had not been that

someone else and myself had taken up his case and brought it under the notice of the heads, he would not have got any redress at all. If the man had attempted to bring the matter before the head of the department over the superior officer in his district, he would have been dismissed from the force by telegram straight away. What justice can a man expect to obtain by appealing to the officer in charge of his district when that officer does not recognise his ability in the first place? When the Government are making this investigation into the public service, I hope that the police will also be considered. Another matter mentioned in the Governor's Speech with which I am thoroughly in accord is the appointment of a public works committee. (Hear, hear!) I have had experience of the workings of a public works committee in another State, having belonged to New South Wales for a number of years. The Public Works Committee has been in existence there for twenty-six or twenty-seven years, and it has worked admirably there. It has worked so well in New South Wales that the Victorian Government copied it about twenty-four years ago. Then the Federal Government followed by appointing a Public Works Committee for the Commonwealth, and I hope to see Queensland follow suit. If we have such a committee here it will prevent much of the logrolling that has been done in the past in this House in reference to the building of railways. Last session there were sixteen railways passed by this House, and in many cases members arranged with one another to support each other's railway. I know one particular case where members arranged to vote for each other's railway lines. We do not want lines passed in that way. We want lines passed by this House on their merits. (Hear, hear!) If we have a public works committee, they will obtain all the papers and all the information in connection with the proposed line, and they will come before this House with a proposal on which we will have some definite information. I advocate running railways into the country to allow people to settle on the land. We have any amount of good land that needs to be taken up, and we cannot expect men to go into those parts unless they are able to send their produce to market. I am advocating the building of railways, not for the sake of obtaining votes at election time, but for the benefit of the people settled on the land. (Hear, hear!) There is a reference to a land question mentioned in the Governor's Speech. The Government are doing quite right in saying that they intend to give an opportunity to the small graziers in the Western country. Some of our holdings are too large at the present time. We want more people settled on the land, not only those who go in for agriculture, but those who go in for grazing as well. If, therefore, we subdivide these large estates, we will give every man an opportunity to have a small grazing farm. That will be much better for the State at large. At the present time we are passing through a bad drought, and, although it is not so bad as we have had in the past, it is a matter that needs the attention of the Government in one particular respect. The mover of this resolution, the hon. member for Oxley, alluded to the question of establishing silos and the making of ensilage, and pointed out how few there were in exist-

ence in Queensland at the present time. I have been in conversation with farmers, as I have some little knowledge of silos and ensilage, and I impressed on them the advisability of going in for such a system in connection with their farms. If these farmers had these silos and ensilage to fall back upon to-day, they would be in a much better position than they are, and we would not be experiencing such a scarcity of dairying commodities. I trust that the Government will give every encouragement to the farmers, so that they can build these silos. Every farmer is not in a position to find the money to do it himself, and it is the place of the Government to assist him in so doing. We want to place men on the land in a prosperous condition, and not be, as they are at present, finding their cattle dying, and they having no means to help them. I feel certain that this Government has the interests of the farmer at heart. During the elections it was stated that the Labour party had no sympathy with the farmer at all. That was the cry on the Liberal side. I say that if there is any party which has sympathy with the farmers it is the Labour party.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. ARMFIELD: The Labour party are prepared to assist the farmer so that he can pay a fair living wage to those he employs. (Hear, hear!) In past conditions he was unable to do so, owing to the faulty legislation. The Labour party consider that the worker on the farm has the right to expect to get a fair living wage, so that he can keep a wife and family on it. A farm worker is entitled to a fair remuneration, so that he may enjoy the ordinary comforts of life, and this Government will assist the farmer so that he will be able to pay a fair remuneration to those he employs. Hon. members opposite have condemned us at different times for the wages logs we introduced in the agricultural districts, but I think that a man who works on an agricultural farm has as much right to receive a living wage as a worker in the city. (Hear, hear!) We want to give these men such a wage that they will settle down, and not wander about the country. We do not want this industry to be a single man's industry like it is at the present time. Now that the Labour party is in power, I hope we will be able to rectify this. I see there is a proposal to amend the Workers' Dwellings Act. That Act is not liberal enough, because, as has been stated, a man has to be a landowner before he can take advantage of the provisions of the Act. If we are going to assist the workers at all, we should assist them far better than that. We should allow a worker to go on to a piece of land and build a house, and pay for it by instalments. The Government cannot lose anything by such a system as that. Some mention was made by an hon. member of the cost of timber for building purposes. I hope the time is not far distant when we will see the Government establishing Government sawmills and Government brickmaking establishments, so that the Government will be able to supply all the building material at a fair price. At the present time the price of timber is too high, and if we have Government sawmills we can have the Government supplying their own timber for workers' dwellings. That would reduce the cost of the buildings, and that would be a great benefit to the workers. The matter of the overcrowding of trams is mentioned in

the Governor's Speech. I think that the time is ripe for the trams to be taken over by the Government. (Hear, hear!) We have a good example of that in the Sydney tram system, which is run by the Government at a cheaper rate, and the sections are longer, while at the same time the men working on the trams have better conditions, and altogether the public are treated much better than they are in Brisbane. I trust the Government will not only take into consideration the overcrowding of these trams, but also consider the question of having them made Government property. I am also very pleased to note that the Government intends to liberalise the Local Government Act. In my opinion, every person living in a municipality has a right to a vote. In New South Wales they have liberalised the Act there to the extent that every lodger has a vote, which means practically every adult person has a vote, because if a person resides with his family he is counted as a lodger, and therefore has a vote. This has been found of advantage in New South Wales, and since that Act came into force there has been more progress in the New South Wales municipalities than ever before, and I trust it will not be long before the Local Government Act of this State is amended. As it stands to-day, if there are lighting works of any description in a municipality—any gasworks or any electric lighting plant—the local authority is debarred of instituting works of their own, and the sooner the matter is altered the better. I do not wish to occupy the time of the House any longer. I thank hon. members for the patient hearing they have given me, because naturally, as a new member, I have not that confidence in myself that I will have later on. (Hear, hear!) I also thank the leader of the Opposition for the remarks he made the other day, when he said the Opposition would bear with the young members. I sincerely trust that before long the new members of this House will worthily take the place of those who were defeated at the recent elections. The leader of the Opposition also stated that the House was the poorer because of the absence of certain members, and I can only trust that in the course of a very short time he will be able to say that the House is the richer for the change.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. APPEL (*Albert*): I desire, in the first instance, to congratulate the mover and seconder of the Address in Reply. They are both young members, but yet, unquestionably, the speeches which they delivered were full of interest. (Hear, hear!) The mover is a man of hard, practical experience, and he has a knowledge of the subjects likely to be brought up in this House, from A to Z. The seconder, probably, is more of a theorist; but still, undoubtedly, his contribution to the debate was of very considerable interest. Mention was made by the last hon. member who spoke of the fact that certain members who had for many years occupied a seat in this House would not be a loss; but there is one member who has lost his seat, and, I think, we all deplore that he is not with us to-day. I refer to Sir Robert Philp, a man who has taken the keenest interest not alone in the political but in the commercial and in the social life of this great State of ours, and I venture to say that, whether we agree or

[*Mr. Armfield.*

whether we disagree with his particular politics, his loss is a distinct one. It is a loss to the House and a loss to the State. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. WELLINGTON: You do not say that conscientiously.

Mr. APPEL: Undoubtedly I do.

Mr. WELLINGTON: You don't.

The SPEAKER: Order!

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: You didn't say so last year.

Mr. APPEL: The hon. member must be in error, because I have never referred to the late hon. member for Townsville except in terms of the deepest respect. The Speech contains a considerable amount of matter, and as an old member who sat on the Treasury benches, I can only hope that the Government will be able to carry into effect all that they have placed in that Address which was presented to us by His Excellency the Governor, but I venture to say that they are very optimistic.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: You can help them.

Mr. APPEL: In any matter which makes for the benefit and improvement of the electors of this State, undoubtedly I will. I wish, in the first place, to compliment the hon. members of the Treasury bench for their remarks in connection with the situation which exists to-day in relation to the Empire. At no time have I even suggested that hon. members sitting on that side of the House were not absolutely loyal; in fact, I recognised from the very first day of the outbreak of the war that no men were more loyal than the hon. members who, on that occasion, were sitting on the Opposition side of the House.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: On sufferance.

Mr. APPEL: That may be—the sufferance of the electors at that particular time. They gave evidence of their loyalty in the fact that numbers of men who support them have gone to the front, and are to-day assisting to uphold the great flag under which we live. Unquestionably events, however deplorable they may be, in connection with the terrible war—the greatest the world has ever seen—have welded the loyalty of all classes in the community in this great Commonwealth of ours, and have made Australia to-day a known quantity, which probably she was not hitherto. Every one of us—and more particularly those who are natives of this great continent—must feel and must realise the honour which our boys are doing for us in the noble stand which they are taking at the front—

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. APPEL: And the way in which they are laying down their lives and shedding their blood. I shall be at one with the Government if they consider it necessary that those of us who, from causes over which we have no control, are unable to take our stand at the front and under the flag, should be taxed; and I shall assist in imposing any taxation that is considered necessary to show what our feeling is and how necessary it is to uphold the great traditions of the Empire—the traditions that make for freedom—and we realise that not alone does it mean our own freedom but the freedom of the nations with whom we are allied. (Hear, hear!) I approve of the proposition

in connection with the providing of land for our returned soldiers, should they desire to acquire land on their return. Of course, there is a kind of sting in this matter when it is suggested—at least it is not suggested, but a question was asked the other day as to whether this land was to be perpetual lease or freehold.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: What difference does it make?

Mr. APPEL: An hon. member interjects, "What difference does it make?" I do not propose to deal with that categorically at the present time, but those of us who know what it is to own their own freehold, however small it may be, realise the difference, and what it means to own a freehold instead of merely a lease. However, that is a matter which may be discussed later on.

[4.30 p.m.] I entirely approve of the suggestion, because I think we can show no greater tribute to our brave fellows who have gone to the front, as I have already said, and have sacrificed their lives and their limbs, and have shed their blood, than by giving them an opportunity of acquiring a home in their native State; and I can only hope that the quality of this gratitude shall not be strained—that if it is to be given to them, it will be on the most favourable conditions. In fact, I go further. In my opinion, if anything is done in that respect, outside the performance of necessary conditions, the land should be absolutely rent free, as an indication of the gratitude which we feel for the services which they have rendered to us and the Empire. The next point which is dealt with in the Governor's Speech is the question of food prices. To my mind, that is a very delicate and serious matter. The question that appeals to me is: Where are we to start? Which end are we to start at? Are we to start at the end which you might call the summit—in connection with the price which is to be fixed for the manufactured article—or are we to take into consideration the cost to the primary producer in the first instance? We know in connection with wheat, and particularly in connection with butter, that certain prices have already been fixed at which the finished article is to be bought. Now, I would like to know whether any inquiry was made as to what the cost was to the producer. Of course, the conditions are difficult at the present time. We realise that under the present conditions it may be necessary for those who are in charge of the Treasury bench to regulate the prices to be paid for a certain commodity, but in fixing the prices of these commodities my contention is that full inquiry should be made in the first instance as to what the cost of the production of that particular commodity was.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: What part of Queensland?

Mr. APPEL: In any part of Queensland. We know that the conditions in Queensland differ. Queensland is a State of such vast area that you may have drought in one portion and plenty in another; and, as hon. members on the Treasury benches are advocating decentralisation owing to the extent of the State, so is it likewise necessary to inquire into the conditions in the different portions of the State in regard to the cost of production. When we realise that in parts of Queensland a drought has existed for a very considerable number of months, that on the Darling Downs, probably one of the

most fertile areas in the State of Queensland, drought conditions have prevailed for many months, and where now you can go for hundreds of miles over that otherwise fertile country without finding a blade of grass visible to the eye, and when we realise that the dairy farmers are purchasing fodder from the north-east and south-east districts at a cost of something like £1 10s. per ton in the particular locality in addition to the cost of freight and the cost of delivery—when we realise all that, my contention is that, before these prices were fixed, a full inquiry should be made as to the cost to the producer. I do not for one moment think that hon. members who are in occupation of the Treasury benches to-day are desirous of victimising the primary producers, because we must realise that, if the farmer is to pay a living wage under the conditions which now exist, he must receive a certain amount of return for his product. And quite outside of drought conditions, all of us who are engaged in the industry know that. Even in my own district, the South Coast district, where we have comparatively plenty of grass and fodder, owing to the severe weather conditions quite unusual for a large number of years, the produce for our dairy herds has decreased fully 50 per cent. In some cases, those of us who are interested in the industry know there are numbers of men whose products practically amount to nil. They have got no products, and those who have any find that their costs have increased by fully 50 per cent. As I have already said, the question is a very delicate one, and I think it will be well that I should read to the House an article which appeared in the Sydney "Bulletin" of 3rd June of this year. No one can say that the Sydney "Bulletin" has any Tory inclinations. Hon. members may say it has sometimes, but the article is one which, I think, requires and should receive our serious consideration. It is headed "Making the Toiler Sweat for the Don't-work Brigade." Does that appeal to hon. members on the opposite side of the House? The article goes on to say—

"When a frenzied little man read in the newspapers last year that a war had broken out in Europe, he immediately rushed into the street and, whistling up two or three passers-by, demanded to know whether they thought they were up to the job of fixing prices. Being assured that they could get to work early next morning, he took their names and addresses, sprinted round to Parliament, and, after prolonged conflict with his own and other verbosity, got his men clothed with a legal status as the Necessary Commodities Commission of New South Wales. They fearlessly grappled with cream of tartar or nutmegs to start with, then got on to wheat and flour, took bread in their stride, spent a strenuous week or so wrestling with the price of newspapers, fixed a schedule for liquor which 'Bung' came to the conclusion was exorbitant, and, after refusing to recognise soap as a necessary commodity, though agreeing that champagne is, passed leisurely on to chickfeed, and by slow degrees reached other things, including sugar, butter, and chaff. Meanwhile, the abbreviated author of these activities found himself moaning about prices having gone up in spite of the commission, outlining a

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feather-headed scheme for blowing good solid cash in purchasing suburban bakers' businesses."

That might appeal to hon. members.

Hon. J. HUXHAM: It is a success, too.

Mr. APPEL:

"reviling the Commonwealth for testing the right of the State to prohibit wheat going over the border, and at last advices was struggling in the cleft of a stick he had got himself into over certain hole-and-corner promises to the bloated and truculent sugar monopoly. It has been altogether a most picturesque exhibition of futility, parochial thinking, and muddled economics. That the net results of it all appear to be the famished appearance of the baker's horse and the public being in jeopardy of having no butter to put on the price-fixed loaf are merely ironical details.

"Meantime, it may reasonably be asked of these price-fixers, who it is they suppose is to ultimately get any benefit that may ooze from their laborious tinkering. To what class, apart from the recipients of fees and commissions, will this piffing regimentation do any good? If they are to be judged by their public utterances, Ministers in New South Wales seem to have a hazy notion that if they dragoon the producer of food into parting with his goods at a cheap rate, the poor wretch will derive some kind of esoteric reward from the consciousness that he is 'bearing a share of the burden'."

Mr. BERTRAM: Are you reading the whole of the "Bulletin," or only a part?

Mr. APPEL: I am reading the whole article.

Mr. BERTRAM: Take the remainder as read.

Mr. APPEL: No. I propose to read the remainder—

"—even though his crop may have been but a fourth of what the earth yields in normal times, though from the unwilling udder of his strawberry cow there flows but a trickle, and though the purchasing capacity of the consumer may have been in no way impaired. More than once the Attorney-General has asked of the farmer, in the tone of one who was putting a tremendous poser, 'Do you say that the consumer should bear all the cost of the war, and the producer nothing?' Such a question is merely a windy irrelevance.

"The price the inhabitant of the city pays the rural hayseed for a pound of butter, or the material to manufacture a loaf of bread from, or a sack of chaff, or a pumpkin, has nothing to do with the war. The hayseed will be taxed for his share in the war, and the measure of what he pays will be in no way affected by the consideration that Sydney boarding-house keepers got cheap butter."

You might as well alter that to Brisbane boarding-house keepers.

