

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 21 DECEMBER 1915

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

TUESDAY, 21 DECEMBER, 1915.

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

QUESTIONS.

LAND SELECTION CASE AT ROMA.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*), on behalf of Mr. Bebbington, asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

“1. Has his attention been called to the Press report of the land selection case at Roma?”

“2. Is he aware that this case will shake the confidence of the public in land officials at future balloting?”

“3. What course does he intend to take to put the future balloting out of the hands of any land official and make tampering with the ballot impossible?”

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

“1. Yes.

“2. No.

“3. Direction was given some time back for the preparation of a system less cumbersome and incapable of being tampered with. A method has been approved, and will shortly be substituted for the present system.”

USE OF STEAMSHIP “LUCINDA.”

Mr. SWAYNE asked the Chief Secretary—

“Was the State-owned steamship ‘Lucinda’ lent to the Workers’ Political Organisation for a trip on the river on Saturday last? If so, will she be available for the use of other political organisations on the same terms?”

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

“Yes. It was lent to a number of representatives of Workers’ Political Organisations. There will be no discrimination in the granting of the use of the ‘Lucinda.’”

PROFITS FROM GOVERNMENT SALE OF FARM PRODUCE.

Mr. SWAYNE asked the Chief Secretary—

“Will he inform the House, before it goes into recess, the intentions of the Government as to the distribution of the profits arising out of the sale by them of farm produce?”

The PREMIER replied—

“I desire the hon. member to specify the particulars of the farm produce to which he refers.”

KILLABLE CATTLE AVAILABLE IN QUEENSLAND.

Mr. SWAYNE asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

“1. If he will, before Parliament goes into recess, lay on the table of the House

the returns showing the number of killable cattle in the State, seeing that in September last he promised to consider the question of doing so?

"2. If not, his reason for declining?"

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS replied—

"1. Reports received only furnished the general outline of the condition of stocks in the various districts, but did not attempt to supply the number of killable cattle.

"2. See No. 1."

NUMBERS RECEIVING RELIEF IN BRISBANE.

HON. J. TOLMIE (*Toowoomba*) asked the Home Secretary—

"1. Is it a fact that the number of families who received relief in the metropolis, during the first two weeks of December, 1914, was 154, representing 770 souls?

"2. Is it a fact that the number of families who received relief in the metropolis, during the first two weeks of December, 1915, was 927, representing 4,635 souls?

"3. What means are to be taken by the Government to establish public confidence, in order to find employment for the large numbers of breadwinners now out of work?"

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. D. Bowman, *Fortitude Valley*) replied—

"1. Yes.

"2. Yes.

"3. Public confidence in the Government to handle the question of unemployment will be confirmed when the results of its taxation proposals and other legislation passed this session take definite shape."

QUANTITY OF BUTTER EXPORTED.

HON. J. TOLMIE asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

"1. Were the number of boxes of butter exported—

For week ended 5th December, 1914	...	...	...	459
For week ended 12th December, 1914	...	...	...	12,706
Total	...	...	...	13,175

"2. Were the number of boxes of butter exported—

For week ended 4th December, 1915	...	...	...	Nil.
For week ended 11th December, 1915	...	...	...	742
Total	...	...	...	742

"3. What means are to be adopted to resuscitate this industry?"

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. W. Lennon, *Herbert*) replied—

"1 and 2. Yes; the figures were supplied by the department.

"3. The Government, as it has already done, will continue to do everything possible to benefit the industry."

GOVERNMENT WHEAT TRANSACTIONS.

HON. J. TOLMIE: I desire to ask the Chief Secretary the following questions, without notice:—

"1. Was not the Argentine wheat purchased through the Agent-General?

"2. Did not the Agent-General in his cable quote 62½-lb. wheat?

"3. Did not Mr. Denham accept and purchase 62½-lb. wheat?

"4. Was not 62½ lb. the highest grade wheat of the season?

"5. Was not the first shipment purchased to leave middle of May, and second shipment middle of June?

"6. Will the Chief Secretary put on the table of the House the contract?

"7. Has the Agent-General explained failure to carry out the contract?

"8. Has any claim been made by the Agent-General?

"9. Has any allowance been made by shippers?"

The PREMIER replied as follows:—

"1. Yes.

"2. Yes.

"3. No.

"4. Information not available.

"5. No.

"6. Yes. It will be found on page 88 of the report of the Wheat Commission already tabled in this House, a copy of which I now table.

"7. Contract was carried out.

"8 and 9. The Agent-General has obtained the allowance from the shippers in accordance with the provisions of the contract."

QUEENSLAND RAILWAYS INQUIRY.

REPORT BY MR. R. McC. ANDERSON.

The PREMIER laid on the table of the House a report by Mr. Robert McC. Anderson in reference to the Queensland Railways, and moved that the paper be printed. Question put and passed.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

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

CHIEF SECRETARY'S DEPARTMENT.

MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES.

Question stated—"That £57,334 be granted for 'Miscellaneous Services.'"

Mr. BARNES (*Warwick*): The fixing of the prices of all commodities, particularly that of butter, by the Government had resulted in a great failure. It would have been up to the Minister to acknowledge that failure all along the line had attended the efforts of the department to fix the price of butter. It may have been to the advantage of some people to fix it, but it resulted in loss and serious disadvantage to the primary producer. Nothing that the Minister had said on the previous night was going to allay the great unrest ruling throughout the country districts of Queensland where dairying was in vogue.

Mr. SMITH: Are you in a sceptical vein this afternoon?

Mr. BARNES: He was giving solid facts. He was sceptical as regards the Government, or, indeed, any Government, to control or fix prices to the ultimate and permanent well-being of any community. He would endeavoured to prove the Government had signally failed in fixing the price of butter.

Mr. GLEDSON: What about wheat?

Mr. BARNES: He would take butter first, wheat second, and probably meat third. A deserving portion of the community were to-day suffering, and one of our best industries would suffer almost beyond repair, as a result of the action of the Government in dealing with the butter supplies.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: As a result of the absence of rain.

Mr. BARNES: If the debate on the question had done nothing else, it enabled them to get back to the right spot. Prior to the elections they were told that the cause of the high prices of commodities—butter in particular—was due to the bad administration of the Denham Government. No one claimed that the present Government were responsible for the shortage of butter. But they had an admission now—which the Liberal party contended during the elections—that the shortage of butter was due to drought conditions, and nothing else; but during the election it suited hon. members opposite to say that the Government of the day were entirely responsible for the condition and for the high price of butter. They knew that butter and other commodities were ruling at an extreme rate throughout the world to-day. It was unfortunate that the high price all over the world should be coincident with the most unfortunate drought they had ever experienced in Australia.

Mr. H. L. HARTLEY: How was it that you exported 20,000 boxes of butter in February last?

Mr. BARNES: It was true that butter was exported in the early part of last year, but they found history now repeating itself. They knew that during January, February, and March of this year no less than 111,500 boxes of butter were exported.

Mr. H. L. HARTLEY: You said there was a drought then.

Mr. BARNES: Not at that time—not up till March. History was now repeating itself. If it was a mistake for the Denham Government not to anticipate conditions, how was it that the present Government, with the experience of the Denham Government to guide them, and with conditions still remaining in a bad way, exported 6,329 boxes of butter, when there were more places in Queensland that would be without butter than at any time in the experience of the previous Government? The late Government were charged with not anticipating things, and yet this Government were following what they considered the bad example of the Denham Government by allowing the butter to be exported to the extent of 6,329 boxes just on the eve of big requirements in Queensland.

Mr. H. L. HARTLEY: You exported to Victoria.

Mr. BARNES: Some was exported to Victoria. Why should they be selfish about the matter? They talked about one destiny and one people in Australia, and yet they objected to share their butter with Victoria.

On the other hand, the other States objected to share their chaff and other products with Queensland. Until remonstrated with successfully by hon. members opposite, they declined to allow their products to come into Queensland. The thing was too ridiculous. If they had the commodity in Queensland to share with the neighbouring States, then the Queensland people should say what price they should get for the article. The hon. member for Fitzroy also complained on the one hand that they said the farmers were not getting enough for their butter, and on the other hand they said it was too dear; but the hon. member failed to distinguish between the conditions. During the election certain members opposite went to the country blaming a given set of circumstances, and said that, in consequence of the Denham Administration, things were too high, while the Opposition had claimed all through that it was not that condition at all, but that the high price of butter and other commodities was due entirely to drought.

Mr. A. J. JONES: How is it that the butter factories made such large profits?

Mr. BARNES: The butter factories maintained their profits largely owing to the constant upward movement of the article. It was always found that when things were on the up grade money was easily made, but when things were on the down grade it was extremely easy to lose money. He wanted to deal with the special shipment of butter made by the Queensland Government, and he wanted to know what right had they to take that butter. He wanted to know what circumstances justified their action in seizing that butter and exporting it when it could have been exported to very much better advantage, and when it could have been sold to better advantage? At the time that special parcel of butter was seized by the Government and exported, they arranged to pay for the butter 140s. for first grade; 135s. for second grade; and 126s. per cwt. for third grade, or an average of 137s. per cwt. At the date of the shipment that butter could have been sold in Brisbane for from 150s. to 155s. per cwt. It was all very well for the Minister to make the statement that the farmers had been dealt with ten times more liberally than they should have been dealt with; it was all very well to say that they had received the highest advance ever made in connection with the export of butter, and that they would receive the balance that might be forthcoming on receipt of the returns. Did they ever hear of anything so extremely absurd? That was not what the farmer wanted to know. The farmer knew that he was likely to be faced, in connection with that shipment, with a loss of £2,500. The Government probably anticipated that when the butter reached the other end of the world, it would command a high figure, but they were not experienced and they were tampering with a thing they did not understand. To-day they found that the value of butter had dropped. The latest cable was as follows—

“Butter market weak; Australian salted, 150s. to 154s.; unsalted, 152s. to 156s.”

It was, therefore, evident that the price obtainable for that butter, if it was sold in London now, would result in a loss approximating £2,500. The farmer wanted to know whether that loss was going to be made up to him.

Mr. Barnes.]

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: How do you know that there is any loss at all?

Mr. BARNES: When that butter was seized at an average of 137s. per cwt. and exported, it was worth from 150s. to 155s. per cwt. It would cost 14s. per cwt. at least, with all charges, to take it to London, and the loss represented the difference between 137s. per cwt. and 155s. per cwt. Would the Government take into early consideration the fact that they had muddled with that butter, and that they were dealing with a commodity that they were not capable of dealing with to the satisfaction of the people, and that as a result there was that big loss? The farmer wanted to know if, as a result of interfering with their work, the Government were going to make up that loss.

The PREMIER: What about the loss through selling his wheat too cheaply?

Mr. BARNES: The farmer in Queensland received an average of 1s. per bushel more for his wheat than his fellow-farmer received in New South Wales. How did the Government account for that condition? And in addition to that, they were not interfered with in Queensland. Further, bread was no dearer in Queensland for the twelve months following the war than it was in New South Wales, where wheat had been purchased at 5s. per bushel. Those were indisputable facts.

The TREASURER: Bread was only 4d. per loaf in Sydney for a long time.

Mr. BARNES: The average ruling price for the period for which the Government made inquiries in all the States was practically 4d. In Victoria it was 3½d. for the 2-lb. loaf; Western Australia came out at 4½d.; Queensland was no dearer; and the average for the whole year was 4d., or the same as in New South Wales. Under a Labour Government in New South Wales with the fixing of price of wheat at 5s., bread was just as dear as it was in Queensland where the miller paid an equivalent of £2 10s. per ton more for his wheat than they did in New South Wales. So that not only was the disadvantage seen in the muddling with butter, but it was seen in the muddling with wheat. Look at the extraordinary conditions obtaining to-day. Last year in a time of scarcity wheat was fixed at 5s. per bushel in New South Wales, and now in a time of plenty, so far as the other States were concerned, wheat had been fixed at London parity, and no one could object to that. That was the true principle on which to work.

The PREMIER: That is not the principle you work on in connection with butter.

Mr. BARNES: The hon. gentleman was not a business man or he would see the difference. The interjection showed that the hon. gentleman did not understand the situation. When they had a surplus they worked upon an exportable basis, and when they had to import they must work on the import basis. The value of wheat this year was the London price, less the charges which were incurred in taking it there. The moment production fell below their requirements then the values were regulated from outside, and the moment production exceeded requirements the values were regulated by export values. The price of wheat this year was regulated by London parity, and it

[Mr. Barnes

should have been regulated last year by the value of wheat from whatever source they could procure it, plus the charges in bringing it here, and that was what the farmer was entitled to.

The PREMIER: He did not get that.

Mr. BARNES: The country and the farmers would have done very much better if there had been no interference. To revert once more to the butter industry; the fearful shrinkage in connection with the dairying industry was seen in the fact that Queensland was not so fully represented at the Islington Dairy Show this year. This year the dairy show was held on 19th to 23rd October, and Australia was represented in the Colonial butter classes by thirty-one exhibits. Of these Queensland accounted for seventeen, New South Wales eight, Victoria five, South Australia one. In 1913 Australia sent exhibits from seventy factories, and in 1912 from fifty-nine factories. The shrinkage in representation this year may be accounted for in a great measure by the extremely unfavourable conditions which were prevailing in the winter. Victoria was in the throes of the severest drought in her history, and New South Wales was suffering considerably. He had mentioned that the condition of unrest on the Downs in connection with the attitude of the Government in

[4 p.m.] fixing the price of butter was more pronounced to-day than it had been during the months which followed the fixation of the price by the Government. He had there a very exhaustive article written for the "Examiner and Times," dealing with the position very carefully, and it would be well for the Chief Secretary to read it through.

The bell indicated that the hon. member's time had expired.

Mr. SWAYNE: He did not think that anything better illustrated the impracticability of the Labour platform on one of its most important points—fixation of prices—than their recent attempts in that direction. First of all, it had been shown that it was only a cloak for the exploitation of the producer, and further that it would not remain at that. Carried out, it meant a shortage of supplies for the general community. At the time the Government interfered with the price of butter, he thought that the price locally was 232s. per cwt., and they arbitrarily brought it down to 196s., thereby depriving the producer of something like 36s. per cwt. of his wages. What an uproar there would have been if, through State interference, the members of, say, the Waterside Workers' Union were prevented from earning the fairly large sums which they did earn from time to time! It had been forced home on them that no matter what was done, no matter how it was done, the fixation of prices was always a means of pandering to the large organised vote of the towns at the expense of the man who went out and made the wealth of the community.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I must ask hon. members to maintain perfect silence. It is really impossible for the reporters to hear the hon. member who is addressing the Chair. Almost every couple in the Chamber seem to be engaged in a conversation in a loud tone of voice, and it is impossible for the hon. member to address the Chair properly.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. SWAYNE: The member who had just resumed his seat had dealt with the question of wheat very fully and very ably. In regard to that matter in New South Wales, he had there an extract from the "Sunday Times," the gist of which was as follows:—

"It is generally recognised that war conditions had nothing to do with our shortage in wheat. Caused solely by the drought. That the fixing of the price of old wheat in September at 4s. 2d., or 5d. per bushel under its then market value based on London parity, was done for one reason only—to save the State bakery."

No matter in what State similar action was taken as was taken by the Queensland Government, it would lead, not only to the detriment of the producers, who were sacrificed, but also eventually to the detriment of those for whom they were sacrificed—that was, the consumers—for it led not only to shorter production, but also to higher prices, as was seen at the present time. It had always been pointed out that the State, from the very groundwork of democratic government, was unable to deal with such subjects as that, that it was far better to leave it in the hands of private individuals, and the community would gain in the long run. The people of Queensland had for some time been compelled to pay an extravagant price for an inferior article, because of the mismanagement of the hon. members opposite. They were not content to rely on the arrangements that had been made by their predecessors to relieve the shortage of wheat, but needs must dip in themselves. They overbought, and one of the results was the proclamation of 25th October, limiting the price of flour made from good local wheat to £12 per ton. At the same time, an inferior article was selling at £17 or £19, he thought, so that through the mismanagement of the Government an inferior article was forced on the consumers at an advance of £7 on the price of the local article, which was infinitely better. Five days later, on the 30th of the month, the price of local flour was forced down to £9 per ton, in order to get rid of the inferior imported article, so that their producers were compelled to sell their article at £9 a ton, while the foreign article, produced by cheap labour, was being sold at £19. That was an instance of what happened when the Government took a hand in such transactions. It had always been urged that nothing but disaster would attend the State interference with prices. And what had happened amply justified that prediction. The very first time it had been tried in Australia things were infinitely worse than they would have been in the ordinary course of business. To try to fix prices arbitrarily, in the hope that consumers would benefit, was a very, very old method, had been tried and failed both in ancient and in medieval times, but it had always ended to the disadvantage of the persons it was designed to benefit. Arthur Twining Hadley, president of Yale University, in his book on "Standards of Public Morality," pointed out when dealing with the subject—

"It is the fundamental principle of Marx's book on capital, the economic bible of the socialist, but the attempt to carry this theory out in practice, to make it a workable standard for the conduct of trade instead of a somewhat vague economic ideal, have been attended with much difficulty.

"To begin with, while it makes provision against extortionate profits by the trader on some articles, it does not say how he is to be protected against losses on others."

Then it went on to say—

"But there is a deeper practical difficulty than this. The attempt to prohibit a trader from selling an article for more than it cost may become disadvantageous to society as a whole."

That was what he was chiefly concerned about—the effect on the general community.

"Take a concrete case, which was frequently occurring in medieval communities. There is a scarcity of wheat, and a deficiency in the bread supply. Those who have the wheat or the bread to sell are anxious to put the price up. They are not allowed to do it. The church threatens them with everlasting penalties in the next world; and, more immediate if not more important, the magistrates threaten to cut off their ears in this. Of course, the price stays where it was. No man is going to imperil his soul's salvation and his ears at the same time. The consequence is that as long as the supply lasts, the consumption of bread goes on at the same rate as before. Then there is a sudden and appalling famine, in which whole villages are desolated."

Again, it said, in regard to what happened in the United States—

"There are many men still engaged in business who can remember the days in 1864, when Congress undertook to prevent speculators from putting up the price of gold, with the result that the price of gold in two weeks went up to a height hitherto undreamed of, and that as much harm was inflicted on the Union cause as would have resulted from the loss of half a dozen pitched battles. For high prices and abnormal profits in a particular line are not a cause of scarcity. They are a symptom of scarcity, and the man who attempts to treat the disease by repressing the symptom manifests but little knowledge of the organisation with which he is dealing."

That pretty well represented the position. It represented the working of the theory when it had been tried before, and for a climax could you get anything more convincing than the fact that in Rookhampton, Gladstone, and two or three other towns in the Central district, through State interference, the bakers were on strike, and the people could not get bread?

Mr. FORSYTH (*Murrumba*): The Hon. the Secretary for Agriculture had told the House how the Government had collared about 6,000 boxes of butter and had paid 137s. a cwt.—the biggest price that had ever been advanced for butter in Queensland, and he expatiated on what a splendid thing it was going to be for the butter manufacturer and the producer.

Mr. D. RYAN: Can you prove it otherwise?

Mr. FORSYTH: He would do so before he sat down. One of the directors of a company which sent away some of this butter

Mr. Forsyth.]

assured him that, ten or twelve days before the Government shipped that butter, he received cables from London, and could have sold the butter at from 150s. to 155s. per cwt. He asked permission to send the butter away, but the Government told him to wait and see what was done. Ultimately, the offer was withdrawn, and the butter had to be got elsewhere. The Government seized the butter, and advanced 137s. per cwt. on it, as stated by the Minister for Agriculture last night, and in the event of a profit being made it was to be handed back to the butter factories to give to the producer, and in the event of a loss the Government were going to stand it. What right had the Government to interfere at all in connection with a matter of that sort? What right had they to offer 137s. when the people could have got from 150s. to 155s.? The hon. member for Warwick had told what the price of butter was in London to-day, and they could not realise what could have been got here. The butter people wanted the butter to be sold here, as they were offered a magnificent price, but they were not allowed to take it. Did the Premier call that good business? The butter would have gone out of the State, and was not going to interfere in the slightest degree with the people here. It was already shipped.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It would assist the local price.

Mr. FORSYTH: They had fixed the price here, and it did not matter what the price was in London. What was the good of saying it was 120s. here, if from 150s. to 155s. could have been got for it.

Mr. D. RYAN: Don't you think that the State has the first claim on their own produce?