"The city man will be taxed, too, on principles that will decline to be affected by consideration of the fact that the politician had given someone a cheap bag of bran. Neither the consumer nor the producer is contributing a single, microscopic bean to the war bill through any

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deal they may make in the material for the breakfast of man or horse. To pretend that they do is to aid and abet a fraud. A public policy which results in the plentiful citizen with a thousand a year being able to save tuppence a pound on the butter he consumes, at the expense of farmers harassed by drought and the seasonal fluctuation of his supplies, is almost too exasperating for serious contemplation. Yet that is the direct consequence of the latest experiment New South Wales has made in pandering to ignorant folly.

"The notion that such an enormity is atoned for by the fact that the poor working-man reaps benefit by the arbitrary restriction on prices is without justification. Low prices for produce mean low wages for someone."

That is absolutely unquestionable.

"Neither low wages nor low prices are of any use to the man with anything to sell—whether it be his labour or the produce of the soil. The only persons who can possibly benefit by the eccentricities of the Unnecessary Commodities Commission are the don't-works—the large army of individuals with incomes that are not derived from personal exertion, who having nothing themselves to sell naturally secure the equivalent of an increase in revenue when the cost of things they have to buy is cut down. Cheapen commodities to these people, then to them the cost of the war is nothing, since it will be discharged by the savings they make through being able to get supplies cheap from the producer. Lessen the national earnings from the sale of products, and then either wages must fall or employment be scarcer, since there will be less money at the disposal of wage-payers and less demand for the output of wage-earners."

Mr. BERTRAM: Are you stonewalling?

Mr. APPEL: The hon. member knows that I am not; I am dealing with a matter which is a very serious one—not only from the point of view of the producer, but also, I venture to say, from the point of view of the consumer.

"So in the end cheap commodities mean a bonus for the don't-works and a millstone for the neck of the producer and the wage-earner. A pumpkin, a pound of butter, a boot, a hat—all are the products of labour, and everybody engaged in the output of these things has a vital personal interest in seeing that the seller gets the best possible return for them. The public certainly is entitled to ask that it shall get the product of the dairyman at a figure uninflated by excessive transport charges, commissions, and intermediate profits. The vegetable specialist may with good reason look to the State to see that the rake-off between the grower and the consuming family is not a piratical appropriation of pumpkin. Similarly he can still be sane and expect to be protected against the rapacity of combines and landlords when he seeks to exchange the proceeds of his sales for feet and head coverings. It is in these directions that the State has hitherto pretended to see a fertile field for activity by keeping transport charges down, exhorting producers to co-opera-

tion, and encouraging men to till the soil and increase the output of factories, workshops, and mines. But now it breaks out in an entirely new place, and tries a 'prentice hand at a scheme of price-fixing by a rule to which no conceivable set of principles can be applied. For instance, the price of chaff was fixed. Chaff may mean anything from sawn-up beds to the sweepings of suburban mixerries. A week after the price was fixed in New South Wales, the commission found this out, and learned something of the disastrous effects that had followed its meddling with horse feed. Faced by the new set of facts, it solemnly commenced to consider the fixing of standard qualities, lodging specimens at various places throughout the State, and insisting that no chaff should be sold which did not conform with the standardised samples. An army of inspectors would be required to work such a scheme, and in a time of famine would be of no more use than a flock of kookaburras. When chaff became plentiful, they would have nothing to do except draw wages out of the taxpayers' pockets. The drone again!

"The price-fixers started vote-catching at the wrong end. Instead of fooling about with Australian toilers for the special benefit of the lazy don't-works, they might have started on the imported article that is not the result of Australian labour nor made of Australian material—the price of which goes to swell the pockets of foreign strangers and local middlemen. But by trying to manipulate the quotations for foodstuffs in the midst of a drought and vanishing supplies, they have merely made for themselves a laughing stock, and the assertion that their juggling had relation to the war convicts them of knowing their case was so desperate that it could only be defended by perjury."

That practically comprises my own opinion on the subject, and I would earnestly urge the Premier and his colleagues to deal very carefully with the question of the fixing of prices. Nobody can have any objection to the fixing of prices, provided that the fixing starts at the proper end; but simply to fix the price of the finished commodity, without ascertaining and taking into consideration the cost of the production of that commodity, will undoubtedly inflict a very gross injustice upon a large section of the community. I am very glad to note that it is proposed to make provision for the regulation of the fish supply. When I was a member of a local authority I was one of those who, in the first instance, took a very keen interest in the establishment of a fish board. As a matter of fact, in the earlier stages of that board, I occupied a seat on it, and at that particular time I endeavoured to get my fellow-members to agree to a widening of the scope of the Act, in order that they might be enabled to establish fish depôts in different portions of the city, because unquestionably, until that is done, we shall never get a solution of this problem, nor will fish be available to the community generally.

Mr. COLLINS: That is municipal socialism.

Mr. APPEL: It is at the present time, only the matter requires to be extended. At the present time the matter is in the hands of the local authorities.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You admit that you are a State socialist. (Laughter.)

Mr. APPEL: Of course I am a State socialist—(laughter)—but I am dealing now with the matter in the Address in Reply, and I heartily commend the Government on their intention, which I hope will be realised, because unquestionably to-day the primary producer—the fisherman—does not receive the full result he is entitled to for the fish which he catches. Any of us who have taken any interest in the matter know that there is a fish ring in Brisbane, as well as other rings.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. APPEL: The result of that fish ring is that the producer comes to the ground, as he always does. I only hope, as I have already stated, that this particular matter will be realised. I do not propose to deal at any length with the question of the amendment of our electoral laws. Hon. members opposite may differ from me as to whether the present electoral laws inflict an injustice or not.

Mr. H. J. RYAN: You know they do.

Mr. APPEL: My own contention is that they do not, and I challenge hon. members on that side to show the contrary, because under that measure they came to the front with the majority they possess to-day. It was contended when the Bill was before the House that its sole purpose was to bolster the Liberal party, and that the result would be to make their return secure. But what has been the result?

Mr. FREE: Opposite to what the Government thought. (Laughter.)

Mr. APPEL: "The proof of the pudding is in the eating," and the fact that that legislation did not impose an injustice is evidenced by the fact that hon. members were returned on that side of the House with the majority that they possess to-day. Of course, I remember, when the Liberal party was returned with a still greater majority, hon. members who were then sitting on this side were very fond of saying: "You only had 35,000 of a majority." I wonder if hon. members on that side have made an analysis of the elections which have given them the majority they possess to-day.

The SPEAKER: Order! I hope the hon. member will address the Chair.

Mr. APPEL: Certainly. I was not aware that I was contravening the rules. I was simply speaking for the purpose of making my voice heard. (Loud laughter.) When other hon. members were speaking to-day, I heard interjections to "Speak up." (Laughter.) If hon. members opposite will analyse the election results, they will find that they have won by about the same majority that the Liberals won on the last occasion.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: No, no! Three times as many.

Mr. APPEL: The hon. member has not analysed it. The majority which has placed hon. members opposite in the position they occupy to-day is about the same which placed the Liberals in that position, with the exception that they had an addition of two in number. However, I do not propose to deal any further with that matter. Hon. members opposite are in power, and they will

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probably do as we would do if we were there. They will produce an Electoral Act to suit themselves—(Government laughter)—to endeavour to keep themselves in the same position, and it is quite possible the result may be the same; they may fall through the bottom. Now, it is proposed to repeal the Industrial Peace Act. That is a most debatable matter. When the measure is before the House, I will probably be able to say something about it; but, after all is said and done, the endeavour of every member of the Legislature should be to promote industrial peace. If hon. gentlemen on the Treasury bench can produce a measure which will be effective in the direction of promoting industrial peace, I personally will have no hesitation in supporting it, because, after all, we want industrial peace. It is not a question of the rate of wages or of the hours of labour, but peace.

Mr. H. J. RYAN: Fair prices.

Mr. APPEL: Of course, those two go together. The thing is that we should be able to go hand in hand, because should not our goal—the prosperity of the State and the people—be the same? You can only attain that object by industrial peace. If hon. gentlemen opposite are able to produce a measure which will have that effect, and which will be more effective than the present legislation, I shall have no hesitation in supporting it.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: We shall have no more "Black Fridays."

Mr. APPEL: I hope not, because "Black Fridays" are no good to anyone. They are certainly no good to the worker, and I think hon. members opposite will realise that "Black Friday" did not do them any good at the previous election.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: It beat your Government.

Mr. APPEL: It is proposed again to deal with the sugar industry. It is suggested that this matter may be effected by means of cane price boards, so that an equitable price may be received by the grower of the cane. I have always been of opinion that it would be a very good thing if we could have a board regulating the prices; but do hon. gentlemen opposite propose simply to deal with the sugar industry in connection with the regulation of these prices? I have already indicated in connection with the fixing of the price of butter that, to my mind, a start was made at the wrong end. If it is proposed to deal with the sugar industry, why not deal with the dairying industry?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You did not discover the wrong end of your own prices board.

Mr. APPEL: The hon. gentleman knows that that was not within the purview of the department which I administered. I may have my own opinions on these particular matters. To-day I am in Opposition, and can voice my opinions. (Hear, hear!) Hon. members opposite will find that, so far as their individual opinions are concerned, they have to submit to majority rule in the Cabinet. The Secretary for Public Instruction, who proposes to abolish home lessons, will probably find that he spoke too soon and before he submitted that matter to the Cabinet. Hon. gentlemen sitting on the Treasury benches are not able to do exactly as they like. When they are in Opposition, when they are practically free lances, they can say what they like; but now they are sitting on

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the Treasury benches they will find that many of the matters they have advocated will have to be put into the background.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You had a free hand at Coolangatta.

Mr. APPEL: The hon. gentleman finds that what he might have advocated on this side of the House when he was in Opposition, to-day sitting on the Treasury benches he is not in a position to advocate, and I was in the same position. I think it is

[5 p.m.] a very good rule to judge your fellows by yourself. It is proposed to establish a public works committee to deal with the question of railway construction.

The PREMIER: Before you deal with that, will you tell me whether you would support an extension of the principle of cane price boards to other farm products?

Mr. APPEL: I am inclined to say that I would. If we are to have a fixing of prices, then we should ascertain in the first instance the price of the raw product. I venture to say that if that had been done, the Premier would not have fixed the price of butter at the price he did recently. (Hear, hear!) It is proposed to establish a public works committee, which will examine and report on any railways to be constructed. I quite realise that under present conditions the Ministry may find themselves in a difficult position so far as the carrying out of railways is concerned. We know that the conditions are unusual at the present time, as we have a calamitous war taking place, and it would be most improper on the part of those sitting in Opposition if we took advantage of that fact. Still, I am pleased to see the hon. gentleman propose, when funds are available, to extend the railways, not alone in the settled districts, but in districts where settlement may take place if railway construction is carried out. (Hear, hear!) I have always contended that if we are to successfully settle the lands in this State, it is necessary to give communication to those settled upon the lands to enable them to get their produce to the market or to the port. Unless we do that by means of railways or subsidised roads, I venture to say that *bonâ fide* settlement in Queensland will never be effected. I welcome the proposition of the members on the Treasury benches and the Premier, but I point out this fact: that by the appointment of such a committee it means the delay of at least twelve months in any railway proposal that is made. A railway proposal may be made which, to be effective and for the benefit of the State and its people, should be carried out immediately. But with the appointment of a public works committee, it will be necessary, after the proposals have been laid upon the table of the House, for these proposals to be relegated to that committee. That committee does not sit while the House is sitting. It sits during the recess, and the report is only brought before the next session of the House, which means at the very least a delay of something like twelve months.

Mr. BERTRAM: We know that when Parliament does approve of a railway at the present time it is eight years before it is built.

Mr. APPEL: Parliament has not yet approved of the proposed committee, but I know that the system in New South Wales is

for the committee to make inquiries during the recess, and to present its report, and the House decides "Aye" or "Nay" on it. I admit that the committee may be of benefit in some ways, particularly where it will save members of the Administration from very awkward conditions—I will put it that way. When a railway proposal is referred to the public works committee, members opposite will be absolved, so far as their supporters are concerned, of the responsibility of the construction of that particular scheme.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Don't you regard it as a power for good?

Mr. APPEL: So far as the Administration is concerned, unquestionably it is. It absolves you from very awkward positions.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: But so far as the country is concerned?

Mr. APPEL: Probably the electorate concerned may not always agree with the report of the committee. We know that many electorates have received railways in the past which, if they had been submitted to the report of a public works committee, would not be in that position. (Hear, hear!) I am quite opposed to that. I admit that the committee is a very good buffer, and it will give members composing the committee, selected from all sides of the House, an opportunity of taking evidence on the spot, of viewing the locus in quo, and of making their report.

Mr. MURPHY: And of giving their supporters a good job.

Mr. APPEL: It is all very well for the hon. member to say that it gives members a good job. If a man has to go away from his home and travel, then he ought to be paid for it. I do not believe in sweating. (Hear, hear!) I think that every man should be paid for the services he renders. Those of us who have got any experience of the matter realise that members of the Public Works Committee of New South Wales make laborious journeys far away from home, and undergo many privations; and why should they not be paid for it? I am not opposed to the proposal. As a matter of fact, it is a matter that has always appealed to me. I do not intend to oppose the proposal. In fact, I will support it. It is proposed by the present Administration to discourage the acquisition of large estates. I am thoroughly in accord with that. (Hear, hear!) I do not believe that a member of the community should be allowed to acquire a large area of ground if he cannot utilise it. If he has more than he can utilise, the members of the community will suffer thereby.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: You have got all you want.

Mr. APPEL: Why not? Why not? It shows that I appreciate what the country is worth. I have got all the land I want, and I am using it, too. If hon. members opposite would only do what I have done, and go upon the land, they would learn some of the disabilities and trials of taking up a selection.

Mr. McMINN: And the benefit, too.

Mr. APPEL: And the benefit, too. It is proposed—and I am fully in accord with this proposal, too—that so far as the rents which are paid by our pastoral tenants are concerned, they should be increased. When we consider that the grazing farmer

who owns 18,000 acres, 20,000 acres, or 25,000 acres has to pay a certain amount of rental, and frequently he has not got the best part of the particular area, and when the pastoral tenant is paying something like 75 per cent. less, to my mind there is something radically wrong, and the State should receive the benefit. The State should receive the full benefit of the land which it possesses, and in connection with these large pastoral areas, I am in accord with hon. members sitting on the Treasury bench who say that that land should not be parted with—should not become freehold. To my mind, it is a perfectly valid proposition, so far as these large areas are concerned, that they should be leasehold, and hon. members will have my full support in any measure which will give to the State the value of the leasehold which is to be paid by the pastoral tenant.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: Is this a benediction of the Government programme that you are giving us?

Mr. APPEL: If the hon. member for Kennedy takes it as a benediction, I think hon. members sitting on that side of the House should be very gratified to know that any member of the Opposition, who has some small knowledge of the requirements of this State, should be able to support any proposition coming from that side. The hon. member, I know, is in a state of perennial pleasure. There is one matter which I consider is a very serious omission from the programme—that is, there is no reference made to a scheme of water conservation. (Hear, hear!) If our lands, more particularly the lands not immediately within the coastal area, are to be closely settled, it is absolutely necessary that a scheme of water conservation should be carried out by the State. In the coastal portion of the State we know we have copious streams, and we have a fair rainfall; but even 400 or 500 miles back from the coast, although in many instances there is a plentiful rainfall, yet all that water runs away. Now, that water can be conserved, and with the conservation of that water, vast areas of land as fertile and as suitable for closer settlement as any on the coast—in many instances more so, because we have none of the pests that exist on the coast—can be made available for closer settlement. When we find that the United States of America, where they are blessed every winter with a fall of snow, which, melting, causes a large quantity of water in the streams, have considered it absolutely necessary to carry out a scheme of water conservation—only the other day we had a report from the Lieutenant-Governor in connection with his visit to California, a dry State comparatively, where, by means of water conservation, they have been enabled to settle a very large population, a population which is doing remarkably well financially—when we find that even in the Dominion of Canada they have found it necessary to go in for schemes of water conservation—to impound the water from the melting snow—then how much more necessary is it in this great State of ours, where we suffer from the lack of water? If the Government is honest in the matter of closer settlement, then a water conservation scheme should run together with the other scheme of limiting the large estates.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You don't doubt the Government's honesty, do you?

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Mr. APPEL: I doubt everybody's honesty.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Even your own.