Mr. FORSYTH: It was not their own produce; it belonged to the butter factories.

Mr. D. RYAN: Are they outside State laws?

Mr. FORSYTH: The quotations to-day showed that the price had gone down in London, and would not realise the price expected.

The PREMIER: You misunderstand the position.

Mr. FORSYTH: He did not misunderstand the position, and the hon. gentleman was talking nonsense when he said so. Not a single member of the Government could show any reason why they did this. He might mention another case. There was some butter going to Melbourne, and the Kingston butter factory applied for a permit, and were told it was all right. They sold the butter at 225s. When they came to ship it on the Saturday the Government would not allow them to ship it, and said they could sell the butter. He understood the agent was going to get 2 per cent. on the sale of the butter at 220s., which was 5s. less than the Kingston people had sold it at. They said to the Government, "What is the good of your selling it at 220s. and paying 2 per cent., when you could sell it to the same people we sold it to at 225s.," and after a good deal of persuasion the Government allowed the butter to go to the people that the company had sold it to. But when the Government came to square up with the Kingston butter factory, they paid them £192 for the butter, and stuck to the £33 per ton. They said they were the friends of the farmer, but they had never paid

[Mr. Forsyth.

one penny piece of the extra price which they got for the butter which they collared. Those were facts which no one could deny. The Government had bungled the thing from beginning to end in connection with wheat and butter, and more especially butter.

Mr. D. RYAN: What would have occurred if the Government had not interfered?

Mr. FORSYTH: The butter would have gone to London, and they would have got 155s. per cwt., and the butter factories would have had the cash. The Government had no right to take the butter at 137s., more especially as they could get a better price in London on the spot, f.o.b. and cash. No business man in Brisbane would have done a thing like the Government did when he could have got such a splendid price for the butter. They had no right to injure any section of the community, and the Government could not think that they were doing any good, because they were offering so much less than the people could have got. How could they tell that the price would not go up? The hon. member for Warwick had read a cable stating that the price of butter in London had dropped, and the consequence was that there might be a big loss on the butter when it reached London.

Mr. D. RYAN: The hon. member for Rosewood contradicts that.

The PREMIER: If the Government had not interfered would this butter have brought more in London?

Mr. FORSYTH: He had already stated that the butter would have fetched from £150 to £155 f.o.b. Brisbane.

The PREMIER: Where is the proof of that?

Mr. FORSYTH: In the cable. Whether the butter rose or fell that would be the price they would get.

The PREMIER: They would have taken the risk.

Mr. FORSYTH: There was no risk at all. This money was payable in Brisbane f.o.b. on presentation of bills of lading.

The PREMIER: Would not the butter eventually be sold in London in any event?

Mr. FORSYTH: It would be sold in London in any event, but how did they know whether the price would rise or fall?

The PREMIER: Who would suffer?

Mr. FORSYTH: In the event of that butter being sold at a loss, the Government had got to lose. If it sold at less than 137s. they would have lost the difference, but that was not so. The butter factories could have got so much more than the Government gave them.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: And you limited the price to the Queensland consumer.

Mr. FORSYTH: This had nothing to do with the local consumption; it was an export article. The Government did something they had no right to do, and those who were going to suffer were the farmers of Queensland. What was the Government going to do with the £33 a ton which they collared? What right had they to hold that money? Why did they not pay it to the butter factories to hand back to the producers? Would the hon. gentleman say that that was an honest deal? Was it

a fair deal for the Government to rob the butter farmer, who was starving? He called it a most abominable and disgraceful deal. He was surprised at any Government interfering with such things. The more they touched these things, the worse they got. The Government got an example of how the people looked at the matter in the result of the Wide Bay election. It was the people on the land who did that, and they would do it at many other elections.

The PREMIER: Our supporters were away at the front.

Mr. FORSYTH: He wanted to refer to one or two other matters in connection with this vote. One was in connection with the advertising of the State, which they had already discussed on another item. There was £4,000 to be spent on advertising the State. He hoped the Chief Secretary would try and save as much as he could on this item.

The bell indicated that portion of the hon. member's time had expired.

Mr. FORSYTH: He would take a little more time. The hon. gentleman did not know how things were going to be at the end of June next, and he should do his level best to save every shilling he could. He thought he could save that £4,000, and he sincerely hoped that the hon. gentleman would do so. Then, there was an item for the cost of free railage of gifts for patriotic funds and railway fares of members of Expeditionary Forces. He did not profess to know how much money would be spent for that, but there was no doubt that there would be a lot of men going by train to Sydney. A very large quantity of goods came from all over Queensland as gifts for the Patriotic Fund, and the Government did not charge any freight on those goods. The money spent last year was £4,600, and now they had £10,000 for that purpose. Did the hon. gentleman think he would spend £10,000 this year, seeing that he only spent £4,600 last year? There was very little stuff coming in now. He knew a little about this matter, because he happened to be on the committee, and he knew that the Queensland people were most generous in sending all sorts of gifts. The freight on that would come to a good deal.

The PREMIER: Are you suggesting that the Government should not defray the cost?

Mr. FORSYTH: No, he was not. He was saying that the Government would not have the same amount of goods this year as they had last year. Anyone could see [4.30 p.m.] that at a glance. The large amount of goods that came from all over Queensland last year was not likely to occur again this year, and he was asking if the amount of money on the Estimates was likely to be utilised.

The PREMIER: Do you suggest that the money is likely to be wasted?

Mr. FORSYTH: No. His opinion of the matter was that the Estimates were being boomed up to show how much money will have to be spent, and it gave the Government an excuse for putting on extra taxation on the people. This extra taxation was not required to the extent of a brass farthing.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It was a bad case that would not stand on

its own merits and that had to be propped up with a lot of misrepresentations and falsification such as they had listened to during this debate. (Hear, hear!) They heard one hon. gentleman say that because the Government fixed the price of flour at £9 per ton, that meant that the price of Queensland wheat was 3s. 6d. per bushel. Did anyone in the House believe one word of that? The Government simultaneously, in fixing a price for flour, fixed a price for seed wheat, and the Secretary for Agriculture, in asking the millers for seed wheat samples, paid 5s. 3d. a bushel for it. He asked any fair-minded man to show what justification there was for such a statement that the price of Queensland wheat was fixed at 3s. 6d. The whole of the statements made by members opposite during the debate were a disgrace. They had been making statements for which there was not the slightest foundation. Members opposite also said that because the Government had interfered with the butter, the quantity available had shrunk. The hon. member for Warwick attempted to show them that the shrinkage in exhibits sent abroad from the various factories was caused by the Government.

The PREMIER: They say that if the hens don't lay eggs it is caused by the Government. (Laughter.)

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Hon. gentlemen opposite never said anything about the shrinkage in the flocks and herds of Queensland, which they could have done when they were talking about the shrinkage in butter. Not one said one word about the number of sheep and cattle whose bones were lying bleaching on the plains of Queensland to-day. Members also said that the price of bread was high and that it was due to the action of the Government. It was due to the conditions under which they found themselves to-day. He had never listened to statements in the House that compared with the statements made by members opposite during the debate. They were now in the throes of a drought, the country was never in such a bad condition before, and yet they found members opposite indulging in criticism which was unworthy of an Opposition professing to be there to assist in the administration of the country. They had the leader of the Opposition telling the House more than once that the Government were under the thumb of the certain mill. He told the hon. gentleman that the Government were never under the thumb of any mill, but still he continued to make the same assertion. There was a miller sitting behind the hon. gentleman, and he could tell him that the Government was not under the thumb of any mill. Yet the hon. gentleman continued to repeat the falsehood in the hope that he might at last get the House to believe it. It was unworthy of the hon. gentleman, and was unworthy of anyone holding the position that he was holding at the present time. The hon. gentleman knew that what he said was untrue, and, in sending forth to the country such falsehoods and unfounded statements, he ought to be absolutely ashamed of himself. He would show what were the arrangements between the Government and the millers. The first shipment of wheat was of inferior quality, and it arrived so late that Queensland was actually in a state of famine when it reached Brisbane. It was arranged with several of the millers to take over the bill of lading at the price it cost the Government, on the

Hon. J. M. Hunter.]

understanding that the price of flour should be based on the cost of the wheat, and any time that the Government felt disposed to reduce the price of flour, a corresponding reduction would be made in the price of wheat. They were not under the thumb of the miller at all at any time. The Government had full authority to take stock whenever they wished, and they did take stock at the mills. They reduced the price of flour.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: You did not reduce the price of bread.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We did.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: When did you reduce the price of bread? That is what I want to know.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We did reduce the price of bread, and the hon. gentleman knows it. The hon. member for Warwick had just told the House that the price of bread in Queensland was the same as the price of bread in New South Wales. The hon. gentleman was not concerned about the price of bread or anything else at all. The hon. gentleman and his erstwhile friends who sat on the Government benches with him purchased the wheat at a price that made the price of bread dear.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: What about the wheat you bought?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The late Government were offered wheat from the Argentine at £2 3s. per quarter, but they hesitated and waited until the price rose to £3 4s. per quarter when they bought. That cost the country 2s. 7½d. per bushel more than it should have done. That 2s. 7½d. meant a difference of £6 11s. 6d. per ton in the price of flour, and of 1½d. in the price of the loaf of bread. Where was the dear food party now? (Hear, hear!) Who was responsible for the high price of bread in Queensland now?