Mr. APPEL: Even my own. (Laughter.) And from my knowledge of the Secretary for Agriculture, I doubt his very frequently. I note also that it is proposed to amend the Workers' Compensation Act. I have no objection to that.

Hon. J. HUXHAM: You approve of everything in the programme.

Mr. APPEL: Perhaps I approve of anything that benefits my fellow-electors more than members who are interjecting, because I do it without compulsion. To my mind, no exception can be taken to this proposition for many reasons, but it must run together with the establishment of State insurance—(hear, hear!)—because we all know that to-day a considerable obligation is placed upon the employer in the matter of making provision for workers' compensation.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: He is at the mercy of the company.

Mr. APPEL: As an hon. member interjects, he is at the mercy of the company, and unquestionably with an increase in the amount to be paid, he would be still more at the mercy of the company; and I take it, as reasonable men, we don't want to throw the whole of the onus on to the employer. There is no object in saying you must be victimised, and, I take it, hon. members, on whichever side of the House they may be, only desire to see a fair and equitable deal; and if this is to be increased, it must run hand-in-hand with the establishment of State insurance, so that the increased amount to be paid by way of compensation is not placed upon the employer. If that is done, I have no hesitation in saying that I will give the proposition my cordial support.

Mr. FOLEY: Are you speaking on behalf of your party now?

Mr. APPEL: The hon. member for Mundingburra is like an old spavined horse—he is trying to be sarcastic.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. APPEL: I withdraw. The hon. member is endeavouring to be sarcastic, and he reminds me of that particular animal in that particular condition, when he endeavours to be so. There are several other matters mentioned in the Speech, and hon. members sitting on the Treasury bench found the Bills in draft when the late Liberal party left the Administration. There is a Bill dealing with the appointment of a public trustee. It is quite a reasonable proposition, and I think it is one that will be beneficial to the State. In connection with the proposed amendment of the Local Authorities Act, I may claim to have some little knowledge of local authority law.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You were administering that Act.

Mr. APPEL: That is so; and I had something to do with the different amendments which were brought into the forefront. As to what form these amendments will take, of course, it is impossible for me to say, and I have no doubt that even the Secretary for Agriculture will not give me any information on that particular point. However, I have no doubt that it is proposed to extend the franchise, because one of the speakers

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who preceded me mentioned New South Wales. Well, I have pointed out on different occasions that if the franchise is to be extended, the State, as in New South Wales, must contribute to or subsidise local authority funds, then there can be no objection; but if it is proposed to extend the franchise without those who are getting the franchise contributing something to the local authority funds—

Mr. FREE: They do already.

Mr. APPEL: Unless it is proposed that the general taxpayer shall contribute something towards the maintenance and upkeep of local authority matters, then it will receive my opposition. Now, I believe my time has almost expired, and I only want to mention one matter—that is, the question of our tramways. I trust that the Government will either acquire the Brisbane tramways, or, if they allow the local authorities to have control of them, it will be under such a measure that they will have full and complete control of that public utility. Under a Bill which was tabled last session, it practically meant that the franchise was extended in perpetuity to the present company. I think that would be a disastrous position for the electors and the ratepayers of the State to be in. (Hear, hear!) My own idea is that the concern should be acquired by the Government itself, or under the conditions which I have mentioned. Whether the Government will be able to provide against overcrowding, if it is a Government utility, I am unable to say, judging by the tramways of New South Wales, because I find there just as great overcrowding at certain hours of the day as we find in connection with the Brisbane tramways.

Mr. MCLACHLAN: Had you not a different Bill drafted?

Mr. APPEL: Hon. members know that is so, and that I made the statement publicly on the hustings that I had prepared a Bill which would give the authorities control, a measure modelled on the enactments which existed in Victoria and New South Wales, and which are working extremely well there in enabling the running of tramways as local authority utilities. My time is up, and all I can say, in conclusion, is that I hope the Government, in dealing with this matter will acquire the tramways themselves, and carry out their maintenance.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I beg to move that the hon. member be granted an extension of time, say, for fifteen minutes, to enable him to conclude his speech.

Mr. FREE: I second the motion.

Question—That the hon. member be granted an extension of time—put and passed.

Mr. APPEL: I thank the hon. member for his motion. I did not ask for the concession, but the House has graciously accorded it, and I am very pleased to accept it. It will give me the opportunity to refer to one or two matters which I have not had time to touch upon. I notice that it is proposed to extend the medical and dental inspection of school children. This is a matter which we know, of course, was introduced by the late Administration. It has been so far very effective, but I want to point out one difficulty to hon. members on the Treasury benches. What is the utility of merely sending a dental or a medical inspector to a school? Take the case of a dental inspector who

examines the children's teeth, and says, "This child wants certain things done to his teeth," but they are not done.

Hon. J. A. FIBELLY: The scheme will provide for that.

Mr. APPEL: I suppose so, because it seems to be always an anomaly that we should say that this child requires certain attention, whereas in certainly 60 per cent. of the schools in the State of Queensland there is no local opportunity of having this carried out. To my mind, it should be the duty of the State, when we are dealing with this matter, not alone to make an inspection, but also, where the parents are unable to afford to pay for the necessary skill, to see that the work is carried out.

Mr. TOLMIE: That is being done now.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: No.

Mr. APPEL: Advice is simply given. I hold, too, that this inspection should not be confined to State schools alone. We have many other schools under different denominations which are carrying out that particular educational work in the State of Queensland. We have Church of England and Roman Catholic schools which are assisting the State in this great and worthy object, and to my mind this dental inspection, and every addition which is made to it, should be applicable to the whole of the schools which are carried on in the State of Queensland for the benefit of the children of the State. And I speak somewhat feelingly on the subject of the inspection and treatment of teeth, because we find a large number of young men at the present time, who are otherwise suitable, and would be available, and are anxious to go to the front, have been rejected owing to the fact that their teeth have been neglected, undoubtedly, in their youth. To my mind, this is one of the most important matters. We all know that the general health of a child practically depends on the condition of the teeth, and I can only assure the leader of the Government that, so far as this particular matter is concerned, he will receive every support I can give him, however widely he proposes to extend the system. Then, it is proposed to adopt a policy of decentralisation. Well, I am in thorough accord with that, and I can only hope that hon. members on the Treasury bench, and hon. members sitting on that side of the House, will realise what centralisation means, when centralisation propositions come before any party, whether it is in the Commonwealth or elsewhere.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. APPEL: I hope they will realise that our policy must be decentralisation, and not centralisation. I am in thorough accord with the proposition, because I believe it makes for the benefit of the State as a whole, and undoubtedly a policy of decentralisation, so far as the particular localities are concerned, will make for the benefit of those localities. I understand that the policy has already been carried out to a certain extent in connection with railway administration. I can only hope that hon. members are bonâ fide in this matter, and if they are, I can assure them that they will have every assistance from myself in carrying out the policy. I notice it is proposed to deal with the regulation of trade and monopolies. The Bill is placed fairly in the forefront of the proposed legislation, and I can only

hope that the Hon. the Premier will bring this on at the earliest possible opportunity. I spoke upon this subject at some length during the last election campaign. I am not prepared to say that at the present time combines and monopolies do exist, but I have a very considerable suspicion that something of that character does exist. I know that so far as we poor primary producers are concerned, a certain ring existed in regard to pigs. We know that, whereas at one time pig buyers from the different factories came to our styes, and we had the opportunity of getting what we considered was a fair price for our swine, evidently they came to an agreement, and that agreement resulted in this—that they required us to bring our pigs in the first instance to the railway stations, where they must be submitted to public competition by an auctioneer.

Mr. T. L. JONES: Hear, hear!

Mr. APPEL: And we know further that that same combine or monopoly—I have no hesitation in calling it that—that it frequently happened that only one buyer came there. I speak with feeling on the subject. It frequently amounted to this: that we got from 10s. to 15s. less on the value of the pig.

Mr. T. L. JONES: When was there only one buyer?

Mr. APPEL: In my district, over and over again. And—I hope the hon. members on that side of the House are honest in their support of the policy of co-operation, which, of course, is one of the principal planks of the platform of the country party—the proprietary factories simply had us as in a cleft stick, because, if we did not choose to accept the price offered by the one man—

Mr. T. L. JONES: Absolutely untrue.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. APPEL: I am telling absolute facts, because I was one of the sufferers from this particular monopoly. If we did not choose to accept the amount which was offered to us, well, we were told, "You can take your pigs back again." And if you offered them again in a fortnight, you were told that they were second class, they were too heavy, and you had to take 5s. or 10s. less than you were offered before.

Mr. T. L. JONES: Do you take us for a pack of innocents?

Mr. APPEL: I have not referred to the hon. member for Oxley. I do not blame the hon. member.

Mr. T. L. JONES: I blame you, though.

Mr. APPEL: Under the conditions which allow of such operations, the man who is in business as a proprietary manufacturer is not to blame for taking advantage of those conditions. But I blame the State which fails to introduce such legislation as will make it impossible. I can only

[5.30 p.m.] assure the leader of the Government that in connection with the introduction of such a measure he will have every assistance that I can give him, not alone in this House, but anywhere else where he chooses to call for it. I am very glad that he proposes to proceed with the erection of public abattoirs. That is another measure which will give to the smaller producers a considerable amount of relief. It is one of the matters which the Country party put in

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the forefront of its programme, and such a measure will receive every support from this party. I do not propose to trespass any longer upon the indulgence of the House. As I stated a few days ago, the Country party are not here for the purpose of offering capricious obstruction to any measure that is brought before the House by those who are occupying the Treasury benches. It may be considered the duty of the Opposition, as a rule, to object to everything that is introduced by those who are occupying the Treasury benches. That was the attitude adopted by hon. members who are now on the Treasury benches.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Oh, no!

Mr. APPEL: However, our position is this: Any measure which makes for the benefit, not alone of the primary, but of the secondary producers of this State, will receive the support of the Country party. If hon. members on the other side introduce measures which do not make for the public benefit, then they must expect opposition and criticism from hon. members belonging to the Country party.

The PREMIER: You don't think that we will introduce such measures, surely!

Mr. APPEL: I hope not; but we never know what a man who is young in political sin may do when he becomes hardened. To-day the hon. member may have a certain inclination to do what is right, and I hope he will continue in that mind, because, so long as he does, he will receive the support of this party. If not, then he must expect criticism and the same obstruction that he and the members of his party indulged in time after time when they sat in Opposition—when they cried "Divide, divide," on every occasion, and when they took every advantage of the Standing Orders. I hope the hon. gentleman will not place us in that position. If the hon. member and his colleagues are prepared to do what is right and just and equitable to the State, then he will receive the fullest support of myself and my colleagues.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): I take this opportunity of congratulating the mover and seconder of the Address in Reply. It is a pleasure to know that there are new members in this House who are able to address themselves without unnecessary bitterness, and although we may not agree with everything they say, still one cannot help appreciating clear and fair expressions of opinion when we hear them. I trust that all the new members will be as free to act as they wish. If they are they will be useful members in this House. It is not my intention to obstruct; on the contrary, I shall support any measures which the Government may introduce that will tend to benefit the electors I have the honour to represent and the State of Queensland as a whole. We should not lose sight of the tremendous war that is raging in Europe at the present time, and, if any measure can be introduced that will assist the Empire and our allies, that measure should be placed first on our business-paper. If there is anything that the settlers of Queensland can produce which will assist those on the other side of the world, we should give that our first consideration. I notice that it is proposed to introduce an Enemy Contracts Annulment Bill. If that is going to be of any real assistance, I trust

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the Government will see the advisability of bringing it forward at an early date. During the last Federal election campaign, a good spirit reigned in the electorate which the Prime Minister has the honour to represent. The candidate opposing Mr. Fisher was withdrawn, to enable Mr. Fisher to give his full attention to matters in the interest of the whole of the Commonwealth and the nation generally; and we hope now that Mr. Fisher is Prime Minister that he will do what was expected of him, and will act fairly to the whole community, and will not obstruct what might be of benefit to the Commonwealth by introducing measures which will divide the people unnecessarily.

Mr. COLLINS: Has not Mr. Fisher already done so? What more do you want him to do?

Mr. CORSER: Yes, he has divided them already, and we don't want a repetition just now. I trust, further, that everything that can be done in this House will be done to assist our people on the other side, and to assist our soldiers when they return. (Hear, hear!) The present Government has promised to assist our returned soldiers and ex-service officers; but they have inaugurated the principle of providing them only with perpetual leaseholds when they arrive here. I think the country will be quite prepared to give them the best that the country can offer.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Preference to jobs, too.

Mr. CORSER: Yes, preference to jobs, but also a freehold tenure. When they left here they could have obtained a freehold tenure, and it would be only fair to give it to them when they return if they wish to have it. I hope that the present Government are going to honour the promises of the late Government with reference to placing public servants who left to fight for the Empire in their former positions when they return, and to give them any higher positions which may be vacant.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: This party will honour everything that is honourable.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORSER: I trust they will continue to do so. The defeat of the past Government, no doubt, was of their own making. The writing was on the wall. Many members who were in the last Parliament who were likely to be "in the know" did not expect anything but that the Government were going to be defeated; but the Opposition members at that time did not expect that they were going to be returned with the numbers that they now have. The overwhelming defeat of the late Government was due, to a great extent, to the misrepresentations that were indulged in. Misrepresentations went the rounds of the people, and of consumers in the cities in particular, which aimed at an imaginary trust, or at middlemen who were supposed to be getting all the profits from our industries. Those misrepresentations nearly led to the Government having altogether too many supporters to make it safe for them in their own positions. I might also remind hon. members of the statements that were in circulation to the effect that the late Government were trying to deprive our troops of the votes which this House gave them.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Is not that quite true?

Mr. CORSER: It is not true; and the journals that made those statements did not contradict them when the votes came to hand. The statement was made that the middlemen were absorbing all the profits and the farmers were not getting anything. Is it not common knowledge that our co-operative companies are run by our directors—by men whom we have selected from among ourselves to run our business concerns?

Mr. A. J. JONES: Dry shareholders.

Mr. CORSER: The storekeepers have not made the profits that our political opponents at election times gave out that they were making. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating of it." We find that a firm in Brisbane supplying butter to the General Hospital, a benevolent institution, has had to admit that they were losing £14 a week on their contract. These middlemen procured no profit, and they had to admit that, in face of the fact that the Government and their supporters had previously claimed that the middlemen secured all the profit. Though I am not prepared to make the extraordinary statement made by the leader of the Farmers' Union party or to swallow *holus-bolus* the programme set forth in the Governor's Speech, still I will say that if ever a monopoly appears, and it comes to dealing with trusts and combines and taking away from the middlemen any profits to which they are not entitled, then I am with the Government; every man on this side is, and the majority of the people in the State are as one in that. Nobody is going to contradict the fact that we are up against trusts and combines and undue profits. (Hear, hear!) Everyone admits the existence of those facts. Those are the facts which the Government allege as an excuse for cutting down the price of butter and taking away from the farmer that which is his due. The statement that the farmers are not getting the benefit of the higher prices for food which have prevailed up to the present time is not true. If the Government propose to deal with trusts, I hope that they will induce their party supporters in the Federal Parliament to deal with a trust which is supposed to exist in the Commonwealth, and which they endeavoured to tackle at one time. I refer to the tobacco trust. When the Labour party show by their actions that they will deal with that trust, we shall be able to believe that they are sincere in their professions. A good condition of things would be brought about if the Government would assist co-operative enterprise and give farmers facilities to market their own produce. That would be quite sufficient to ensure a reasonable price being charged for foodstuffs and to ensure to the farmers a full return for their labours.

Mr. WELLINGTON: Why didn't the Liberal Government which you supported do all those things?

Mr. CORSER: I was an independent supporter of the late Government, and it was not within my power to bring about the desired alterations, as hon. members will understand after having listened to the extraordinary statement made by an ex-Cabinet Minister to-day. Whilst I sat behind the late Government and took part in the meetings of the caucus, I always maintained my independence and exercised it whenever I liked.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You voted with them in the House.

Mr. CORSER: I voted with them in the House when my conscience directed me to do so.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You signed that round robin.

Mr. CORSER: That is not a matter which affects my independence as a supporter of the late Government. I signed no such round robin; yet I did what I could to shift Mr. Denham from leadership. You do not hear anything in Queen street about the terrible drought which is existing in the country; you hear about the tremendous profits made on food coming from the country, but you hear nothing about the stricken downs and bare plains on which sheep and cattle can find no feed. Where you hear nothing about the drought, that is where the Labour party secured their greatest majority at the last election. The people in those places have been educated from the teaching of Karl Marx up to the price of butter, but not in any other direction, and they know nothing about the man who with his family is struggling on the land. It is all very well to hear members supporting the Government speak about the conservation of produce, but there is another side to that question. The hon. member for Oxley, in moving the adoption of the Address in Reply, stated that there was a want of forethought and foresight on the part of farmers in not storing up fodder. I claim that the farmer would gain nothing by filling his cupboard with food supplies for stock when that stored up food would be seized by burglary such as is going on in New South Wales at the present time. It is claimed by members opposite that farmers have no foresight, as they have not stored up a quantity of fodder which the Labour Government could come along and seize. When the position of the farmer is fairly recognised, then it will be right for the farmer to store his food, and he will probably do so. Of course, ere long the Treasury benches will be occupied by independent country members who are out to promote the interest of the farmer without any detriment to any section of the community. (Government laughter.) Then we shall be able to pass measures which will enable him in times of plenty not only to knock out a bare existence, but also to put something by for a rainy day, and not be in need of everything to keep body and soul together.

Mr. BERTRAM: Are you not a pledged supporter of the present leader of the Opposition?

Mr. CORSER: I am not a pledged supporter of any leader and never was, and I do not happen to be in the same position as the hon. member for Burke. I am sitting by his side, but I have the honour of being quite free, a country member, and I shall support any measures which are in the interest of every section of the community, and which are not class legislation. It is a very serious position that the market in Great Britain is shut to Australia as far as borrowing purposes are concerned, but the Government cannot consider that position to be serious, since they claim that they are a non-borrowing party. I shall quote the remarks of the leader of the Government at Barcaldine. Listen to the wording of this sentence, a sentence the words of which are used every day in calling recruits

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to fight a common foe on the other side; that same wording was used to fight a political opponent here in time of war—

“The ideal of a white Australia was not respected, and Liberal faith, Liberal science, and Liberal culture could only find expression in the raising and spending of huge loan moneys which were very often expended wastefully, and in the end left to posterity to redeem.”

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear! Quite true.

Mr. CORSER: We only spent £2,000,000 a year, and yet your friends in New South Wales spent £10,000,000 in 1914, and £6,000,000 in 1915. We spent £2,000,000 by authority, and it is claimed that it is too much. I have no doubt, nor has any member on this side any doubt, that this non-borrowing Government will spend more than £2,000,000 a year if they can get hold of it. The Premier made reference to the Royal Commission on wheat, and claimed that the report goes to show that inordinate profits were made by certain dealers in these foodstuffs. I am not in a position to contradict that statement of the hon. gentleman.

The PREMIER: Do you agree with it?

Mr. CORSER: I cannot agree or disagree with it now. I cannot decide till the report is before this House, and I think it is not a correct thing to make such a statement to the Press of the country without giving the Opposition an opportunity of perusing the report. I hope and trust that the Government will bring in such enactments as will meet with my own approval. I would like to deal with a few of the measures which are enumerated in His Excellency's Speech. The Industrial Peace Act is to be repealed—an Act that has done more good for the working people of Queensland than any other Act on the statute-book. (Government laughter.) It has proved to be a good enactment.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: Because you were afraid to put it into operation.

Mr. CORSER: It has provided continuous work for the men, increased wages, and happiness for their homes and wives and families. It has made the industrial worker too happy for our friends on the other side. (Government laughter.) What are the objections to the Industrial Peace Act?

Mr. GUNN: It has killed agitators.

Mr. CORSER: It will not only kill agitators, but it is an Act which provides a more lenient way of dealing with those in error than does the New South Wales enactment, placed there by a Labour Government. In one week in the Maitland district the Labour Minister for Works issued 600 summonses against the miners for refusing to work in consequence of some coal dust nuisance. Have we anything like that here? Do our measures provide for anything more stringent than that? We have had industrial peace, whilst the workers in other States have lost much time and money and happiness. The Local Government Act is also to be pulled to pieces. There is no doubt there is room for improvement in the Act, but I am afraid that the Government are not going to start where they can do good; they are going to pull the good out and place something bad there instead. A considerable extension of the fran-

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chise is proposed. I suppose they are going to take away from the man who has to have a large area of inferior land to produce the same amount on as his neighbour can do on a good and productive small area; they are going to take away from him his three votes or two votes which he secures by paying a higher rent to provide for himself the same existence as a man who gets one vote and has a cheap and small and good property.

Mr. FOLEY: You believe in plural voting!

Mr. CORSER: I believe in getting what one pays for, and I believe that the people in our shires should be represented on our shire councils. There is nothing foreshadowed as to any proposed assistance to the shire councils. I trust that the hon. member for Eacham will do what he can in the caucus meetings to bring in something to enable the local governments to get the assistance which they have been deprived of up to the present time—that is, to secure a percentage of the land revenue for local authorities to enable them to make good roads. I have advocated this being done on every occasion.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: And then voted against it.

Mr. CORSER: And then voted for it on every occasion. If the Government are out to do good for the greatest number, I trust they will do good to our people in the country. They have an opportunity now, after being in opposition so long, to amend and improve these Acts, and I hope they are going to do so. I would also like to know if the measure they intend to introduce gives any guarantee that the sole right of land taxation is going to be still vested in the local authority. That is one of the blessings of the Local Authorities Act. It is the greatest blessing that in this State the whole power of taxing land is left with the local authority.

Mr. FOLEY: Would you leave it in the hands of plural voters?

Mr. CORSER: Leave it in the hands of the electors in each division, the people who have gone out back to make their homes. If anybody else wants the votes, let him go out and endure the same hardships. Another measure that is going to be tampered with in some way or another is the Workers' Dwellings Act, an Act which has done a great amount of good for the workers in the cities. It has done so much good that the workers turned against those who were their friends. (Government laughter.) The past Government brought out immigrants from home, paid their passages, and assisted them when they got here by their better conditions to secure a piece of land.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Out of the rate-payers' money.

Mr. CORSER: Out of their own savings. They also provided them with a house out of the people's funds. Through the operation of the Workers' Dwellings Act and the use of Savings Bank money, it is made possible for them to provide themselves with a good home, and yet at election time these

are the people that turned round, [7 p.m.] and they will throw out the present Government when their time comes for judgment. The Government secured their position on the Treasury benches by misrepresenting the position. The

legislation they propose to put on the statute-book is new democracy, and is in the interests of a class. It is in the interests of a section of the community and to the detriment of the greatest number, to the detriment of the toiler, and chiefly the bush worker. With regard to the Workers' Dwellings Act, I might call attention to a remark made by one of the members sitting on the Government benches. That hon. gentleman said that the present Act was only of benefit for the capitalist.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Quite right.

Mr. CORSER: The hon. gentleman says, "Quite right." He means that a capitalist only can secure any benefit from the Workers' Dwellings Act. I do not know whether the supporters of hon. gentlemen opposite who have secured assistance from the Workers' Dwellings Board to enable them to erect workmen's cottages, will congratulate themselves on the fact that their friends in this House have dubbed them as capitalists, which is something very black at election times. I do not claim that the person who owns a £40 block of land, and secures assistance to get a workman's dwelling erected on it, is a capitalist. I am sorry that the Government are going to take away from these people the chance of getting assistance to help them in their thrift, and enable them to buy a cottage of their own. The Government are going to give the benefit to those who take up land under the perpetual lease system. Just as in the case of the Agricultural Bank, so with the Workers' Dwellings Board, it will be a serious matter to say where the money is going to come from. Now that the Commonwealth is issuing a loan, it will be a great inducement to our people who have money in the Savings Bank, industrial workers and others, to withdraw their money from the Savings Bank, where they are getting 3 per cent. interest, and take advantage of the Commonwealth loan and get the  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. interest offering. I hope the Government will see the advisability of securing sufficient money to make all the grants that will be required under the amending Agricultural Bank Act, which I trust the Government are going to introduce; if not, the people will invest in the Commonwealth loan.

Mr. LARCOMBE: There will not be the same flexibility, as they will not be able to draw when they please.

Mr. CORSER: That will not induce them to draw from  $4\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 per cent. I trust that one of the earliest Bills to be brought forward will be one to give assistance to the agricultural settler in times like the present. I hope they will make it possible for the agriculturist to secure more than 13s. 4d. in the £1.

Mr. BERTRAM: You voted against that amendment when we proposed it last year.

Mr. CORSER: I voted to increase it to 15s. in the £1. When the present Government introduce their amending Bill, they are going to make it applicable to perpetual leases. I say they should make it possible for an agriculturist to borrow £400 for unspecified purposes, and even more under such tenure.

Mr. BERTRAM: Your party opposed that last session.

Mr. CORSER: I am not answerable for what the party did.

Mr. MURPHY: That is the curse of party government.

Mr. CORSER: I claim that the Agricultural Bank Act of Queensland is the most liberal of any Agricultural Bank Act or any Assistance to Settlers Act in the Commonwealth, and members opposite know that that is so.

Mr. BERTRAM: What about the Western Australia Act?

Mr. CORSER: I will leave it to hon. members opposite to show where the Western Australia Act grants greater assistance. They have State machinery factories in Western Australia, and the settler is allowed up to 10s. in the £1 to buy machinery from the State workshops. In Queensland, he can secure up to 13s. 4d. on machinery, and he can buy it where he likes, while in Western Australia he is compelled to buy it from the State workshops. That means that in Western Australia he is advanced 10s. by the State, and he has to make up the other 10s. in the £1 himself, and in addition he has also to put his hand into his pocket to help make up the deficiency that takes place from year to year in those State workshops.

Mr. TOLMIE: The State machinery in Western Australia has not got the latest patents.

Mr. CORSER: No, and it is not considered by farmers to be first-class machinery. It is more expensive machinery than the farmer would have to pay if he bought an imported article, even with the duty added. Take a binder, for instance.

Mr. GILLIES: Have you got a brief for the harvester trust?

Mr. CORSER: I have not got a brief for the harvester trust, nor have I got a brief for hon. members opposite. If any hon. gentleman likes to look up the estimates of cost of the State harvesters in Western Australia, and the imported article, he will see that the State machine costs £54, and is graded third-class by the farmer who uses it. The State machine is called "The Gem," and is a third-class machine. You can buy a McCormack binder, a first-class machine, for £35.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: The "McCormack" has a good name. (Hear, hear! and laughter.)

Mr. CORSER: The McCormack is a first-class one, and with all the cost of freight and duty added it is only £1 more than the State machine, a third-class article.

Mr. BERTRAM: How do you account for the fact that the Farmers' party in Western Australia are supporting the Labour Government there? (Government laughter.)

Mr. CORSER: If hon. members opposite think that the Farmers' party are going to support them they will be disappointed, just as the Labour party in New South Wales were about the farmers. We should protect the farmer, especially the farmer who is growing wheat and the man who is manufacturing butter. The butter manufacturer has to compete in a freetrade market in London. He has no protection at all.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He is getting good prices there.

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Mr. CORSER: Yes, and as soon as the price goes up, the State Government imports butter or brings in hay free. That is all the protection the farmer here gets.

Hon. J. A. FHELLY: Who has been telling you that?

Mr. CORSER: I know it from practical experience, unfortunately. Where is the fairness in that? As soon as the price goes up it is allowed in free, or imported by the State.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: In where?

Mr. CORSER: In the States the Commonwealth takes the duty off. Further, might I ask: Why is not the same condition applicable when it might act detrimentally to the industrial worker? We know that under the Lyne tariff iron and steel were admitted free, and under the Tudor tariff, in 1913, they collected from the farmer £27,513 duty on iron and steel wire. Now, during a time like this, when there are troubles and trials—when our people have to fulfil the conditions on their farms, when they must, by Act of Parliament, provide improvements and the necessary fencing, they must fell their scrubs and provide wire netting, and they must have their iron—why not have these duties taken off these necessities, and thus assist the farmers when the prices of these commodities have doubled? If you are going to assist one section of the community to the detriment of the farmer, why not assist the farmer when it is no detriment to another section, because the industrial worker can secure union wages for the articles that are manufactured? There is another matter that the present Government are going to tamper with to some great degree, and that is the fish proposition. Cheap fish is most desirable, and cheap food is most desirable when possible. Our friends opposite owe a lot to the cheap food cry, and I hope before long good seasons will make it possible for them to carry out their promises; nothing else will. What was this action of the fishermen? It was for the fishermen's own protection. To prevent them from glutting the market on one occasion unnecessarily, they did something the same as the Labour party did when they were in Opposition. The Labour party have opposed the introduction of assisted immigrants, because they were afraid that it would glut the labour market. The fishermen were probably strong unionists, and they did not want all their fish to get on the market in one day, and thereby throw them out of work for a week or a fortnight, and probably they might have had some means of securing for themselves their daily bread; and they acted in a certain way.

The PREMIER: What way?

Mr. CORSER: I am not a fisherman, and there are no fishermen in my electorate, but I claim that there are two sides to every question. At election time the whole of the fish trouble was brought up, but the country electors never see a bit of fish except they catch it in the river or depend upon these fishermen. Why should these people catch a large quantity of fish if they are not going to be compensated for it? Why should they collect an amount of fish if they are going to be done out of their "full time"? We find our friends, the Federal Government, won't, even at a time like this, keep our small arms factory going; they delayed

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in taking action to keep the Lithgow works going three shifts. Why should not the fishermen hold to themselves one shift in their boats to enable them to make a living? It was simply owing to the fact that they saw it was going to take their bread from them that they took some action which might not be right, but the past Government were not to blame for that.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: They threw away their daily bread.

Mr. CORSER: They saved to themselves their daily bread. I trust that whatever action the Government do take, that these men, although they might not be good unionists, will receive proper consideration, so that they will be able to earn sufficient wages from day to day. No doubt they will get it if our friends on the other side introduce trawlers such as the New South Wales Government have done, and leave them lying idle, and the people getting no fish. If this State does run their own industries, I hope the Government will see that they run them better than the New South Wales Government have controlled the men who were working on these expensive trawlers, which were brought from the other side; and if they do not do so, country members will be given a trial on those Treasury benches. (Government laughter.) I might say that some remarks have been made as to the reason why Queensland has not increased the area under cultivation. It seems to be a big problem, and the statement wants counter-acting to some extent. In 1913-14 "Knibbs" states that there were 747,814 acres under cultivation, including the sugar lands; and in 1910-11 there were 667,113 acres under cultivation. Not a very great difference, but it is accountable for, all the same. In the first place, the reason why New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia are so tremendously ahead of us in the area under cultivation is owing to the fact that they are wheat-growing countries, and it is possible to put in large areas with large machines—to scarify huge areas which are planted with wheat—and they are called cultivated areas. In Queensland we have got to plough our land if we want to get a crop.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: So do they in the other States.

Mr. CORSER: There are exceptions where they plough and harrow the land, but, as a general rule, it is simply scarified land, and it is included in the cultivated land. The wheat-growing countries always show a tremendous area under cultivation. New South Wales produced in 1913-14, 38,000,000 bushels of wheat; Victoria, 32,956,000 bushels; South Australia, 16,936,000 bushels; and Queensland, 1,769,000 bushels. That is the reason why we are so much behind the other States in the area under cultivation. Now for the reason why our area has not increased. That is simply because the Darling Downs, that were settled first, are going out of cultivation, because the people are finding that in the Burnett electorate, and places like that, they are able to secure better land; but it takes time. It takes time to clear this land.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: What have they substituted on the Downs?

Mr. TOLMIE: Dairying and sheep.