Hon. J. TOLMIE: You are keeping up the price.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It was the late Government that caused the extra cost in the price of flour and a corresponding price in the loaf of bread. If this Government had reduced the price of flour and had given the people cheap bread at the expense of the general taxpayer, the leader of the Opposition and hon. members opposite would have said that the Labour party were truckling to their friends in the country and making the general taxpayer and the poor farmer foot the bill. That was what they would have been charged with. There was no doubt the Government made a loss over the purchase of the wheat.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: How do you bolster up your statements that wheat could have been purchased at £2 3s. per quarter?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He drew the attention of the hon. member to the fact that one of his colleagues on the Opposition bench asked for a return to be tabled showing the quotations which had been received by the Denham Government for wheat for various months gone by, and that return was placed on the table of the House. The return should have been in the hon. gentleman's box that morning, and if he had looked at it, he would have got the information he was asking for.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: You are on thin ice.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He was not on thin ice. With regard to

[Hon. J. M. Hunter.

fixing the price of bread, the price of flour, and the handling of wheat, the late Government had been an absolute failure.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: You were going to show that the late Government were offered wheat at £2 3s. per quarter, but you can show nothing.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He was prepared to put up £100 for every £1 which the hon. gentleman would put up to give to any charitable institution if the information he asked for was not revealed in the return laid on the table of the House at the request of the hon. member for Burnett. He made the hon. gentleman that challenge. He could fix any sum he liked, and he could look at the official return tabled at the instigation of his own party. The hon. gentleman and his colleagues remind him of Kaiser Wilhelm, who dreamed of the wonderful things that his Zeppelins were going to do, and what his wonderful navy was going to do, but they did absolutely nothing. It was the same with the hon. gentleman and his party; they did absolutely nothing. What he tried to do was an absolute failure, and now he was trying to make a little mean political capital out of something he thought he could do. His ammunition had failed him. There was not a single shot fired at the Government party that had not returned to the leader of the Opposition himself and wounded him and his party worse than he ever dreamt of. It was like a boomerang, and came back to him. Then they had the hon. member for Wide Bay saying that chickwheat was being sold to Queensland at a certain price. They could not get enough of the wheat grown in Queensland for seed purposes. As a matter of fact, the Secretary for Agriculture was 20,000 bushels short of the amount of wheat he wanted for seed purposes. Why should the farmer sell wheat for chickwheat purposes when he knew the Minister was ready to buy all he had for seed purposes? A few bags might have found its way into the markets for chickwheat, but there were very few indeed. With regard to the charge made about Mr. Taylor, butcher, at Gympie, a general statement was made in regard to the supply of meat required by him. Mr. Taylor wanted brisket beef, but it was not available in Southern Queensland. The Government shop had no monopoly of brisket beef or any other beef, and Mr. Taylor today was buying his supplies of fresh meat from the same source as the State butcher shop was doing. Mr. Taylor could not get brisket beef, and because the Government would not bring it down from Townsville and sell it to him he complained. He knew that Mr. Taylor could be found guilty of selling beef at a price higher than the proclaimed price, but he did it in this way: he bought the beef as an agent, and charged commission for it.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: The same as you did with the butter.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The hon. gentleman shifted his ground with regard to the wheat, the butter, and the meat. He would leave the Premier to deal with the butter question, and after the Premier had finished the leader of the Opposition would feel that he had been knocked as flat as a pancake. (Government laughter.) He challenged the hon. gentleman to bring

a single miller in Queensland to show that he had bought wheat in Queensland for 5s. 6d. per bushel.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: I never said so.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The hon. gentleman and his party always told some story of misrepresentation regarding the price of wheat. An article was read by the hon. member for Drayton purporting to be dealing with the wheat question in New South Wales, when, as a matter of fact, it was dealing with fodder, not with wheat at all. Then the hon. member for Cunningham came along and said, "Why did you ever touch that wheat of the farmers at Warwick?" He said the Government should have paid 9s. per bushel for it. As a matter of fact, the price paid for that wheat was the price it cost those people. It was stated that the Government should have paid the same price as for the imported wheat. As a matter of fact, there was no imported wheat in Queensland at the time.

Mr. GRAYSON: You knew what the wheat would cost.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They did not know. Even if they did, the wheat had not arrived, and the previous price for wheat was about 6s. or 7s., and the Government paid what it had cost the company, and that wheat was absolutely to keep supplies up to the people of Queensland, otherwise there would have been no bread. They could not get wheat from New South Wales, and the Warwick Farmers' Milling Company actually saved the situation. Was it a right thing at a time like that to squeeze the last drop of blood out of the people?

Mr. GRAYSON: Will you admit that it was better wheat than the imported wheat?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He would admit the wheat was good. The Warwick Farmers' Mill had behaved more generously towards the Government than the Opposition, because they realised the position and were prepared to help the Government.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: You squeezed it out of them.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They would have taken it from them if they had not given it up, because it was a critical time and the position had to be met. It did not matter who suffered, the public of Queensland must not go short of food.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: They are short of flour on the Downs now.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Warwick Milling Company had 12,000 bags of wheat in their sheds and the shortage of flour was due to the fact that two mills broke down recently. Probably there would have been larger stocks of flour had wheat come forward more rapidly than it had from the South. Every step hon. gentlemen opposite had taken in connection with bread, flour, and wheat they had got farther in the bog. One moment they were charging the Government, the next minute they were charging the Agent-General; anything at all to retreat from the position they found themselves in.

Mr. STEVENS (*Rosewood*): It was hard to realise in whose department the vote they were at present discussing was. He thought

when the vote was proposed it was in the department of the Chief Secretary, but they had had already two Ministers apologising for the position the Government found themselves in, probably to relieve their chief from apologising for his own department. He had no doubt whatever that even, independent of the verdict the electors gave in Wide Bay the other day, the Government were very sorry indeed they ever attempted to interfere with the prices of primary products. The Hon. the Secretary for Lands, in trying to get rid of the blame for the position in which the Government found themselves, emphasised the fact that the country was suffering from a terrible drought, and, therefore, the primary producers must have suffered. They were the primary sufferers under present conditions, and yet that was the very time the Government chose to step in and interfere and arbitrarily fix the prices of the farmers' products, and far below the actual cost of production. Worse than that, adding insult to injury, they sold the farmers' butter, after they had seized it, so badly that speculators were able to make huge profits out of the transaction, profits that should have gone, and would have gone—had not the Government interfered—into the pockets of the producers. Even then they would not have been receiving a fair remuneration for their labour. Perhaps the Hon. the Secretary for Public Instruction did not realise the position; he was a faddist and had set ideas upon those subjects, and no proof could be strong enough to convince him that his theories were incorrect. The present position was another exemplification of the proverb "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." The Government rushed in, although they knew nothing whatever about the matter, and had handled it so badly that, instead of the farmers getting a fair return for their produce, they had allowed speculators to make huge profits. The Secretary for Lands also tried to ridicule the hon. member for Drayton because he quoted the effect of the Government fixing the price of flour made from any wheat except imported by the Government at £9 per ton, which was equal to 3s. 6d. per bushel for wheat. He ridiculed the idea of anyone trying to fix the price of wheat at 3s. 6d. per bushel.

The PREMIER: You know we were paying 5s. 3d. per bushel for wheat then.

Mr. STEVENS: The Secretary for Public Lands failed to say why the price was fixed. He said it was not to fix the price of wheat at 3s. 6d., although that was the absolute result of that action.

The PREMIER: That was not the result, and you know it.

Mr. STEVENS: It was the result. He knew the Secretary for Agriculture was offering 5s. for seed wheat. The price the Government fixed was for milling wheat, and the Secretary for Public Lands utterly failed to give the committee any reason why that price was fixed. Perhaps the Premier would tell them why the price was fixed in that manner.

The PREMIER: One would think it was explained so fully that there was nothing left to explain.

Mr. STEVENS: It was not for him to say whether the hon. gentleman's colleagues

Mr. Stevens.]

had explained the matter to the Premier's satisfaction or not, but he imagined there was a great deal left to explain. He had marked three items in the vote, which he thought required explanation. The first was Queensland's share of the Australian representation at the Panama Exposition.

The PREMIER: What do you want to know about that?

Mr. STEVENS: He wanted to know why the management was so badly muddled that the Queensland representative felt compelled to retire from the position?

The PREMIER: You ought to have asked Mr. Denham.

Mr. TOLMIE: He retired during your time.

The PREMIER: He sent in his resignation in Mr. Denham's time.

Mr. STEVENS: The next item was "Control of Trades Boards, £500," the same as last year. Last year there were three boards appointed, consisting of three members each, one for the Southern, one for the Central, and one for the Northern district of the State. That was nine gentlemen composing the various boards, and the amount set down for their maintenance was £500. Now, they had one gentleman appointed for the whole of the State, and the amount of the vote was the same as last year. The next item was a Royal Commission on wheat and flour. He thought that was the most serious of all. One of the first actions of the present Government, when they took office, was to appoint a Royal Commission on wheat and flour, and when the Governor met members of the House in another Chamber, His Excellency was forced by the Government to say that facts had been revealed already by the evidence taken by the commission that showed a very serious state of affairs that required urgent attention, which they would receive at an early date.

The PREMIER: And they have received it.

Mr. STEVENS: The Chief Secretary repeated the statement in the House, and yet, what was the result? They found there was absolutely nothing in the findings [5 p.m.] of the commission of anything to which exception could be taken. And yet the Government placed in His Excellency's mouth words which, to use a mild expression, were utterly without foundation.

The PREMIER: Do you say that we forced the Governor to say something that was practically untrue?

Mr. STEVENS: Yes; he might practically say that without any fear.

The PREMIER: It is in the report, if you read it carefully.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: Information was given privately to the commission that was not supposed to go into the report.

The PREMIER: It proved what was stated in the Speech. We do not keep information of that kind confidential.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: The commission stated that it would be, I understood.

The PREMIER: They were making huge profits privately, and it is well that the public should know.

Mr. STEVENS: To sum up the matter with regard to the Government's action in fixing prices, as he had maintained all along,

[Mr. Stevens.

production had been retarded. He had referred members of the Government to the action taken in the old country, where it was not so necessary to foster production as it was here, but where statesmen were refraining from interfering in any way with the primary producers. Here, unfortunately, the opposite course of action had been taken, and everything that the Government had done with regard to fixing prices and seizing commodities had tended, and would tend, to retard production and prevent people from going on the land. Without speaking in any party spirit whatever, he would warn any Government from interfering in that way. He thought the late Government made a mistake with regard to their Prices Boards, and the present Government had followed in their footsteps with disastrous results. It was the duty of any gentlemen who occupied the Treasury benches to do all they possibly could at such a time as the present to foster production and encourage people to occupy the land. Everything that was being done tended to drive people off the land and to cause them to congregate in the cities. Any one who sat down quietly for even five minutes must come to the conclusion that they could not go on indefinitely living on borrowed money, inflating prices, and putting up wages to such an extent that they did not get anything like 20s. worth for 20s. expended. If they did that on borrowed money, it must end before very long in disaster, and the only way even to minimise it was to encourage production in every possible way. That certainly could not be done by arbitrarily fixing prices.