Mr. CORSER: If the area has increased by 50,000 acres in the Burnett district this year by the felling of scrub, it has to lie

five years under grass before clearing the stumps and put it under permanent cultivation. So that those 50,000 acres which are included in the cultivated land this year disappear again for the next four years. So it is from year to year, and eventually by the time our friends opposite have been in office for some little time this land will be coming back to its fifth year and will be termed "cultivated land" again. When our scrubs are felled it is cultivated land for one year only, and then for the next four years it is under grass, producing milk. There is another reason: In Queensland many of the settlers are not devoted to the cultivating of their land; they are devoted to the clearing of pear on their land to enable them to cultivate it afterwards. That is what is keeping the area of cultivation down, and I think hon. members will agree that the reasons are sound and good, and it is only by increasing the number of farms that you can increase the area with these conditions and these obstacles. I want to say that if our friends opposite are going to be dominated by the Trades Hall—(Government laughter)—I suppose we may expect something similar to the action of the Trades Hall in Victoria, where a Trades Hall committee demanded a special session of Parliament to bring in a Compulsory Cultivation Bill—a Bill to compel the farmers of Victoria to put their hands in their pockets and employ the unemployed in cultivating in bad times. I trust they will not do the same here. Then, the bad seasons have a lot to do with it. People in the cities do not consider it. Look at the conditions on Jimbour; look at the thousands of acres that are put under cultivation there year after year from which there is no return! How many years have those people and people in other districts worked like that without any profit? Is it possible for them to store food and increase their areas? Then, there is something else that is threatening the farmer, the rural workers' log. (Government laughter.) The rural workers' log is possibly not so great a bogey to the farmers as the conditions will be when our friends on the other side have carried out the enactments which they propose. The rural worker is increasing the cost to the farmer of his labour, and on the other side we have the actions of the Government restricting the price of that article. They are bringing about a state of things which will compel him to pay more for his article and protect the consumers by securing to the farmer the lowest return for that increased cost. They are asking the farmer to pay a minimum wage to the worker; they can pay as much over it as they like for the man who can do any work.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Do you object to that?

Mr. CORSER: No, I do not, provided you are consistent right through. In the town here you are going to bring in regulations and enactments which are going to compel him to sell at a certain price—he can sell as much under it as he likes, but he must not sell over it—although you can pay the man as much over the minimum wage as you like.

The PREMIER: As a matter of fact, he is selling at under the price now.

Mr. CORSER: What is he selling under the price?

The PREMIER: Butter; he is selling under 196s.

Mr. CORSER: He is selling it under the price the grocer buys it at, but the grocer has to make a profit. The farmer secures 196s. less the cost of manufacture.

The PREMIER: I say under the price that is fixed. Under the price that we are paying for it.

Mr. CORSER: The farmer does not make the butter at home, and even so, how much more could they have got for it if you had not taken such action?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They are selling it under it.

Mr. CORSER: There is no proof, as my questions to-day will show. What evidence has the Premier to show that?

The PREMIER: By offering butter at cost price, and we were told that they could do better elsewhere.

Mr. CORSER: Why stop them from doing better? What have the present Government done for the consumer so far as butter is concerned? On the 22nd May—we all know the date of the election—butter was offering at 205s. Butter went after the election to 215s. When it was 215s. the grocer was paying 1s. 11 1/2d. per pound, and selling it at 2s. 1d. And now it is 196s. The grocer paid to the factory 1s. 9d., and at the present time he is selling it at 1s. 11d., where he secures it at that price.

Mr. TOLMIE: And the best at 2s.

Mr. CORSER: That is, in 56-lb. boxes; he has to break it up and have other costs. I would like to refer to the Elections Act, the Act that was kicked about a good deal last session. We were told that we were bringing about a state of things that would make it impossible for the Labour party to secure power. But we brought something in which made it possible, and, unfortunately, gave them some weapons to contest the election on.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: That was not your intention. (Laughter.)

Mr. CORSER: It was our intention to do our duty to the people and the State and to you. You may claim that there are anomalies in that Act. Are there not anomalies in every Electoral Act? If there are not, why did the Commonwealth Act contain a clause which made it necessary for every Labour man to vote for a Liberal candidate for the Senate? Was that not an anomaly?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That was in a certain emergency.

Mr. CORSER: And the Federal Prime Minister has been asked to rectify it. And if the late Government were in power to-day, they would be quite willing to listen to any propositions to remove any anomalies that might be found in the Bill when it was put into operation. It was a splendid Act. It had only one fault, and that was that it made it possible for the Labour party to adversely criticise a fair measure. A return has been asked for by the hon. member for Toowoong in connection with election figures, and the only thing he did not ask for was the number of postal votes given for Liberal candidates and the number given for Labour candidates. It would be very interesting if the Hon. the Chief Secretary informed us of that. I am not opposed to a fair Elections Act, a simplification of the Elections Act, but I am totally opposed to a six months in Australia qualification, and one month in an electorate, if there are no clauses to make it

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impossible for a man to be on two or three electoral rolls at the same time. I will support any measure that goes to make it impossible for an elector to be on more than one roll at the same time, and that is what that measure did to the greatest extent, and that was all that it was intended to do. I want to refer just for a moment to railway works. I am strongly in favour of some sort of public works committee to decide upon routes, and I do not mind if they start out in the electorates right away, among those lines which were passed, and select the best of the lot, because then the Burnett electorate will have a railway that it should have had thirty years ago. I have been here three years, and the first railways included the Upper Burnett Railway, which should have been included twenty years before. I thank the Minister for the information as to the railways we are going to get—the Minister in the past did not give us any information—but he has given us the information, even if it is good or bad, and it fortunately provides for a railway to Proston, a settlement which for the last four or five or six years has been struggling away, waiting for a line, satisfied with the conditions and their prospects. It will be a very beneficial line, and no line in the State has better claims. Then, what about the Upper Burnett? Unfortunately—and the hon. member for Bundaberg and

[7.30 p.m.] the hon. member for Maryborough will know it—it suffered by its number of suitors. They all wanted their railways into various parts of the Burnett. In 1904, a commission inquired into the areas of land available for settlement, and they reported that in the Upper Burnett district alone there were 1,400,000 acres.

Mr. CARTER: The line should have gone to Gladstone.

Mr. CORSER: I am not going to say where it should have gone to. That should be for experts to decide. We want right to be might, and we want the line to go by the best route, so that there may be as much land as possible producing. Make available our lands. Do not allow them to lie idle. The Lands Office have written across the Upper Burnett map, "No action to be taken until the action of the Railway Department is made known." That is what the Secretary for Lands has to unravel, and I trust that he will do it at an early date, and that, when he lays his scheme before us, it will make provision for opening up roads and providing water on farms. The last Secretary for Lands did his best to bring about settlement, and it was not his fault that something has not been done in this direction in the Upper Burnett. I trust that the Premier will not take any notice of the talk about ready-made farms; we want assistance from the Agricultural Bank to make it possible for people to make their own farms. Money should be provided by the bank, and a man should be allowed to work and secure money to develop his farm. Keep the work in the bush for the men in the bush. There are plenty of men there looking for work in these dry times. The hon. member for Oxley said that land monopoly was rampant in Queensland to-day, yet only 4 per cent. of our lands are alienated. Later on the hon. member said, in answer to an interjection from the hon. member for Drayton, that he had a larger farm than the hon. member. Good luck to him—I am glad to know that he has—but it was hardly in keep-

ing with his earlier statement. I am afraid that the workers in the bush are not going to get the assistance from the front Treasury bench that they expected they were going to get. They are not likely to get much from representatives who are tied hand and foot to a party who are not free to act in the best interests of the whole community.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Are you a farmer?

Mr. CORSER: Yes, I am a farmer.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: What party do you belong to?

Mr. CORSER: I am a member of the Opposition, and I will do my best to see that the Government carry out the responsibilities thrust upon them. I hope that the various sections sitting in Opposition will come behind the elected leader of the Opposition, the hon. member for Toowong, in putting up a fight for the interests of the section that has put us here and safeguard the State whenever we have an opportunity of doing it in the House.

Mr. PETERSON (*Normanby*): I have listened with a great deal of attention to the leader of the Opposition, the hon. member for Albert, and the hon. member for Burnett, and I may say that what they have said here is just what the supporters of that party said to the electors of Normanby at the last election. For over thirty years my electorate has been represented by a supporter of the party which are now, fortunately, on the Opposition side of the House. The result is that the electors said, "We have stood thirty years of Liberal Governments, and we have got nothing from them, and now we are going to have a change." (Hear, hear!) My electorate is one of the oldest settled constituencies in Queensland, and what have the farmers there ever received from past Governments? I am the answer to it to-day. I have been returned to represent those men. They knew that so long as they returned the party which was in power in the last Parliament and in previous Parliaments so long would Queensland remain the most backward State in the Commonwealth. It is because the people have awakened to a sense of their responsibility that they have placed this Government on the front Treasury bench. Much has been said about the Government owing its return to the high cost of living. I believe that there was an even more important factor in securing the return of this party to power than the high cost of living. In my electorate leading Liberals came to me and said, "Peterson, I am going to support you because it was the Labour party which gave to Australia its great navy, and it was your party which inaugurated compulsory military training."

Mr. FORSYTH: It was not the Labour party which created the Australian navy.

Mr. PETERSON: It was the Federal Labour party which was the initiator of our great navy, and leading Liberals said that, if the Federal Labour party could initiate such great national schemes, the State Labour party should be placed in power in the State to see what it could do. All the talk we hear about the high cost of living being responsible for placing us here is so much surplusage. In the short time I have been in this House I have heard hon. members on the other side advocating that this Government should do certain things, and yet they sat behind their Government for years and never did those things. Here we have the hon. member for Burnett getting up, and,

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in his closing words, urging the Government to give financial assistance through the Agricultural Bank to settlers on the land. If any hon. member will look up "Hansard"—as I did and showed it to my electors—he will find that, with the exception of the hon. member for Murilla on one occasion, those hon. members always voted against allowing the settlers on the land to get more money from the Agricultural Bank.

Mr. CORSER: I voted for increasing the amount to 15s. in the £1.

Hon. J. A. FHELLY: You sat on that bench and saw how the numbers were going first.

Mr. CORSER: I sat on that bench, then.

Mr. PETERSON: If the man on the land wants to know who is his true friend, the truest test is to find out who is ready to help him in times of trial and tribulation. My sympathy goes out to the farmer and the dairyman, and any votes I can give to better their condition will always be given by me, together with the other members of this party. When the members of the Opposition had the opportunity of assisting the man on the land, where were they? Whenever this party wanted to assist the man on the land, not one of those hon. members supported those on this side, and that is one cause why Normanby has sent me here. The members on the other side say they are the friends of the man on the land, but every time legislation has been brought forward for the purpose of wiping out the middleman or doing anything that would help the workers, those hon. members were never found supporting it. I may say, in passing, that I have noticed that when any reference is made to the bettering of the conditions of the workers or to increasing wages, a sneer always crosses the countenances of hon. members on the other side. I do not know why that should be so. I started work at an early age, and for the past twenty years I have been associated with the Labour movement, and both from the land point of view and from the industrial aspect I have come to the conclusion that the party which has the best interests of the people at heart is the party which sits on this side of the House. I am here to support them. I wish now to refer briefly to a few remarks made by the hon. member for Albert. The hon. member stated that many farmers are surrounded by drought. We all know that, but incidentally the hon. member inferred, indeed he said, that many farmers are producing nothing. He also stated that this party are taking away from the farmers the added value which butter would bring on account of the tightness of the market. The hon. member apparently lost sight of the fact that many farmers in Queensland who are producing nothing use butter, and will get the benefit of the price fixed by the Control of Prices Board.

Mr. STEVENS: No; they do without it.

Mr. PETERSON: This is a poor commentary on thirty years' Liberal government—that a farmers' representative admits that the effect of one drought compelled farmers to do without butter. A number of those farmers use butter, and they have to pay the price fixed by the board.

Mr. STEVENS: What sort of an argument is that?

Mr. PETERSON: I am going to show the hypocrisy of hon. members opposite before I have done, as I did right through the

Normanby electorate. I only wish I had been a candidate for the Burnett. (Laughter.)

Mr. CORSER: You wouldn't have been here if you had.

Mr. PETERSON: I am very pleased that hon. members opposite are taking exception to what I am saying. With regard to the fixing of prices, I think there is a great deal of justification for what the hon. member for Albert said on this subject. I say, as he does, that in fixing the price of butter, that price should be computed from the cost of production.

Mr. STEVENS: Will your party do that?

Mr. PETERSON: Oh, yes! they will do it. The basis on which the price of butter is fixed should be the cost of production, just as when workers go before a wages board asking for an increase of wages they often bring up the question of the high cost of living, and the wages board fix wages with regard to the cost of living in the various localities where they have jurisdiction. The very same rule should apply with regard to the fixing of the prices of commodities. That is only fair and just, and I, for one, will do my part in that direction, and I am sure the Government will do their part also. I desire to refer briefly to the speech made by the hon. member for Burnett, Mr. Corser, but I shall let him down as lightly as possible. (Laughter.) In his opening remarks the hon. member stated with a great deal of flamboyancy that there are no trusts and combines in Queensland. The hon. member said this party went to the country on the cry of trusts and combines, and in grandiloquent language he derided us and asserted that there are no trusts and combines in this State. Then incidentally he said these trusts are fleecing the people, and later on he stated that he would assist the Government to deal with trusts which are making undue profits. (Government laughter.) I took a correct note of what the hon. member said, and, as I have observed already, in his opening remarks he stated that there are no trusts and combines here, and later on wound up by saying, "Mr. Speaker, I shall be all there to help the Government to stop these fellows getting undue profits."

Mr. CORSER: "Undue profits."

Mr. PETERSON: Hon. members who in the past have posed in this House as the farmers' representatives told the electors that they were independent. I challenge any one of those farmers' representatives to name two consecutive occasions when they voted against the past Government. The hon. member for Burnett stated in his opening remarks that he was independent, and he wound up his speech by asking members of the Opposition to place themselves behind the hon. member for Toowong.

Mr. CORSER: To support the leader of the Opposition.

Mr. PETERSON: With reference to the statement that the action of the Labour party has been detrimental to the man on the land, I wish to say I distinctly remember that about fifteen years ago in the Rockhampton district, of which I am a native, when farmers in the surrounding districts brought their produce into Rockhampton they did not sell it for money, but had to take goods for it from the merchants. They had to take what they could get.

Mr. HODGE: They cannot get money to-day.

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Mr. PETERSON: I can remember also a farmer in my electorate bringing in 3 tons of pumpkins and offering them for sale to a Liberal storekeeper, one of the so-called friends of the man on the land. The farmer asked this storekeeper what he would give for the pumpkins, and the storekeeper replied, "I don't want them; take them away." Later on, after taking the pumpkins round the town and failing to get rid of them, the farmer went to the storekeeper again and said to him, "I cannot get rid of the pumpkins; take them." The storekeeper said, "All right," and gave the man £1 10s. for the pumpkins, and afterwards sold them for £4 per ton. That was done by a gentleman who went round my electorate and claimed that the Liberals are the friends of the man on the land. Since the Labour party came into the arena of State politics the time for that kind of thing has gone by, and farmers in my electorate can now bring their produce into the market and get good for it. In the old days, under the rule of Liberal middlemen, they had to take what they could get for their products.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They had a system of barter.

Mr. PETERSON: Yes, they had to take goods in exchange for their products. The change which has taken place since the advent of the Labour party reminds me very much of a little boy who had some kittens he wanted to sell. He went to a lady's place, knocked at the door, and when the lady came out asked her if she wanted to buy some kittens. She said, "Yes, what kind of kittens are they?" The boy said, "They are Liberal kittens." The lady said, "Take them away, I don't want them," and he went away. Ten days later the boy went round again, and asked her if she wanted to buy any kittens. The lady replied in the affirmative, and again asked what kind of kittens they were. The boy said they were Labour kittens. The lady said, "You rascal, the last time you were here you told me they were Liberal kittens." The boy said, "Oh, they have their eyes open now." (Laughter.) So the people of Queensland have had their eyes opened, and now we have the Labour party on the Treasury benches. (Hear, hear!) The leader of the Opposition, in his opening remarks, laid great stress on this statement—

"The policy of the Government, as far as I can see, does not cause the cows to give milk; they have not caused the cost of things to go down in any shape or form."

As far as my electorate is concerned, I say that if the past Government had done their duty to the farmers, there would not have been a shortage of butter to-day. In my electorate there are 500 farmers settled in the Deedford district alone. They have taken up farms there, felled their scrub and burnt it, and many have splendid Rhodes grass growing; but these settlers have not been able, in the majority of cases, to put a single hoof on their farms, because they have not been able to get water from the so-called friends of the men on the land—from the ex-Government—and the result is that, instead of seeing thriving butter factories in that district, which they could have with the Rhodes grass growing there to-day, owing to the lax policy of the last Government in not assisting these settlers to get water, there is nothing there to-day but drought, and these

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men have to seek work in other avenues of employment. With respect to the hon. member's statement that we have not caused the cows to give milk, I say that if the late Government had done their part, the effects of the drought could have been greatly minimised. This Government will show what can be done, and if it does not show it, then I am going to speak candidly.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. PETERSON: I am absolutely convinced, from my experience of the members of the Cabinet, that this Government will show the people of Queensland that its sympathies go out to the man on the land. (Hear, hear!) I say also that the policy of a Government such as we had in power in Queensland for so many years, to open up land, build railways to it, and then leave starving settlers to their fate, is no credit to them. They turn round now, and ask what have we done for the man on the land? I retaliate, and say: "We have not had the opportunity to prove ourselves. You have had thirty years, and what have you done?" We find member after member getting up on the opposite side, and saying what we ought to do—do what they neglected to do.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. PETERSON: Our platform provides for certain benefits to the man on the land, and we can say that every man on this side is alive to the benefits which should be given to the man on the land.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. PETERSON: We do not find members on this side talking about being the leader of this or that party, and another saying he is an independent. We are united. The farmers know that we have a common policy in connection with land development, railway construction, roads, and also water. Given a little time and patience on the part of the people, and we will find that that policy is consummated, and the Liberal party will never see these benches again. We have one farming constituency represented for the first time, as far as Normanby is concerned, and I am just as competent in farming matters as members on the other side of the House claim to be. I will take a plough with them at any time. I am used to hard and industrial work; and I am sick and tired of hearing them gibe about us not understanding the work of the farmer. The farmers understand a lot about the Liberals. Let us go a little further, and analyse the actions of the friends of the men on the land. I have referred briefly to the hon. member for Toowong with regard to the cows. I have also tried to show that his Government neglected the farmers in my district. Now, here is the main point of his address: He said that the cost of living has not gone down. What has happened? We admit that the cost of living has not gone down, but it has gone very little higher. If the Liberal party had been returned, I will tell you what would have been the prices. Bread would have been 9d. for a 2-lb. loaf, butter 3s. 6d. per lb., flour £28 per ton, and sugar £40 per ton. Hon. members opposite, in criticising the Government and their actions, forget the fact that the brake has been put on.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. PETERSON: The hon. member for Toowoong also stated that there were no trusts, no combines, and no exploiters. The ex-Premier, Mr. Denham, let the cat out of the bag. He showed unmistakably that there were exploiters at work, because, in a report of his speech, which appeared in the "Toowoomba Chronicle" just two weeks before the election, Mr. Denham said this—

"The profits of middlemanism were shown up exceptionally well by some remarks made by Mr. Denham in Toowoomba a few days before the elections. According to a Press report—

"He emphatically denied a statement that the firm with which he was connected had made any profit on wheat. He had received a letter from a Toowoomba resident stating that he had been informed that the firm of Messrs. Denham Brothers had made a big profit out of wheat, which they had purchased at a figure between 4s. 6d. and 4s. 9d. Mr. Denham said that his manager had informed him that to buy wheat at that price would be a good opportunity to make a profit, but he (Mr. Denham) had told his manager not to buy one bag of wheat as a speculation to make a profit. The manager had said that if he (the manager) had been given a free hand, he could have made from £5,000 to £8,000 profit on wheat."

How does that compare with the statement of hon. members opposite? Mr. Denham said that his firm did not operate in connection with this wheat deal, but the inference is that others were doing it. What were the actions of the Government of the day? Did they interfere and protect the farmer then, and protect the consumer? No. What happened in New South Wales? The Government there stepped in and protected the farmers. So much has been said about the evil influence of the Labour party against the man on the land, but how is it that the Labour party of New South Wales is back with a majority from the country representative of the farmers? I lived in New South Wales for twelve years, and I know what I am talking about. How is it that at a by-election in the middle of this wheat acquisition business the Labour candidate was returned at the head of the poll by a bigger majority than ever before, in the largest wheat-growing district in the State? I could quote extracts from communications which the Minister has received from various farmers in connection with that, just to show the hypocrisy of hon. members opposite in urging that the Government are out to hurt the farmer. I wish to be brief, and not weary the House with long quotations like the hon. member for Albert. This is an extract from the "Sydney Morning Herald" of 29th September, 1914—

"Mr. Hall said there was no development in connection with the pronouncement made by Mr. Hughes regarding the constitutional aspects of the situation. 'There are some farmers in the country,' he said, 'who appreciate what is being done by the Government. Mr. George Valder, chairman of the Wheat Acquisition Board, has handed me two letters, which are typical of many that have been received. An extract from one of them reads: 'Your action in this matter deserves great credit, and, although the Press may call down condemnation on

behalf of the speculators, the public generally appreciate your move, for the farmers are getting a fair price now. There are farmers in this district who sold the whole of their wheat weeks ago at from 3s. 9d. to 4s. 3d., and this same wheat was, prior to your proclamation on the 18th, being rushed across the border, where it was sold up to 6s. 4d. The farmers now know that they will receive at least 5s., for the whole of the contracts have been cancelled, and they are getting some of their own back. They have to work hard for it. I can give you many instances like this, if you require them.'"

I can also produce a letter from the secretary of the Warra Warra Farmers' Union, in New South Wales, a letter which he also sent to that board, praising, by way of a resolution from his association, the Government for their action in protecting the farmers; and so it is right throughout the whole piece. I know who it is that squeals. It is the middleman in Sussex street; that man who joins the farmers' association, who has a big diamond ring, a motor-car, and a big cigar. He joins as an honorary member of the farmers' association, and his location is in Sussex street, Sydney. These are the men who are squealing in New South Wales, but the people have voted and placed the Labour party in power. The Labour party has been returned after a three years' trial with a greater majority than ever, and I maintain that if we get the same ratio of increased representation next time there will be no Opposition at all.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. PETERSON: I want to read this letter. Since I have become the member for Normanby, judging from the correspondence I receive, the Normanby must have been a very neglected electorate, and I am almost thinking of asking the Premier to appoint a junior member for Normanby. (Laughter.) Bushley is in my electorate, and

[8 p.m.] it is one of the places that hit me hard at the last election.

There are a great number of settlers there who belong to the Liberal Association. I have a letter here which I received from the secretary of the Farmers and Graziers' Association at Bushley, and he encloses a letter which was sent to the Minister for Agriculture, which I will read. This is a letter, mind you, from an association known as the Farmers and Graziers' Progress Association, and nine-tenths of its members are Liberals. Listen to this—

"F. and G. Progress Association,

"Bushley,

"22/6/15.

"The Minister for Agriculture, Brisbane.

"Sir,—I have the honour, by direction of my association, to request that you will immediately take into consideration the establishment of State markets—"

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. PETERSON: Do you hear that? State markets! These farmers are beginning to have their eyes opened. It goes on—

"for the disposal and distribution of farmers' produce at Rockhampton and Mount Morgan.

"In support of this request, am further directed to point out that the establishment of such markets will have the great

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advantage of encouragement of production, which is the only essential making for reduction in the cost of living.

"By receiving full market value for his product, less selling commission, instead of having to accept the ridiculous prices offered by the middlemen as at present—"

How is this from the Farmers' Association at Bushley? They now see that the party which has led them through the wilderness for forty years has led them into a morass. (Government laughter.) I have not finished this letter yet. Here is some more—

"would be an important factor in encouraging the farmer to increase his production, and the consumer would have the opportunity of purchasing his requirements, pure and fresh, at a price according to supply and demand, without having to add middlemen's profits amounting, occasionally, to over 100 per cent.

"Trusting you will kindly give this matter your urgent and serious consideration, and hoping for a favourable reply,

"I am,

"Yours faithfully,

"E. WALMSLEY,

"Hon. Secretary."

What greater indictment can we have against the late Government than that? Here we have an association composed of gentlemen, who, for years past, have supported the late Government, and we have them now coming to us, and asking us to see that they get a fair measure of justice, to which they are richly entitled. I shall do my utmost for them, and I hope that when the Local Authorities Act is being considered, it will include in its provisions one allowing full scope to permit municipalities to enter into this business to provide proper facilities for farmers to get the full value of their products. (Hear, hear!) It is one of the matters mentioned in our platform that the worker shall get the full result of his industry, and I am here to see that the farmer and the worker gets the full result of his industry also.

AN OPPOSITION MEMBER: What about co-operation?

MR. PETERSON: What have hon. members opposite done for co-operation? When we on this side proposed last session to give increased assistance for co-operation, hon. members opposite voted against it.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETERSON: No wonder that the farmers of Queensland are beginning to see things from our standpoint!

MR. BAYLEY: The Country party were not here last year.

MR. PETERSON: The Country party will disappear altogether before the next election. (Government laughter.) The next matter referred to in the Speech is an amendment of the Agricultural Bank Act. There are many settlers in my electorate who have been forced to take advantage of the provisions of that Act. It is no use hon. members sneering at these men for having so taken advantage

of it. One inducement held out to men to go on the land is that they will get the benefit of this Act. When hon. members talk about lending the farmers money in connection with the Agricultural Bank Act, they forget to say that it is money taken out of the Savings Bank—money put there by myself and others throughout Queensland. What is the position? We find people in my electorate, and in other electorates, who find the provisions of the Agricultural Bank Act very harsh indeed. The Government, first of all, sell them the land. The Government fix the price, and the settler buys it. Say the price is fixed at £1 an acre, and the settler buys it right out. Say he buys 100 acres, which at £1 an acre would amount to £100. Later on he applies for an advance on his land, which he offers as security for the loan. He asks for £100, according to the value the Government put on it when he bought it. He gets a letter from the Agricultural Bank saying that the inspector of the bank inspected the land, and reckons it is worth 15s. an acre. That is the way the previous Government assisted the man on the land. They sell him the land at £1 an acre, and when he sends that in as the value, the Government refuses to accept it. These facts cannot be denied. I am confident that the present Administration will see that these absurd anomalies are overcome, and that better conditions financially will be given to these struggling farmers. Anyone would think, when members opposite rise in their places and talk about the man who goes out into the backblocks and carves out his home, and gets rid of the prickly-pear, that they have a monopoly of that sentiment. We have seen it all ourselves, and know the trials of the settler. If the members now in Opposition can show where their Government dealt with these matters, then I am prepared to have a better opinion of them than I have had in the past. We know that the prickly-pear is increasing at the rate of 1,000,000 acres per year, year after year. I hope, when the Agricultural Bank Act comes forward, that there will be more liberal assistance given to these men. I hope that the Government will also pay attention to the question of prompt inspection and payment. I have letters in my box at the present time from men who have applied for assistance from this bank, and great delay has been experienced before they can get it. That delay seriously inconveniences these people. When this measure is before the House, I shall direct more attention to it, and perhaps offer some cogent reasons why the House should accept the suggestions which the hon. member for Burnett and myself are making. There is also the question of water conservation and irrigation. It is remarkable how this great question has always been shelved. I was pleased to hear the hon. member for Albert lay particular stress upon it. No Government can expect to have a successful land policy unless the question of water conservation and water irrigation is gone into.

MR. GUNN: Commandeer the water.

MR. PETERSON: I am afraid there will be a drought then. With regard to water conservation and irrigation, we find that in New South Wales, despite the fact that Labour rules supreme there, the Yanco irrigation works have been established, and 7,000 farms will be irrigated from it. I do not want to weary the House with figures,

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but I just wish to show what has been accomplished by the Labour Government in New South Wales. We have had fifty years of Liberal rule in Queensland, and we have not one single water conservation scheme in Queensland. Can any member show me where there has been any attempt made to secure water conservation in Queensland?

Mr. VOWLES: Yes, Irvingdale Scrub.

Mr. GUNN: In the Weengallan area.

Mr. PETERSON: That is private.

Mr. TOLMIE: No, public.

Mr. PETERSON: It is most remarkable that you have to get a microscope to find it. We find that in July, 1912, to June, 1914, 673 farms were granted on the Yanco irrigation scheme, and the total amount taken up under this scheme was 27,520 acres; and the declared capital of those 673 farmers was £407,947. Now, hon. members had said that the Labour party in the other States do not help the man on the land like the past Queensland Government has done. I would like hon. members to bear with me for a moment to see if I cannot refute that statement. With regard to houses and sheds, we find on the irrigation areas there the Government erect houses for the settlers, and that is repaid by a deposit of 10 per cent. on the total cost, and the balance is spread over twelve years at 5 per cent. Here the Liberal Government allow a paltry £45. Go out into the new districts and see the condition of these men that hon. members opposite plead for! You find them there with their wives and little children in a bark hut, a hut of bags, or a hut covered with galvanised iron. Yet these men are the friends of the man on the land! On the other hand, when new men come into power, we find that as soon as they take over the administration they intend bringing in legislation to give the men on the land equal opportunities with the worker in the city, who gets his workers' dwelling. We say the Government that will do this kind of thing is not a Government to be sneered at by members of the Opposition. (Hear, hear!) Let us go further. They also provide fencing and building material, and they give them ten years' terms with a deposit of 5 per cent. Then with regard to cattle—and these cattle are specially selected by experts—the deposit asked by the department is £1 10s. per head, and the balance monthly at 10s. per head, and three months given before the first payment. That is to enable the man who goes on these irrigation areas—when he goes on his irrigation area he goes in for crops, and on other parts, which are allowed him for dairying, and so on—he can immediately get a return by having these cows, and the Government there advance these amounts on the most liberal terms in order to allow the farmer to secure a return. Then there is also electric power provided when the number of settlers warrants such provision. Then again, we find the New South Wales Government have formed 205 miles of road. I would like some hon. members opposite to come into my electorate, and into the Keppel electorate, and see the magnificent roads the poor unfortunate man on the land has had to contend with for years past under the administration of our friends opposite. We find at Yanco also that there are 250 miles of reticulation channels, and 147 miles of drains. What has been the result of this policy, and it is not complete yet? What has been the result to

the people of New South Wales? We have heard a lot about the extra wheat acreage, and the discount put upon that by the hon. member for Burnett, but here is a result of practical efforts. We find that on that irrigation area there are 500 acres under stone fruits, 100 acres under vines, 3,000 acres under lucerne, 8,000 acres under fodder crops, and 200 acres under vegetables, and the population there now, where there were not twenty before, is over 4,000. That is under the system which the Labour party are bringing to a successful end in New South Wales. Not only is that water conservation scheme there, but also provision is being made for one on the Murray, on the Darling River, on the Hunter, on the Lachlan, and Murrumbidgee Rivers. And I appeal to my friends to remember this fact, if we want to do well in this State—that we cannot get away from the fact that, unless we have sound land laws, unless we give every facility for the men in the country to develop the country, and provide them with the necessary facilities, we cannot expect the success that we would otherwise have, and a Government that will do this, I venture to say, will have a perpetual lease of this side of the House.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. PETERSON: So much has been said that the Labour party has done nothing to assist the public in this great crisis—that we have absolutely failed in our promise to reduce the cost of living; that we have also failed in regard to certain other reforms that they accuse us of having given utterance to at the last election. But here is the position: As has been pointed out by the hon. member for Burnett, Queensland stands last, with the exception of small Tasmania, in the matter of cultivation. We find also that no practical provision has been made by past Governments in regard to increasing the wheat areas. We find that only yesterday the New South Wales Government just completed the putting in of 11,000 acres of wheat. The Government themselves employed men to plant the wheat, and when we have been in power—say, for three years, as they have been—we will be able to show at the end of our term that we can do things in the same way that the New South Wales Labour party has done. And I make bold to say that if we get a longer period than three years, the position will ultimately end in Queensland, instead of being the most backward State in the Commonwealth, being the finest. (Hear, hear!) I am a native of Queensland, and I am proud of my native State, but I am not proud of the lagging position she holds in the Commonwealth to-day; and I hold that with the progressive policy that has been placed before the House in His Excellency's Speech as a forerunner, we will have in Queensland a condition such as we have not hitherto had. I am not going to weary the House at further length, but I would like to deal briefly with the Elections Act. Hon. members opposite have said that we cannot accuse them of any ulterior motive in connection with that Act; that we cannot say it has been unfair. I make bold to say that if the Elections Act had been fair at all, there would have been only two members of the Opposition returned to Parliament. The hon. member for Albert, I regret, is not in his place. I told him I would take up his challenge. He challenged any hon. member to show where that Act dealt harshly. What happened to the men working on the Dawson

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Valley Railway extension? The elections were, first of all, fixed for about 1st May. I am not going to make a charge or anything of that kind, but it seems a most peculiar coincidence that the railway was finished just in time to prevent those men voting for me at the elections.