The PREMIER: He desired to say a few words in reply to the criticism of hon. members opposite, but seeing that they had made an arrangement that they should come to the end of the Appropriation Bill by 6 o'clock if possible, he intended to make his remarks as brief as possible. Some members had taken the opportunity on that vote of making a general attack on the Government, and, if he might be permitted to say so, what they lacked in logic and common sense in their criticism, they made up for with the noise and bluster of the reiteration and misrepresentation that they had heard during a very considerable time last night, and for some part of this afternoon. The first point he intended to deal with was the query with regard to the position in connection with the Panama Exposition. The arrangement made by the Denham Government with Mr. Robertson was that he was to receive £500 for his expenses as Queensland representative thereat. Subsequently to that, the Commonwealth appointed Mr. Robertson as one of the Commissioners who would represent the Commonwealth at the Exposition, and agreed to pay £4 4s. per day to each of those Commissioners. Some dispute arose between the Commissioners, the chief of whom was Mr. Deakin, and the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr. Mahon, as to who had authority to deal with the employees of that Commission. The Minister for External Affairs held that he was the person of authority, whereas Mr. Deakin held that he was. He did not intend to enter into the merits of that dispute, although he should imagine that the responsible Minister representing the Commonwealth Government should be the person with final authority to decide matters. He knew he would consider it a very peculiar position if his Government appointed a Commission

and had no final power with regard to the direction of the matter. The dispute led to the resignation of Mr. Deakin, Mr. Neilsen, and Mr. Robertson, whilst the Denham Government were in power. Mr. Denham, when he got the resignation of Mr. Robertson, cabled to him that he was not to resign, that he was to remain at his post. Those were the only instructions that Mr. Robertson got, and he continued, in pursuance of that direction, as long as September last, he thought.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: On 5th July he communicated with you.

The PREMIER: He did, and he allowed the instruction of his predecessor to stand.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: You never communicated with him.

The PREMIER: There were certain communications with him, and also with the Southern States, because the hon. member would remember, if he was conversant with all the facts, that the two Southern States suggested that the three should join together and pay the whole of the expenses of the exposition. He objected to that. He did not think it desirable that Queensland, having contributed a sum of money towards the Commonwealth representation, should take over the expense of the whole matter, and he took no action with regard to the suggestion. The point in dispute was whether Mr. Robertson was entitled to payment at the rate of £4 4s. per day, which was his rate of pay from the Commonwealth Government, and if he had carried out the directions of Mr. Denham, he would not have resigned from that position with the Commonwealth Government, and he would have received £4 4s. per day. He now made a claim on the Queensland Government to be paid from the time that Mr. Denham gave that direction up to the time of his leaving, at the rate of £4 4s. He claimed that Queensland should pay him, instead of the Commonwealth, because Mr. Denham directed him to continue there. The question was whether he should be paid at that rate, or whether he should be paid at the rate he arranged with the Queensland Government before he started on the transaction at all—that was, to receive £500 for the job, which would mean a payment of £1 10s. a day. The matter was still under consideration and would be decided by the Cabinet at an early date. However, those were the merits of the dispute. Passing from that to the criticism which had been levelled against the Government with regard to their treatment of the man on the land, hon. members had raised somewhat of a hullabaloo over the result of the Wide Bay election, because they succeeded at a time which was the worst possible for the conduct of an election from the Labour point of view, in balancing the votes. Because they succeeded when large numbers of Labour supporters were out of the electorate, when large numbers were at the front—larger numbers in both instances than of the supporters of their opponents—they cried out that that was proof that the policy of the present Government had been condemned by the electors of Wide Bay. For the information of the public, and for the information of hon. members, he would like to point out that, in the three State electorates which were held by

Labour members of that House—Maryborough, Bundaberg, and Musgrave—the Labour party increased their majority considerably. In the electorate of Burrum, which was held by a representative of the party opposite, and was largely a sugar-growing electorate, they increased their numbers by 100 votes. Certainly, the Liberals increased their numbers to some extent in the other three electorates held by Liberals, but those electorates which were held by Labour representatives in that House had shown their undoubted confidence in the Government, and the electorate of Burrum had shown a distinct advance in Labour support; and it was evident that the primary producer in those constituencies realised the wisdom which was shown by the Government in entering into the arrangement with the Commonwealth Government for the acquisition of the sugar crop of 1915, and their subsequent action in taking steps to acquire the product of 1916. He would like there to point out that his hon. friends opposite, when conducting that campaign, did not disclose the real nature of the arrangement that was made with the Commonwealth Government with regard to the acquisition of the sugar crop of 1915. When he went into the electorate of Wide Bay during the last three days—he had one night at Childers and one at Maryborough—he found that they had been sedulously spreading about the electorate the statement that, if he had not made that arrangement, Queensland growers would have got £32 a ton for their sugar. They were telling them that. They were saying that this was a bad thing for the grower, until he produced the letters from the representative growers asking him to use his best efforts to induce the Commonwealth Government to renew the arrangements that had been so successful in 1915. The people at Maryborough were astounded when they heard him read out a letter from Mr. Angus Gibson, saying that his company recognised the sympathetic interest which they had taken in the sugar industry in Queensland, and hoped that they would be able to make a similar arrangement for 1916.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: And Mr. Hughes said he would do it.

The PREMIER: He pointed that out in those two places, and the votes there showed that the people knew the position, and that was a sample of the misrepresentation with regard to the doings of this Government. He could quite understand why, in those other parts of the electorate which were held by Liberals, and which were not given much attention to by the representatives of this party, that the votes which were cast for their Liberal friends were somewhat greater than they would otherwise have been. He could assure his friends opposite that they need not take too much consolation from the fact that they had succeeded for the time being in winning the election for Wide Bay by the small majority which they had obtained. There were indications that the representatives of the greatest agricultural industry in the State—the sugar-growers—were realising the real benefit which had been conferred upon them by this Government and the Commonwealth Government, and when they had the whole of the sugar-growers at their back, they had the largest class of primary producers in Queensland. His friends opposite had dealt with the

Hon. T. J. Ryan.]

action of the Government in regard to butter, sugar, and wheat, and he thought he might summarise his opinion of the treatment which was meted out by the late Government in allowing speculators to have a free hand with regard to wheat and butter, as having brought about the same result to the primary producer as the drought conditions were bringing about now.

Mr. STEVENS: You do not understand the position.

The PREMIER: They were not so short in memory that they could not all carry themselves back to the contest which took place before the 22nd May, when Mr. Denham himself, the then leader of the party opposite, admitted that he himself could have made £8,000 out of a deal in wheat.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: And the commission said nobody made anything out of it.

The PREMIER: The commission did not say that nobody made anything out of it. He had read all the figures in that commission, and he said what he had stated before in the House, that during the war those who dealt in wheat in Queensland—the millers—made larger profits than they made in times of peace. He repeated that statement. There was a representative miller sitting behind the Opposition, and he challenged him to deny it.

Mr. BARNES: It is not true if you take every year in the past into account. (Government laughter.)

The PREMIER: He had studied those figures too carefully, and he knew that the profits which were made out of the purchase of wheat during the war were larger than they were for the ordinary year. That applied to his friend, the hon. member for Warwick. He was not blaming the hon. member personally, because he was taking advantage of a system which he believed in. He was taking advantage of a policy which he was supporting, and which all his hon. friends opposite supported.

Mr. BARNES: Ask the Minister for Agriculture if he has taken advantage in the sale of the produce of the Gatton State Farm of the upgrade in the market.

The PREMIER: All he was saying was that his hon. friends opposite believed in the policy that allowed the speculator a free hand. If he could get his primary products cheap from the farmer, then get it, and sell it at a high price to the consumer. At what price was wheat bought on the Darling Downs in February and March? At what price was the wheat purchased which went down South, and which led to the necessity of the Denham Government making the purchase of those two cargoes, which were so much discussed?

Mr. BARNES: Only 6,000 bags went South.

The PREMIER: Wheat was sent South which should have been bought by the Queensland Government, and kept here, but through the delay of the Denham Government on that occasion, they eventually had to leave it entirely in the hands of Sir Thomas Robinson to make the best deal he could with regard to the purchase of wheat. They knew the deal that he made, and they had the matter discussed last night. They knew it was wheat of inferior quality. They knew there was no date fixed for delivery, and they

knew it was short weight. The contract which was made had been on the table of the House for some considerable time.

Mr. FORSYTH: What shipper would give you a date just now? Who would fix a date during the war?

The PREMIER: He did not know who would fix a date, but there was no date fixed, and, as he was reminded by the Secretary for Public Lands, when they made a purchase some time afterwards they had a date fixed by the shippers. He must not be drawn away from the trend of his argument. The Denham Government purchased this wheat under this contract, and they had this clause in it, and Mr. Denham was well aware of the nature of the clause, because a similar clause was pointed out to him by a letter which he received from Sydney from Graves and Company some days previously. The contract was made in London on the 13th April, and this was where the door was left open, and it gave them no legal claim finally when the wheat was delivered here short-weight. The clause read—

“Payment net cash in London, less the freight payable at Brisbane on arrival of steamer upon receipt of cable advice that the document was handed over to the Anglo-South American Bank in Bahia Blanca.”

The Agent-General gave a certificate, and on that Mr. Denham himself—because he turned up the papers and found his actual minute—his hon. friend knew “D.D.”—wrote this minute—

“Sent copy of Agent-General’s cable advising repurchase to Treasury and advise that provision must be made in terms of the purchase. D.D. 16/4/15.”

And on that £81,000 was paid over by the Queensland Government on that contract. The contract was received out here by Mr. Denham, and entered into by Mr. Denham’s Government before this Government assumed office.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: Yes, it was, but he was not to blame.

The PREMIER: The hon. gentleman might blame whom he liked, but if Mr. Denham was not to blame, who was to blame? Was it the Agent-General? His friends opposite set out last night to commit the murder of the Agent-General, and they had succeeded in committing suicide. (Government laughter.) He would ask them to compare the action of the Denham Government with the action of this Government on the question of wheat. He had pointed out, as far back as May last, that as soon as they came into power this Government would be able to show what effective steps they would take with regard to protecting the foodstuffs of the people and the prices thereof, and he pointed out they would have to wait until a supply of wheat was produced in Australia and as soon as that was done they took steps—

Hon. J. TOLMIE: The problem was solved then, when you had a sufficiency of wheat in Australia.

The PREMIER: It was not solved when the Denham Government was in power, but this Government solved it by making arrangements with the New South Wales

[Hon. T. J. Ryan.]

Government to supply Queensland with all the wheat that it required for twelve months from this month of December.