Mr. TOLMIE: The elections were not fixed for 1st May.

Mr. PETERSON: I have been told that the late Government promised that. Who is it that blazes the way for the farmer to get his produce to market? Who is it that goes out and lives in tents and in many cases takes his wife and children there? Who is it that lives under unfair conditions? It is the navy on railway construction. These men—and I challenge contradiction—these men were refused a vote in the country in which they were born by the party opposite. I defy contradiction when I say that these men were sent to Winton and were refused the right to have a say in the government of the country. (Opposition dissent.) Hon. members opposite may sneer, and yet these same men will get on the hustings and say, "Go to the war."

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: They vote Labour.

Mr. PETERSON: I know, but they were not so successful in getting them off the North Coast line. I was watching them all day. They did not succeed in getting them off the roll. I shepherded those votes night and day. (Hear, hear!) I say that if ever this party is returned to power by that means—by depriving Britishers of the right to vote in their own country—I would leave it. The action of the Opposition in that matter was worth a vote of censure, and I am sure the hon. member for Mount Morgan and the hon. member for Keppel will bear me out in what I say. It is the absolute truth. When that kind of thing prevailed, are we to sit here and allow hon. members to say that the Act did not deal harshly? In what way could it have been less harsh? I say that the very fact of it operating in that way—to preclude men who are out to develop the State as those men are doing—should teach us better; I say that, if anything, those men should get preference. And I ask hon. members—those who profess such a great interest in these struggling farmers and workmen—to go out there on those constructing works, as I have done, and as the hon. member for Mount Morgan and the hon. member for Keppel have done, and see the conditions which they and their wives and families have to put up with, and if they did so, they would say, "Well, men, we will do all we can for you." That is the British view to take. But, instead of that, what do we find? We find that Act passed in the dying hours of last session. What for? To deprive thousands of men of their votes. They have asked, "Where are they?" I will show you some of them, anyhow. And it does not stand to the credit of the past Government that they refused these men the right to a say in the affairs of their country. The hon. the leader of the Opposition has stated that he considers that twelve months is quite a short time enough for a man to reside in the Commonwealth before he can vote. I am sorry the hon. member for Nanango is not in his place, because I am going to deal with some electors from his electorate. Talk about harshness! A num-

ber of Kingaroy settlers came into my electorate and settled there and resided in the district for a little over two months. Under the Act, they had to get on another roll. The result was that they found that they had to be erased from the Nanango roll and the Darling Downs roll, and by the time they put in their applications, they could not be revised for two months after the election. The result was that, under this beneficent Act, those settlers were deprived of the franchise. And, mind you, some of them were Liberals, and they are not going to forget it so far as I am concerned. (Hear, hear!)

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They will be Liberals no longer.

Mr. PETERSON: No. I can give their names and everything that is necessary. I know that our party is out to see that every person eligible over the age of twenty-one years—I am not talking about lunatics, so don't bring up that joke—should have a say in the affairs of his country. I believe it is the birthright of every citizen in this State of ours, and I believe that this party will see to it that he has it, and that when the next election comes round we will appeal to the people on the most democratic franchise the world has ever seen. (Hear, hear!) I now wish to refer briefly to the matter of workers' compensation. I congratulate the Government on having this proposal in the Speech, and I hope they will speedily put it into effect. At the present time, no provision is made for miners and others who contract phthisis and other diseases which attack men in the work on which they are engaged. I believe it will be within the scope of the new Bill that provision will be made for those people, and I say it is a crying shame that for years past we have not had an amendment of the law in this direction. For, after all, is not the mining industry to be developed? Is it not necessary that men should delve in the deep for the mineral? And if they lose their health and contract that dreaded disease phthisis and other diseases akin to it, they should receive the same, if not greater, compensation as is given in other cases. I am grateful for the assurance that the Government will see that these men are amply recompensed in these matters. Then, under the old Act, when a man broke an arm or a leg, or any serious accident of that kind happened to him—after a great deal of scratching and struggling, chasing lawyers, and so on—because the insurance company fights him—the result is that the court awards a certain amount to be paid weekly. I know a young man in my electorate—a hale, hearty, young man—who was crushed between two trucks and lost the use of his arm, and he was doled out by the court a paltry sum every week. I am sure that provision will be made for cases like that—and they are many—so that the men can get a lump sum and embark on some business that will be congenial to them, and help them to make a decent living. I hope that that will receive consideration from the Government, and also other matters which we can deal with when the time comes. Then, I hope that provision will be made during the session for going in for State enterprise. In the Central district at the present time we find that the settler is harassed by the very high price of timber; and it is a remarkable thing that our friends—who are continually posing as the farmers' friends—do not get up in the House

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and ask, "Why is it that the farmer has to pay such a high price for his timber?" You never see them do that. Never! But we do know that the farmers and the people generally are paying an excessive cost for their timber. And while I am on this point I want to remind the Minister of the deputation which waited on him some days ago, and to say, as a man who has seen something of building, that I hope he will not give way to them on that little bit of a yarn about second-class timber. I hope that the Government will see fit to start, at an early date, State enterprises, such as State sawmills and State joinery works. In New South Wales we find them in operation, and I can show from the reports a good profit to that State. Not only that, but we also find that they make all the forms and furniture for the Education Department, and I can show the big savings which the inauguration of these works has meant. I wish to congratulate the Minister for Railways for the splendid way in which he is administering the department. I also wish to commend the other Ministers. Whatever I have seen of them showed me that they are adapted to their surroundings, and want to do everything for the best interests of the people, the men on the land particularly. I believe that under the Minister for Railways every man in the department will receive fair and equitable treatment. And I can say honestly that the day of victimisation is over—the day when a man did not dare to give expression to his opinions. (Hear, hear!) I have known what it is to be victimised, and I feel confident that the Minister for Railways, with his colleagues, will see to it that that day has gone. I desire to congratulate him on the way in which he has treated all branches of the department, and I believe now that the men will get a fairer deal than before. The effect is seen already. In my electorate the railway men have spoken to me, and I have received letters commending the action of the Government. I have spoken at considerable length, and I suppose I ought to apologise to hon. members for my disconnected speech. This is my first appearance, and I am thankful for the opportunity to make it. It has been the aim of my ambition for many years to serve my country. Some people place a light construction on that, but I believe it should be the object of everybody to endeavour to leave the world better than when they entered it. (Hear, hear!) By strict attention to business, by not making politics a farce, by not being hypercritical in the matter, I hope to be of some service to the State. I thank the leader of the Opposition for his kindly greetings to new members, and I may say that my policy will always be to respect the Opposition and concede to them the right to think and say as they believe. I hope to be with hon. members for a considerable time. I hope not to be here as a transient visitor, and I hope our party will remain in power for many years.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: A fixed star.

Mr. PETERSON: All I can say is that stars sometimes drop. (Laughter.) Apart from the light side of the matter, I earnestly appeal to the Government to deal particularly with land matters, with water conservation, with irrigation, with Agricultural Bank amendments, and with railways. With

these elements in operation we will secure a greater State than we have had hitherto. We will find by opening up land in greater degree and establishing railways and dealing with water that more land will be taken up; there will be greater provision against drought, and more crops and more prosperity; for, after all, all wealth springs from the land. And the Government whose policy is going to do that will be the Government that the people will put back every time, and I feel confident that that will be the Ryan Government, or the Labour Government known by the name of the man who leads them at the time. I hope after the debate on the Address in Reply that we will quickly get to business, and show, not by our speeches, but by our recorded votes in "Hanard," our regard for the settlers and workers, and in that I shall demand the support of the members of the Country party. I thank hon. members for the patient way in which they have listened to me, and I apologise again for taking up so much time.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BEBBINGTON (*Drayton*), who was greeted with "Hear, hears," said: Like other hon. members, I must congratulate the mover and seconder of the Address in Reply, and also other new members who have spoken. On looking over the Address in Reply, I begin to think that the Labour platform is disappearing altogether.

Mr. FOLEY: Your fellows are stealing it.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: No, you have stolen ours. (Laughter.) The party on the other side seem to have dropped the Labour platform. They are bringing in other measures which, I hope, will not be too extreme, and that they will be for the good of the State. Some of them so far have not been for the benefit of the producer. The producer has been sacrificed to the election pledges of the members for the cities. I do not think there are any very urgent measures set forth in the Government programme, and I certainly think that we would all be much better employed in helping to make shells for the use of those who are defending us, because, if Germany wins, our laws will be made in Germany. They will not be made in Australia. Therefore, we should do all we can to assist those who are fighting our battles equally as much as if they were being fought in Australia. I hope that not only will the Government be prepared to give our soldiers leasehold lands when they return from the front, but that they will be prepared to give them freeholds. Sometimes putting a man on a bit of land is a very convenient way of getting rid of him. And not only do I think that we should give those men a bit of freehold land, if they want it, but we should also give them preference for employment wherever possible. That is the sort of preference that I favour. The passage in the Speech referring to the drought conditions does not convey to the minds of the people here the slightest idea of the state the country is in. The people who read that are not given any idea of ploughing and sowing the land three or four times over and getting nothing for it. I tell you, Mr. Speaker, that it takes a great deal more courage to stop in the country and fight a drought than it does to go to war and fight battles. Many of the young men

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who are fighting the drought and trying to save our stock, and ploughing and sowing time after time, are more to be congratulated, if need be, than those who are fighting our battles at the front. The people who are here know very little about it, and, more than that, they show very little consideration to those who are carrying on this fight against drought conditions. The actions of the Government so far show that they have not grasped the situation, or else they have absolutely no sympathy with the producer. Our friends on the other side have given us all kinds of advice. We have heard them talk about silos. I believe they have got silos of their own that have been waiting for twelve months with nothing in them. I believe that is correct, is it not?

Mr. T. L. JONES: Yes.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: It is very easy to stand up and give advice. The other day I went home, and said to my youngest son, "You had better drill about 30 acres of that lucerne." He did so, but no sooner had he done it than 40 points of rain fell, and spoiled the whole lot. There were £40 gone.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He was badly advised. (Government laughter.)

Mr. BEBBINGTON: That shows the sympathy of the other side for the producer; and it shows how easy it is to give advice.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It was you who gave the advice that time. (Renewed Government laughter.)

Mr. BEBBINGTON: It shows how easy it is to make big professions of sympathy for the producer at socialistic meetings and over cups of tea and all that kind of thing. But not a single man of them goes on the land. It is very easy to give advice to other people and at the same time do nothing to assist them. I may like to put the other fellow into some things, and get something better for myself—something easier and more profitable. It is all very well to talk about increased production, and all that kind of thing, but if they knew something about the present drought conditions which prevail in the country they would not be so ready to give advice. With reference to the paragraph relating to the high price of food, there is no doubt that is one of the most important questions we had to deal with. (Hear, hear!) For years I have been working and fighting with others to bring the producer and the consumer nearer together, and to leave as little room as possible for others between the two. We have met with a certain amount of success, and I will not say that there are not some men on the other side who have worked with us. There is one hon. member over there who has worked very nicely with us, and I give him his due. The hon. member for Pittsworth and I were the first who came to Brisbane to establish the Cheese Manufacturers' Association, and the hon. member I refer to gave us all the assistance he could. That paragraph reads very nicely when it is read by the Governor in a Chamber representing the rich people of Brisbane and clad in fine linen. The fact that the Government have reduced the price of butter by 3d. per lb. is, no doubt, very interesting to those people. Assuming that each of them consumes 1 lb. of butter a week, it means that

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they are able to live 3d. per week cheaper. But what about the poor "cockie" who produces that butter? I can tell you of farmers who are going without the necessaries of life in order to buy feed for their cattle.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I say, absolutely, "Yes." There are men who live near me—men whom I see every week—who are going without the actual necessaries of life in order that they may buy feed for their cattle.

Mr. McMINN: Why don't you help them?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: This is what it means to them. At the time the Government reduced the price of butter, their cheques for milk were actually made out, but when the Government reduced the price of butter to these rich people, those cheques were withdrawn, and 1d. per gallon was taken off the price of their milk, in order to give those rich people cheaper butter. That is a socialistic Government for you. That is their action as soon as they come into power. Those men are sacrificing everything to feed their cattle. They send their produce down to Brisbane for sale. Here is a box of butter put up to auction. One man bids 1s. 9d. per lb., and another bids 2s. The man who bids the 2s. is an hotel-keeper—whose name I can mention if necessary—and whose wife can afford to give fifty guineas for a coat. When he bids 2s. per lb. for this butter for his rich customers, the auctioneer says, "Gentlemen, I cannot take the 2s., as the Government have ordered that I can only take 1s. 9d."

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Did he actually say that?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: That actually happened in Brisbane. I can give you the name of the hotel-keeper and also the name of the auctioneer. That is the way that the Government, who claim to be the friends of the farmer, have been treating the rich people here, at the expense of the poor farmer in the country, who is sacrificing the very necessaries of life in order to keep his stock alive. Unlike that character who was said to have robbed the rich to give to the poor, this Government rob the poor in order to give to the rich. With reference to the cheese industry, I maintain that there was no justification for the Government robbing the poor settler of 1d. per lb. on his cheese in order to give the people of Brisbane cheaper cheese. The fact of the matter is that the settler had to be absolutely robbed in order than hon. members opposite might do something to redeem their election pledges. Is it not a fact that in Brisbane the night before the election Labour candidates stood on public platforms and said, "Vote for the Labour candidates, and butter will be 1s. per lb. on Monday"?

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: That is untrue! That is untrue!

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I say it is true, and who was to be robbed but the producer, if that promise was to be kept? Was there anybody else you could rob? There was no butter in stock anywhere in the State, and the only persons the Government could get at were the men who were making butter. That promise was the worst promise that was ever made to a people. Out of something

like fifty-three or fifty-four cheese factories, fourteen are closed altogether, and the others are only getting one-tenth of the milk they used to receive. Those which were getting 33,000 gallons per week are only getting 10,000 gallons. Yet the present Government seek to rob them of the little they do get! The Government have promised that they will do many things, but I contend that we should judge them, not by their promises, but by their actions, by what they have already done. I desire now to say a few words about railways. Undoubtedly railways are our highways of trade. In Queensland we have no waterways of any importance.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Shame!

Mr. BEBBINGTON: No, there is no shame to anybody in connection with this matter. Those who know anything about Queensland and have travelled in the interior of the State, know that our rivers are not like the rivers down South, that they run out, and that if blocked in one place they simply run across another way. What we need in a good many places in the country are light railways as feeders to the main lines we have already got. I maintain that a private company or private employers could make such railways as we require for £1,000 a mile which would carry timber and produce. We should make a big effort to build such cheap railways in districts where it is impossible at present to make railways costing £4,000 or £5,000 per mile. If we have to wait for railways costing from £4,000 to £5,000 per mile, we shall undoubtedly have to wait a very long time. In many cases light railways can be built very cheaply, and those railways should be constructed as early as possible in the interest of the country. We should use as much machinery as possible in the construction of our railways. I have advocated that all along, and I said, as I say again, that where under the present system of railway construction we find a dozen or twenty men digging a railway trench with picks and shovels, a contractor would use scoops and ploughs, and that while the men with picks and shovels were making a trench a chain long he would do a mile. We want something that is fairly cheap in the matter of railway construction.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: What about the guarantee principle?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: We do not want the guarantee principle at all. I have always opposed the guarantee system as unjust. I do not see why the land should carry everything. The people in the large cities who get the benefit of the trade arising from the building of railways should certainly contribute something towards the cost of those railways. Under the present system, the persons asked to give a guarantee have not only to become responsible for any deficiency in the working of the line they guarantee, but have also to assist in making up the deficiency on other railways. Let us do away with the guarantee system altogether. We have been told a great deal about how the farmer is to be treated. I do not see what this Government are going to do for him. So far they have not done very much for the farmer.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: They are going to make millionaires of them.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: They are going to make millionaires of themselves. They talk about members on that side representing the farmers. Whenever I hear that kind of talk I am reminded about a very nice canary I had at home. We also had a very fine cat who seemed to be very fond of the canary, but one morning when I went out I found that the canary was inside the cat. (Laughter.) That is the way hon. members opposite represent the farmers—they represent as much of them as they can get inside. (Laughter.) We have heard a great deal said about the high cost of living. No one regrets that more than the producer, but when we are passing through a time like the present, when it is very difficult to save stock and dairy cattle, I say the worker should not object to pay a fair price for something that will help producers to struggle through the drought, and which they will get cheaper afterwards. It amounts to this: The dairy companies of Queensland pay something like £208,000 per month for the milk produced. That £208,000 is different to a storekeeper or a business man turning that amount of money over. It is new money brought in and put into circulation in the trade. That is what is keeping the bulk of our towns and cities going in prosperity. If we are going to allow, say, 50 per cent. of our dairy cattle to perish, and that £208,000 a month is going to drop down to £100,000, then undoubtedly somebody is going to feel the difference, and if we have to finance ourselves for the next year we shall want all the assistance that we can possibly get. We should assist our dairy farmers all we possibly can. That is why I think we should certainly have got a fair price, at all events, something to help to keep these stock going. Another thing which I would like to mention is with respect to country schools. I hope that the Minister for Education will find the books for the high schools when any step is taken in that matter. Some country children who have gone to high schools find it very expensive to get the books, and where there is only one in the family who goes there, the books are of no use afterwards. If the State finds the books, the same as is done in the other schools, they could be utilised for the other children who come later on. I want to mention one matter which has been touched upon in connection with workers' dwellings. If there is one thing which acts upon a person it is a good home. A good home is responsible to a great extent for the character of men. The surroundings largely make people just what they are. There are two classes of people; one will make their surroundings, and the other will give way, and their surroundings will make them. I have always advocated our being as liberal as possible under the Workers' Dwellings Act, but I do not think there is much margin to go on at present, and I fail to see where it is going to be, for this reason: We cannot have any class legislation as far as that goes.

Mr. H. J. RYAN: You have had plenty of it in the past.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: We have not. The Workers' Dwellings Act has been administered more liberally than any other Act under which advances are made. Whilst the farmer has had 15s. in the £1, under the Workers' Dwellings Act the advance has been £3 to £1. I say you cannot go very much

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further than that if you are going to have any margin of security, because, whatever you give under the Workers' Dwellings Act we will certainly advocate and expect to get for the farmer under the Agricultural Bank Act, and we will also expect the same margin for the co-operative companies to build factories, and also for the sugar-workers. You must put each of them on the same level.

Mr. McMINN: Dry shareholders?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: There are no dry shareholders at all about it; we are talking about the men who own the factories. If you are going to give the full value to the worker under the Workers' Dwellings Act, then we can reasonably expect that the same will be given to us in order to erect buildings for the manufacture of products.

Mr. H. J. RYAN: Why not build the dairies?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: If we had State factories, by the time you had built them and run them, and took from them the raw material, the same as we do, there would be nothing left for the men who produced it. We prefer to manage our own business, because we can manage it the best.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: Still, you want the State to finance you all the time.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: All that we want is a fair thing all round.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: You do not want the worker to share in your co-operation in any way.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The worker would not like to share in the co-operation now. We have men drawing £4 a week, working four or five hours a day, and only working two or three days a week, and the men who are supplying that material in order to keep the companies going, are hardly able to get the necessaries of life; yet they are paying their manager that wage. The hands in the co-operative factories are paid a higher rate of wages, on the average, than the man who is supplying the raw material. There are many things I want to refer to, but we want to give the Government a chance. (Hear, hear!) I have always worked and fought in this House so that the man who did the work could get the benefit of it, and if the Government are prepared to give us the same rate for our labour as anybody else, to give us a good thing all round, we are ready to assist them; but if they want to make slaves of the producers in order to feed the people of the cities cheaply, then they will not get our assistance. They have made a very good start to that position, but we hope this is the end of it.

Mr. CARTER: The sugar-grower is very glad.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I do not know much about the sugar industry. I have only heard the farmers say that if the Government had left the sugar industry alone they would have got 19s. 6d. a ton more than they will now. I am only saying what they state; I am not speaking from experience. The Government should certainly do something in regard to inquiring into the cost of production before they fix prices. If you are going to fix a price, which represents only 50 per cent. of the cost of production of a commodity, it will have the effect of driving people off the land. I am advising

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people in my electorate to get off the land. (Laughter.) Do you think farmers are complete fools to work fifteen or sixteen hours a day, while you take the produce of their labour at any price you like? Would any man do it? Certainly not. I hope the Government will not go any further with this confiscation, and that before they take anything else they will certainly find out something about the industry.

Mr. FREE (*South Brisbane*): I congratulate the mover and seconder of the Address in Reply. I would also like to say, as a new

member, that I came here, like [9 p.m.] many others, expecting to sit

back and listen with respect to our elders in Parliament, and let them teach us by example how we should conduct ourselves in this House. I am sorry to say that I feel to-night that I hope none of my comrades will follow the example set us by the Opposition. I think the greatest disgrace in the history of Parliament was the example set us by the hon. member for Burrum, when he started here and ignored the business of the House. I feel deep pity that men who have held the Treasury benches, men who aspired to these high and honourable positions, should conduct themselves in this manner. Taking the next speaker on the Opposition side, the hon. member for Toowoong, the speech which he made after years of watching in Parliament, after years listening to parliamentary speeches, I could not help saying that I did not think the hon. member for Toowoong did himself justice. Really, I think it was one of the poorest speeches I ever heard. For the past twenty-five years I have taken an interest in the speeches delivered from the Opposition side, and that speech was the dullest I ever heard from the Opposition benches. There was not one argument advanced by the leader of the Opposition why the programme which has been brought to us by the Ministers of the Labour party should not all be put into law. All he contented himself with was talking about the faces we will never forget—that this House is poorer for the loss of certain faces. Personally, I think, after hearing some of the speeches on the Address in Reply, that this House is the richer by one face in it this year that was not here last year, and that was the hon. member who advocated the good old Liberalism. The electors of Queensland have shown that they want modern and progressive legislation, and I feel that the confidence shown by the electors on the 22nd of May last has not been misplaced. (Hear, hear!) That has been proved by the administration of the Government up to date. I feel satisfied that the electors of Queensland will feel more satisfied with the programme which has been placed before the House. The first Bill to be noticed is the Elections Bill. One or two members on the Opposition have had the audacity to tell us that that Bill is not necessary. We know perfectly well that all over Queensland people were robbed of their votes. We have prided ourselves in days gone by on our adult suffrage. Under the late Government that became a thing of the past. There was no such thing as adult suffrage. There was a qualification clause, and men who lived in tents, and who did not pay rent, were disfranchised. That is what was done with men on the North Coast Railway, in the electorate of the hon. member for Murrumba. Any amount of men were robbed of their votes because they lived in tents. I know that

district well, because I have visited it for the past five or six years, and I know that the men there were robbed of their votes. I can tell you of even a more low-down trick than that. In my own electorate there is an old lady in Clarence street who has lived there for the last thirty or forty years. She has always been a Labour voter. Before the previous election she had the misfortune to lose her eyesight, and became blind. On that occasion she had to give a vote, and she voted openly for Labour. Strange to say, when the last election came on, it was found that that lady's name had been struck off the roll by the Denham Government as having left the district. Yet she lived in the same house she had always lived in, and she is living there still. So, the late Government even stooped so low as to rob the blind of their right to vote. Can anything be more contemptible than to rob the blind in order to retain possession of the Treasury benches? It is such actions as that that have caused the late Government to be condemned from one end of the State to the other, and which have resulted in only the remnants of the late Government party being returned on the other side. (Hear, hear!) I notice a Bill to provide for the regulation of trusts and monopolies is on the programme. Some hon. members opposite say that it is not true that there are trusts and monopolies. We know that there are monopolies. Take the gas companies, for instance, particularly the South Brisbane Gas Company, which charges 2s. 8d. per 1,000 feet more for its gas than the Brisbane Gas Company does, and something like double the price charged by New South Wales. In New South Wales they deal effectively with the gas companies, and say what the standard of gas shall be, what rate of profit the company shall get, and so on. Here, in South Brisbane, they can give what sort of gas they like. Very often we have to light a wax match to see, as the gas is burning so low as hardly to be visible. That is the sort of gas they charge us 6s. 8d. per 1,000 feet for in South Brisbane. I say that these gas companies should belong to the Government. We should nationalise them. (Hear, hear!) I fear that if we allowed them to get into the hands of the local councils they would not run them any better than some of the things that are now managed by the councils, particularly the one on the south side of the river.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: Wait until we get the franchise altered.

Mr. FREE: When we see the way the gas companies, the electric light companies, and the Brisbane Tramways Company are run, it is time that we had a Bill to regulate trusts and monopolies. I notice a Trade Union Bill. It is necessary to have such a Bill. If the unions agree to ask for a price for their labour, which they have not been getting hitherto, it is called "a strike." But there are other strikes besides trade union strikes. If the bakers have a meeting, and put up the price of bread, that is as much a strike as a workers' strike. They say that bread will be a penny or a half-penny dearer per 2-lb. loaf next Wednesday, or something like that, and if you don't pay that extra half-penny or penny you will get no bread. These people should be dealt with in the same way as the workers. If the baton is good enough for the workers, it is good enough for the bosses, and it should be applied to them. If the bosses are allowed to raise their prices, then

the trade unionists should be permitted to raise the price of their labour—the only commodity they have to sell—in the same way. I notice we are to have a Fish Bill. The hon. member for Barnett to-night practically stated that the fishermen did the right thing in dumping their fish in the river when they did not get their price for it. Just fancy an hon. member standing up in this House and upholding the action of fishermen in throwing away good food, because it did not reach the price they had put upon it!

Mr. CORSER: I gave my reasons.

Mr. FREE: There are hospitals and charitable institutions which would have been glad to receive that fish. But no; it was thrown away, because the middleman could not make his profit out of it. When he could not take out of the consumer his "pound of flesh," it was dumped rather than the poor should have it.

Mr. CORSER: That is only a statement.

Mr. FREE: It is a fact, and you can find in "Hansard" what Mr. Barnes, the late Treasurer, said. He said that 2,380 trays of fish were dumped, because it did not bring the reserve that was placed upon it in the market; and I prefer to believe the late Treasurer than our friend opposite. Now, as regards the amendment of the Local Authorities Act, I think that is absolutely necessary, because I maintain that the man who pays the rent pays the rates. If a man has a property to let, he takes into consideration what his rates are, what his water rate is, how much insurance he has to pay for protection from fire, then how much money he has invested in that property, and he charges so much per cent. on the total. He is determined to get that, and as much more as he can drag out of the man renting the property. That is the system under which we live. Supposing the local authorities take over the tramways and the providing of light, and made a profit. These property-owners would benefit by that, because their rates would be reduced. Do you mean to tell me that the landlord would go to the man who rents his property, and say, "Oh, well, old chap, there were so many thousands made out of the trams and the light last year, and my rates have been reduced so much, so your rent will be 1s. a week less?" Not much. They do not do that sort of thing. Consequently, I maintain that the man who pays the rent pays the rates every time, and that man is entitled to have a vote, and should have a vote. I believe in the system in force in South Australia, where the occupier of the house has the vote, and I hope that, when we have an amending Bill before this House, it will be something on those lines.

Mr. COLLINS: Adult suffrage.

Mr. FREE: Yes, adult suffrage. I maintain that these local authorities—according to the South Brisbane Council, anyway—are going ahead pretty strong. They are spending more money than they have a right to; and now they have the audacity to come down with a proposal to pay £1,500 of our money to Mr. Badger to run the trams round Grey street, and take over Dutton Park, that would come into their hands in a few weeks without paying that money. I hope the Minister for Railways will have something to say about that, because we can see very clearly that Mr. Badger has a cunning move on there—to tap a railway

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line, and make more money for his company—and I hope we will hear something more about it. There has been a system in days gone by for Mr. Badger to get whatever he liked from the Government. All he had to do was to squeeze the late Premier, and he got whatever he wanted. We had proof of that in connection with the laying of the tramline down Adelaide street. The local authority was against it, and the business people were against it, but all Mr. Badger had to do was to go along to the late Premier and make his demand, and it was granted. I hope to goodness, when we are amending the Local Authorities Act, that we will deal with it in an effective way, and, if we give adult suffrage, I venture to say a different class of men will be put into the councils, and that the interests of the people will be looked after in a different way to what they are to-day. At the present time the system is to do nothing else but look after the interests of the man who holds property. Then, as to the perpetual lease system, I believe the ownership of land is the root of all evil. I believe in the nationalisation of land. Our friends opposite talk about the poor people on the land, and how harshly we treat them. If we spend thousands of pounds in building a railway through certain lands, who gets the benefit of it? The man who takes up that land at a very low price—a few shillings an acre—and it is increased in value a thousand times by the building of the railway; and the Government, who built the railway, does not get one iota of the increased value. But under nationalisation, the Government would get the whole of the increased value. At the present time a lot of those people who talk so much about the private ownership of land do not own one foot of land; the financial institutions and the banks own it for them. They think that, because they sign promissory notes and mortgage deeds they are the landowners. No, the middlemen have got them in their grip, and “kid” them that they are the landowners. It is the middlemen that the Labour party want to deal with—these financial institutions, who are squeezing the life blood out of the man on the land, and mesmerising him into thinking he is the landowner, when it is the financial institutions who really own the land. I am very pleased to see that there is a Stock Diseases Bill promised. That is absolutely necessary, and I think everyone will agree with it. I do not think there are many members of the Opposition who would like to eat this diseased meat that we hear so much about. Then, as to the appointment of a public works committee, I hope to goodness that this will be carried out, because I think it is really necessary, especially after the figures in regard to some Government works that were given in answer to my question the other day by the Minister for Public Works. I want to know why £5,835 17s. 7d. should be given in preference to any man, when the work could have been carried out under the day-labour system for that amount of money less. That seems to be only on a par with the £8,000 preference to the Germans in order that they might have £8,000 worth of bullets to kill the unionists who have gone to the front. It is a positive fact that they gave £8,000 preference to the German dredges as against the Scotch tenders. A lot of that money is being used to-day to make bullets to kill

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the people whom hon. members opposite said were not worth giving a vote to because they might get shot.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: Who said that?

Mr. FREE: Certainly, you provided the Germans with a sum of money to shoot them, and it is a disgrace to any Government.

Mr. TOLMIE: I rise to a point of order. Is the hon. member in order in saying that any member of this House provided money for shooting the unionists?

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is not in order in making these insinuations, and I hope he will cease to do so.

Mr. FREE: I accept your correction, Mr. Speaker. I was not aware of doing wrong. I think, however, that there are many cases one could cite which shows that it is absolutely necessary that we should have a public works committee to look into these things. There is the case of preference to printers, when tenders were put in, and there is the grip buckets case that we have heard so much about. There are £5,000 lying idle in grip buckets. No inquiries made as to whether they were useful or not, and they are lying there practically on the scrap heap. When we see these things take place, I think it is absolutely necessary that we should have a public works committee to inquire into such matters. A good deal has been said in reference to the Workers' Dwellings Act. Personally, I would like to see the Act extended in such a way that the Government would not attempt to make any profit out of it whatever—nothing but working expenses.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: They do not.

Mr. FREE: Oh, don't they. I may tell you that they have made a very large profit. They made £13,650 clear. They paid to the Treasurer £23,000 for the use of the money, and I think it has been very good business for the Government. And yet they tell us how beneficial this Act has been to the worker! Certainly it has been beneficial, but it might have been made of much greater benefit. If they did something under the co-operative system, so that after the first year those who had paid in the money got an extra credit on their payments for the next year as bonus, then it would have been shown that the Government were really in earnest in trying to pass an Act which would be of benefit to those who wished to take advantage of it. Our Government, I think, are prepared to go much further than the past Government, and I hope that as they are not going to sell the land, but are going to give leases, the borrowers won't have to have the land first—which is a great struggle for a working man to do, with the result that they cannot, under those conditions, take advantage of the Act. I sincerely hope and trust that all the measures on the Government programme will be carried into effect, and I am sure that by so doing this Government will earn for themselves a renewal of the parliamentary life which was granted to them on the 22nd May.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Question put and passed.

The resumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

The House adjourned at twenty-two minutes past 9 o'clock.