HON. J. TOLMIE: You would not allow the wheat to come in.

The PREMIER: They allowed it to come. They were bringing it in at cost price, and the people of Queensland were now assured that they would be supplied with bread at an average cost, and he hoped at a very reasonable cost. But the Denham Government never thought of anything of that sort. It was a similar arrangement they made with regard to sugar. He remembered the feeling in the country. Mr. Denham said that he asked for £25 for sugar while the Labour party only asked for £23 10s. per ton. But the Denham Government did not do anything to enable the sugar-growers to get a higher price for their cane, while this Government did things on a large scale for the advantage of the people. He did not wish to delay the Committee long on this question. They had had it all thrashed out during the election—how the Government had allowed speculators to have a free hand with regard to butter, how they allowed butter to be shipped away to Melbourne—and they found on coming into office that there was a temporary shortage in Victoria which was being used for the purpose of manipulating prices here. For instance, it was found that when the declared price in Melbourne was £214 0s. 8d., the price in Brisbane had amounted to 215s. per cwt. Butter was being exported from Queensland and sold in Melbourne at declared price. The result of keeping the Queensland market bare was that although Queensland was the only State showing a surplus of butter produced, the prices here were the highest ruling in the Commonwealth. It was necessary for the Government to step in and do something, which they did. He was not referring to the purchase of butter back in July and August. The Secretary for Agriculture had very capably replied with regard to the more recent purchases of butter which were effected by his department, and with regard to his remarks he sincerely expressed the hope that the time might not be far distant when the Labour party would be able to put that part of its programme into operation which provided for the establishment of the means of marketing primary products by the Queensland Government in London.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: That would ensure for the primary producer the full return for his produce.

Mr. BARNES: Your first transaction means a loss of about £2,500.

The PREMIER: It was strange that all the opposition to Government interference on behalf of the primary producer came from those who had been most interfered with by the action of the Government—from the middlemen. To come back to the actual sales of butter which took place in July and August, he might say that the quantity bought was 755½ cwt.; the dates of purchase were from 14th July to 10th August. The names of the persons from whom it was bought were F. R. Clarke, the Farmers' Co-operative Distributing Co. Agency, Messrs. Crouch and Connah, and the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Co., Ltd. The total amount paid was £7,364 0s. 4d.

and the average price paid per ton £194 0s. 11d. The amount received for the butter sold was £7,978 0s. 2d., the average price received per ton being £211 0s. 2d. The amount paid for brokerage and other charges was £45 8s. 9d., leaving a profit of £568 11s. 1d., which the Government were now holding, and which they intended to distribute amongst the persons they consider entitled thereto. He hoped that his friends opposite would not continue the carping criticisms of the nature which they had been indulging in, because, after all, they were going back and condemning this Government for sins which they themselves had committed. He had pointed to some big things that had been done by the Government with regard to sugar and [5.30 p.m.] wheat, and he was certain that, when they were given a fair opportunity of seeing what they could do, by the time they had next to face the electors the people would be quite satisfied that they were the Government which was capable of directing the destiny of the State in some of its most difficult times—(hear, hear!)—and that they were also capable of steering a course that would take it out of the shoals that the State had drifted into for over fifty years of Liberal administration and mal-administration. (Government cheers.)

HON. J. TOLMIE: He had five minutes left of his time, and he proposed to utilise it in replying to what the Premier had said.

The PREMIER: Do you think it is necessary?

HON. J. TOLMIE: He did think it was necessary. Hon. gentlemen on the front bench reminded him of a certain gentleman who was invited to come down and do a little bit of cursing. The hon. gentleman went to the miller to do a great deal of cursing, and it was very like Balaam and a quadruped which accompanied him. Hon. gentlemen opposite went to the miller to do a little bit of cursing, but instead of doing that they did something else—like Balaam, they came to curse and remained to pray. They had had to drag all these facts out of members on the front Treasury bench during the last five months. The Government had twisted and turned in a way that no honest Government had ever done in Australia before. They endeavoured to bolster up all their transactions in connection with the wheat until it was dragged out of them by the Opposition. The Minister for Lands made a statement about a return being laid on the table of the House yesterday, and which should be in the boxes of members to-day. Well, that return has not yet got into the boxes of hon. members. The Government wished to hide all evidence of their transactions from the House, and wanted to get into recess before it was presented, and because they thought this was the last day of the session, the hon. gentleman put that statement on the table. If he had put the statement on the table, it had not yet got into anyone's box. The hon. gentleman may have put it there, but he had not yet seen it. That had been the policy of the Government all the way through. The Minister for Lands said that all the bills of lading were handed over to the millers. The wheat came forward, and as the Government were not able to finance it, they handed it over to the miller. By that means 171,000 bushels

Hon. J. Tolmie.

of wheat got into the hands of the millers on the condition that the Government were not able to reduce the price of bread.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We did reduce it.

HON. J. TOLMIE: So long as the wheat remained with the millers, the price of bread could not come down. In order to make sure that the price of bread would not come down, the Government decided that the price paid for flour on the wharves should be £9 per ton. They knew very well that no person could get flour in Queensland at that rate. It was for the purpose of keeping up the price of bread to the people of Queensland until the wheat had all been sold. Now that the wheat was all sold, the hon. gentleman said that he was prepared to let other wheat and flour come in. He wanted to get wheat from New South Wales, but New South Wales said they would not send any wheat from there to Queensland, but only flour. Because that wheat had been denied them, and they could only get flour which the Government would not accept, there were thousands of homes in Queensland today which were suffering and were in need of that flour. He had seen letters himself from merchants stating that they could not get sufficient flour to supply the wants of their customers. They saw how angry the Minister for Lands was when he got up to speak, and they knew that an angry man was a madman. The Minister for Agriculture was also mad the previous night.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: What about yourself?

HON. J. TOLMIE: He was not angry at all. When he looked at the learned leader of the Government, it reminded him of the words of Goldsmith—

“His words of learned length and thundering sound

Amazed the gazing rustics standing round.”

The Premier was talking about the Wide Bay election all through his remarks. He tried to rush away from the position which he had taken up on the previous Monday. The hon. gentleman said that his party were going to succeed in Wide Bay, but they did not succeed.

The bell indicated that the hon. member's time had expired.

Question—The vote for “Miscellaneous Services” be granted—put and passed.

TRUST AND SPECIAL FUNDS.

CHIEF SECRETARY.

The TREASURER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*) moved that £10,000 be granted for the “Chief Secretary's Department.”

Mr. APPEL (*Albert*) asked what the vote was for, and why it was reduced from £50,000?

The TREASURER: The money was for the purchase of stock, treatment at meat-works, shipping charges, freights, and insurance in connection with consignments.

Question put and passed.

[*Hon. J. Tolmie.*]

HOME SECRETARY—POLICE SUPERANNUATION-FUND.

The TREASURER moved that £40,151 10s. 3d. be granted for “Police Superannuation Fund.”

Mr. APPEL pointed out that the late Government prepared a scheme for granting better pensions for the Police Force. Mr. Rendle drew up a pension scheme which would involve the State in the expenditure of £1,000,000 to put it into a financial position. That was a large amount of money, but it must be admitted that those who had joined the force in later years were not provided with a sufficient pension. The police were willing to pay a larger amount of contribution, and the new scheme should be taken into consideration by the Government.

The TREASURER: It will be considered.

Mr. APPEL: He hoped that the Government would introduce legislation on the matter next session.

Question put and passed.

At 5.40 p.m.,

Mr. BERTRAM relieved the Chairman in the chair as Temporary Chairman.

CENTRAL SUGAR MILLS FUND.

The TREASURER moved that £300,000 be granted for “Central Sugar Mills Fund.” Question put and passed.

GOVERNMENT SAVINGS BANK.

The TREASURER moved that £45,001 be granted for “Government Savings Bank.” Question put and passed.

HARBOURS AND RIVERS.

The TREASURER moved that £133,290 be granted for “Harbours and Rivers.”

Mr. FORSYTH noticed a number of items had been omitted, including £14,000 for maintenance and repairs to wharves and jetties. He saw £80,000 was down for dredges and plant and working expenses. That appeared to be a large amount, and he would like the Treasurer to give some information concerning it.

The TREASURER: Hon. members would notice that in the vote for Harbour Improvements the items £14,500 for the new approach to the Bowen Jetty and £3,500 for lengthening the dredge “Hydra” were not asked for this year. That accounted for £17,500 of the amount.

Mr. FORSYTH: I was referring to the item £80,000 for dredges and plant, and working expenses. I was under the impression that amount was going to be reduced.

The TREASURER: Last year £77,714 was spent, and the Engineer for Harbours and Rivers asked for the same appropriation, expecting that the same amount would be required this year.

Mr. APPEL said he simply rose for the purpose of urging upon the Treasurer the absolute necessity of keeping the dredging plant up to date. Whatever expenditure

might be involved, it was absolutely necessary, in connection with the trade that was likely to accrue to Queensland after the termination of the war, that they should be in the position to accommodate all the trade and commerce that was likely to come to the port. To effect this, the improvements recommended by the Engineer at the Hamilton should be carried out. He admitted that his late colleagues did not agree with him on the subject of the absolute necessity of providing the fullest dock accommodation for the port of Brisbane. At the present time they had a dock that was only capable of taking coasting vessels, and if the port and Queensland were to hold the position they should it was absolutely necessary, however large the cost, that dock accommodation should be provided whereby they could accommodate the largest vessels likely to come to the port.

Mr. H. L. HARTLEY: Who do you suggest should defray that cost?

Mr. APPEL: The users of the dock. It was absolutely necessary, if they were going to keep the trade.

Question put and passed.

WATER SUPPLY.

The TREASURER moved that £60,500 be granted for the service of the year 1915-1916 for "Water Supply."

Question put and passed.

WORKERS' DWELLINGS ACT.

The TREASURER moved that £433,340 be granted for the service of the year 1915-1916 for "Workers' Dwellings Act."

Mr. FORSYTH: There was a very large increase in that vote, and he would like to ask the Treasurer if the same demand existed for workers' dwellings at the present time?

The TREASURER: No, there has been a considerable falling off.

Mr. FORSYTH: If such was the case, why was such a large amount put down?

The TREASURER: They were now asking appropriation for the applications that had already been granted.

Mr. FORSYTH: He understood that people were holding back until matters became normal, and they were very wise in doing so. Prices of building materials had increased, and people were hanging off until things became cheaper, because the expense later on would be much less than at the present time. If the increase in the vote was because of the applications that had already been granted, he was quite satisfied.

Question put and passed.

AGRICULTURAL BANK ACT.

The TREASURER moved that £455,710 be granted for the service of the year 1915-1916 for "Agricultural Bank Act."

Question put and passed.

CENTRAL RABBIT BOARD FUND.

The TREASURER moved that £10,000 be granted for "Central Rabbit Board Fund."

Question put and passed.

PUBLIC ESTATE IMPROVEMENT FUND.

The TREASURER moved that £21,719 be granted for "Public Estate Improvement Fund."

Mr. FORSYTH: Last year they spent about the same amount of money on public estate improvements as was asked for this year. Were they likely to spend the money this year if the demand for Crown lands was not so great? They were losing a lot of money under this vote. £42,000 had been written off the account as a bad debt, and he wished the Government to be very careful to see that the money now being spent was not lost.

HON. J. TOLMIE: So far as the money being spent at the present time was concerned, it was all likely to come back to the State, because it was very wisely expended and the land was loaded. When the fund was first established in 1902, 1903, or 1904, there was a very considerable number of persons out of employment, and money was found for public works that were not reproductive in order that those people might be able to earn something. Take, for instance, the prickly-pear at Jondaryan. Up to £18 an acre was spent in clearing the pear off that land, and subsequently the land was not taken up and the money was wasted.

The TREASURER: The amount of £42,000 had been utilised by the present Government to endeavour to some extent to square the account of the unrecouped expenditure on certain public estates. It was recognised that some of the balances were absolutely hopeless, and they were simply standing in the books of the Treasury as debts that could not be liquidated. £17,960 had been standing to the debit of the account in connection with the Eungella Estate, in the Mackay district; that amount was written off. At Mount Mee £2,600 had been spent. At Boonah-Killarney, £2,348 had been written off, and there were a number of other small amounts which had been liquidated. At Kangaroo Hills £9,800 had been written off, as there was no hope of any return.

Question put and passed.

WARREGO RABBIT DISTRICT FUND.

The TREASURER moved that £4,600 be granted for the "Warrego Rabbit District Fund."

Question put and passed.

BRANDS, SHEEP, AND STOCK ACTS.

The TREASURER moved that £18,814 be granted for the "Brands, Sheep, and Stock Acts."

Question put and passed.

LIVE STOCK AND MEAT EXPORT ACT.

The TREASURER moved that £570 be granted for the "Live Stock and Meat Export Act."

Question put and passed.

SPECIAL STANDING FUND.

The TREASURER moved that £8,500 be granted for "Special Standing Fund."

Question put and passed.

STOCK DISEASES EXPERIMENT STATIONS, YEERONGPILLY AND TOWNSVILLE.

The TREASURER moved that £5,741 be granted for "Stock Diseases Experiment Stations, Yeerongpilly and Townsville."

Hon. E. G. Theodore.]

Mr. WALKER (*Cooroora*) said they were spending a pretty handsome sum on these stations, and he could not see they were getting the worth of their money. Yeerongpilly was established a few years ago to help the stockbreeders in their troubles and in experimenting, not only in regard to common diseases, but also others. On the North Coast line, particularly since the introduction of sheep from the West, they had had great losses from scrub ticks, and yet there had been no experiments at all, although he had gone out of his way to bring the matter before the director of the station on more than one occasion. However, the matter he particularly wished to speak on was the following:—A committee was appointed by the House to go into the Munro Hull cattle-tick remedy. Unfortunately, when the report was being framed, he took ill, and could not return to the meeting in time to deal with the report, and consequently lost the opportunity of putting in a minority report. The report of the committee was not signed by him, and he did not intend to sign it. He disagreed with the whole of clause 4 of the majority report, which said—

“That, regarding charges made by Mr. Hull against officials of the department, the committee find there was, generally speaking, a lack of sympathy, a spirit of scepticism, and a failure to grasp the possible national importance of such a discovery; that there was a manifest desire to disprove, rather than a whole-souled desire to co-operate and assist in a thorough and impartial investigation; but for this the Government of the time and not the officials must be held responsible.”

He agreed with the portion of the report recommending that further experiments should be made. He went further, and said that if Mr. Hull, by the further investigations, established his particular theory, he should be compensated fairly for the work he had done for Queensland. He [7 p.m.] wished to get that point in because he recognised that according to the Standing Orders he had lost the opportunity of keeping that particular question going. Mr. Hull had made something like twenty charges against the officers of the department, and hon. members would see that it was hardly a fair thing for him to sign the report, knowing full well that those officials—occupying not only high but also minor positions—had not had the usual British chance of refuting the charges that had been made against them. That was why he did not at all agree with clause 4 of the committee's findings. If the gentlemen whom the committee suggested should be appointed discovered anything further, Mr. Hull should be compensated fairly, because they ought to treat the matter on a higher plane altogether than as a mere question between Mr. Hull and the department. It was a matter between Mr. Hull and the dairymen of Queensland, and that was the reason why he believed that there was something in Mr. Hull's claim. He knew that they had conflicting evidence. They also had some gentlemen who said that they had experimented in exactly the same way as Mr. Hull, but, generally speaking, clause 4 should never have been put in the report. He thanked the Chairman for having allowed him to make that explanation.

Question put and passed.

[*Mr. Walker.*]

SUGAR EXPERIMENT STATIONS ACT.

The TREASURER moved that £7,205 be granted for “Sugar Experiment Stations Act.”

Question put and passed.

LOAN ESTIMATES.

The following items were agreed to without debate:—

PUBLIC WORKS.

Buildings—£191,600.
Industrial Undertaking—£10,000.

THE TREASURER.

* Water Supply—£9,000.
Loans to Local Bodies—£9,000.
Loans in Aid of Co-operative Agricultural Production—£15,000.

The Sugar Works Act of 1911—for the establishment of Central Sugar Mills at Babinda (to complete) and South Johnstone (on account)—£200,000.

Industrial Undertaking—£35,000.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS.

Wire Netting—£10,000.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND STOCK.

Towards the Establishment of Abattoirs—£10,000.

RAILWAYS.

General Establishment—£81,602.
Civil Engineering Branch, Southern Division—£537,305.
Civil Engineering Branch, Central Division—£357,152.
Civil Engineering Branch, Northern Division—£411,090.
Signal and Light Branch, Southern Division—£14,550.
Signal and Light Branch, Central Division—£6,100.
Signal and Light Branch, Northern Division—£4,350.
General Expenditure—£315,000.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, 1914-1915.

The following items were agreed to without debate:—

Executive and Legislative—£1,703 15s. 6d.
Chief Secretary—£28,158 7s. 6d.
Home Secretary—£92,254 17s. 2d.
Department of Public Works—£74,496 15s. 11d.
Department of Justice—£4,720 19s. 4d.
The Treasurer—£162,080 1s. 5d.
Department of Public Lands—£9,140 4s. 1d.
Department of Agriculture and Stock—£40,014 17s. 3d.
Department of Public Instruction—£18,539 13s. 10d.
Department of Mines—£3,912 10s. 8d.
Department of Railways—£90,167 1s.

SUPPLEMENTARY TRUST FUNDS ESTIMATES
1914-1915.

The following items were agreed to without debate:—

	£	s.	d.
Chief Secretary's Department	197,356	7	0
Home Secretary's Department	2,389	11	1
Department of Justice	1,000	0	0
Treasurer	140,465	0	3
Department of Public Lands	107,225	10	5
Department of Agriculture and Stock	4,671	9	3

SUPPLEMENTARY LOAN ESTIMATES, 1914-1915.

The following items were agreed to without debate:—

	£	s.	d.
The Treasurer	295,978	0	7
Railways	203,351	3	1

VOTES OF CREDIT, 1916-1917

The TREASURER moved that £525,000 be granted for the various departments and services of the State.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to certain resolutions, and the resolutions were received.

The CLERK then read the resolutions covering the amounts voted for the whole of the departments of the State.

RESOLUTIONS FROM COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

The TREASURER: I move that the resolutions be now agreed to by the House.

The SPEAKER: I propose to adopt the following procedure in connection with the discussion of these items. I will read out the numbers, and if any hon. [7.30 p.m.] member desires to discuss any particular item, he will draw my attention to it as I call the number, and I will mark it to be discussed. We can then pass the other resolutions en bloc.

Resolution 1 agreed to.

On resolution 2—"Department of Public Works"—

Mr. SWAYNE: I wish to say a few words on this vote. I notice here that the sum of £25,680 is put down for Department of Public Works. That is for the salaries and contingencies in connection with that department. At this last stage of the session, I think it is only right to make my protest against the evil practice that has been initiated by this Government in giving preference to members of political organisations in the disbursements of public money. It has been pointed out over and over again that the money comes from the taxpayers as a whole and is contributed by people of all shades of political opinion. It is wrong, therefore, that there should be any discrimination in the matter, so far as politics are concerned. The only considerations to be taken notice of in regard to State employment are efficiency. I would not have gone

into this matter only for something that has cropped up within the last few days. It is only right to draw the attention of members of trades unions to this matter. I believe myself that the main body of the rank and file who compose these organisations are as loyal as any members of the community. At such a time as this, I think it is only right that any disloyal utterances should be brought to the attention of the public and to other members of the unions. I have here an extract from the "Daily Standard" of the 7th December. It refers to a meeting of delegates of these organisations, which was held in connection with the proposal of the Prime Minister, Mr. Hughes, to meet the requirements of the Empire. We know that Mr. Hughes requires every man between certain ages to furnish returns in connection with recruiting. That is now the law of the land. I maintain that it is the duty of every law-abiding citizen to follow the rule laid down in this respect; yet we find that at this meeting the following remarks were made by one of their members:—

"Mr. Hansen (plumbers) considered that immediate and drastic action should be taken by the council in order to prevent this unauthorised system of so-called recruiting being used to coerce the workers. It was an insult to the workers to give local governing bodies the power that was given to them under this scheme to obtain soldiers. These same local governing bodies opposed the suffrage for the workers, and always fought most strenuously against all efforts to bring about that reform, but they were prepared to use their power and machinery in order to force men, whom they denied votes, into the army—and the Government was helping them. Unless Mr. Hughes repudiated the objectionable clauses in the recruiting scheme, he thought that the unionists of the Wide Bay electorate should be advised not to vote for the Labour candidate next Saturday."

We have here a direct incitement to a breach of the laws of the land.

The SPEAKER: Order! I hope the hon. gentleman is not going to discuss the whole recruiting scheme on this vote.

Mr. SWAYNE: I am simply reading the utterances that were made by representatives of the unions. We know that preference is being given to unionists, although I do not think preference should be given to anyone in connection with Government employment. I am giving my reasons why that principle should not be adopted. Then, we find that at that meeting Mr. Axelsen (baking trade) also spoke, and another man named Anzelark. It is really worth noting the number of foreign names that appear at a meeting of this kind. I think that when the matter is brought before members of the unions themselves, they will take the necessary steps to get other representatives. We find that Mr. Axelsen urged that drastic steps should be taken against the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth. Then, we find that Mr. Anzelark—another foreign name—

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the hon. gentleman to connect his remarks with the vote before the House.

M^r. Swayne.]

Mr. SWAYNE: I find that the resolution we are dealing with provides for salaries amounting to £25,680 for the Department of Public Works.

The TREASURER: The Chief Office.

Mr. SWAYNE: I will take another vote, if necessary, but I thought it would come better on this vote, as I understand the department is following the practice of giving preference to members of organisations over other citizens and other taxpayers in connection with Government employment.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member will be quite in order in discussing preference to unionists, but not in discussing what has taken place at recruiting meetings.

Mr. SWAYNE: This was a meeting of delegates from unions, and I want to give this as one of my objections to this practice of preference. However, I will not go fully into this, but I have here from what I may describe as their own organ ample evidence upon this very grave matter that they hold views which I may say are adverse to the welfare and the very existence of the Empire, and on such grounds as that I wish to make my protest against any preference being shown to them. During the session we have been able to show from time to time that as organisations—I am not referring to individuals—their conduct has been most questionable. They have struck when working on transports and coaling transports, and in the small arms works, and I do think, if anything further were required to emphasise the injustice of giving these people privileges that other citizens do not have, I think their attitude in this grave crisis is sufficient to bring it home to everyone.

Resolution 2 agreed to.

Resolutions 3 to 5 agreed to.

On Resolution 6—"That there be granted to His Majesty, for the service of the year 1915-1916, a sum not exceeding £11,870 to defray salaries and contingencies in connection with inspection of machinery and scaffolding"—

Mr. SWAYNE: I take it that this vote has to do with the inspection of machinery, and the administration of the Bill recently passed by the House. I hoped, and I thought I had arranged with the Chief Secretary, to be present when it was to go through. Seeing that I was going away at the request of the recruiting committee to address meetings, I thought that gave me some grounds for asking that he would postpone the consideration of this Bill in Committee for a few days. I think it was five parliamentary days I was away. Possibly the hon. gentleman, in the rush of business, forgot it. I may say, in justice to the hon. gentleman, that he asked me to mention it to the "Whip" of the party, which most certainly I did. I could have got plenty of hon. members on my own side to put my amendments, but I thought, when I followed the request of the Chief Secretary, and repeated the request to the Government "Whip," that something would have been done. The legislation has now gone through. There was one amendment moved on that side of the House, and I am anxious to know how it will be administered. That was an amendment limiting the area of the space occupied by engines which could be taken charge of by one man by 75 feet square. We have to thank the leader of the Opposition for saving owners from the results that would accrue from an

[*Mr. Swayne.*

arbitrary square figure. He substituted the square root of that figure, and it will now be legal as long as the machinery taken charge of by one man does not cover more than that area, no matter what shape it is. Then, another question arises. In my district I think there is a larger quantity of factory machinery in the shape of sugar-mills, heavy steam engines, and so on, than there is, perhaps, in the district of any other hon. member. In the case of sugar-mills, it is often the practice to have a steam pump some distance away. This will not come within the area specified. It only requires visiting a few times a day for the purpose of lubricating, and I would like to know from the Minister in charge of the department whether it will be necessary to have a driver for this one pumping engine. It is not at all necessary; as the Act previously stood, it worked without any ill effects. I am anxious to know if it will be administered so as not to bear harshly on the sugar-mills in my district. Another question was the fixing of some standard of horse-power. If I had been here, I intended to move an amendment to that effect. I notice in the Bill there is a clause giving power to fix the standard of power for boilers but not for engines. What about the buyers of engines? Engines are being used largely—oil engines, benzine engines, and steam engines—very often in a very small way by farmers, and we have no fixed standard of horse-power. Many of the farmers are quite ignorant of machinery. They see an engine quoted at a certain price, of a certain power, but they do not know that the capacity of the work of the engines varies greatly, and I think it would be a great improvement in the Bill if the machinery department had been enabled to fix the standard of horse-power for boilers and also for engines for the protection of buyers. We know the use of machinery is coming increasingly into effect.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolutions 7 to 39, inclusive, agreed to.

On resolution 40—"That there be granted to His Majesty, for the service of the year 1915-1916, a sum not exceeding £103,625, to defray salaries and contingencies in connection with insanity"—

Mr. McPHAIL (*Windsor*): Unfortunately, when the Estimates for this vote were going through I was away unwell. I particularly desire to say something about the institution at Goodna, knowing a good deal about it, perhaps more than the majority of members. In the first place, I take it the condition of the institution is on the improve as a result of the exposure, or the public attention that has been called to it, because I have it on the best of authority that since the inquiry there has been a continual improvement—a continual "cleaning up," I was going to say—but certainly an improvement all round with one exception. The institution can stand considerable improvement, and I maintain it should be given in every respect that attention which it needs, not only in regard to the inmates—because if there is one disease that calls for sympathy more than another it is the disease of those who are mentally afflicted—and I think anything we can do for them should be done to alleviate their sufferings and to surround them with those comforts which will help them eventually to recovery. But there is one aspect I must touch upon. The hon. member for Albert, in dealing with this question, said he was

horrified when he took office with the state of affairs at Goodna. He said had the public known the condition of the institution at that time it would have created a grave scandal. To my mind, that was a reflection on the gentleman who at that time occupied the position of Medical Superintendent. I think there is no man who gave of his very best, who devoted the whole of his time to the needs of the institution more than the late Dr. Hogg—(hear, hear!)—a man who not only attended the patients mentally and physically himself but who gave up all his spare time to studying mental diseases; and while I have no desire to detract from the merits of Dr. Ellerton, I do say if he is an expert of greater knowledge than the late Dr. Hogg, or a man who gives more attention to mental diseases than that late officer, then he is an extremely clever and capable man. I would like to say something with regard to a report made by one of the superintendents who held the position for some time after Dr. Hogg's death. He made a report, and the official visitors were asked to report on it. The official visitors were R. A. Røanking, P.M., and John Thomson, M.B. Their report says—

“ We very strongly deprecate the paragraph that ‘very little effort has been made of late to treat the patients for their mental diseases.’ It is perhaps possible that during the illness, extending over six months, of the late Dr. Hogg, medical attention may have become a little slack, although we have no knowledge of this; but we do know, from having it frequently thrust upon us, that Dr. Hogg not only looked upon treatment as essential, but compelled its observance. He believed and tried to impress upon all that insanity was a form of disease amenable to treatment—not treatment by drugs and medicines, but by healthy surroundings and the removal of anything suggestive of prison restraint, such as cells, obtrusive fences, etc.”

I maintain that that extract clearly proves that Dr. Hogg adopted the same methods as the present medical officer, and I know, from personal experience, it is not true when it is said that patients were restrained, that they were not allowed the same liberty as they are now, that no effort was made by pleasant surroundings to restore them to health and strength. There was a special recreation ground, and twice a week a number of the women patients were taken right out of the wards on to the hills away from the surroundings of buildings and fences, and I think it hardly fair to speak in a derogatory manner of the late Medical Superintendent in the way the hon. member for Albert did.

Mr. MURPHY: He did not reflect on Dr. Hogg.

Mr. McPHAIL: My reading of the hon. gentleman's speeches lent colour to the suggestion that the present Medical Superintendent is far and away superior to the gentleman who occupied the position previously. I want to say this, as Dr. Ellerton and Dr. Hogg both stated, it is not by medicine we can make these people better. A mental disease is not like a disease of the body. And even by giving the warders and nurses a hospital training, we cannot give them any further advantages with regard to mental diseases. I shall be pleased when the Home Depart-

ment make their report in regard to the suggestions made by members that the men and women who are engaged in an occupation which I do not think any of us envy will have their position made as comfortable as possible. I think that a good

[8 p.m.] deal of the trouble at the Goodna Asylum is due to petty tyranny on the part of some of the lower officials, and I think it would be possible for the officials in both the men's and women's departments to work more amicably with the rank and file and not by pinpricks, tyranny, and a domineering attitude make them dissatisfied with their positions. I want also to refer to Warden Morris, who was found “Not guilty” of the charge brought against him, but I understand has not yet been reinstated. I would like the Home Secretary to give that matter attention. I have nothing further to say except that if a spirit of reasonableness be introduced into the asylum, I do not think there will be any dissatisfaction amongst the warders and the nurses, but that they will give the very best they can, both in helping the patients and in working amicably with those in authority.

HON. J. TOLMIE: I wish to remove any impression that might be in the minds of hon. members with regard to the statement of the hon. member for Windsor, that he thought Mr. Appel was trying to reflect on Dr. Hogg. I do not think that anything was further from the mind of the hon. member. I gathered, when he was speaking, that he was under the impression that the institution had been starved for money, and, no matter who was there, he would have great difficulty in making it a model institution. I want to endorse every word of the hon. member for Windsor in regard to the late Dr. Hogg. I do not think a public servant in Queensland ever more faithfully discharged his duties, and anybody who was acquainted with him, as I was, and had an opportunity of observing the close and unremitting attention which he gave to his work, could come to no other conclusion than that he was a gentleman whose whole heart and soul were wrapped up in the health of his patients. Knowing him as I did, I would not like any reflection to rest on his memory, and I am sure that no other hon. member would like to know that such a reflection had been cast upon him; nor should I like the late Home Secretary to be unjustly blamed. I might add that his successor, Dr. Nicoll, showed the same unremitting care and attention to his patients, so that I do not think the reflection was on the management or any of the superintendents, but rather was a statement that the institution had been starved in days gone by.

Question put and passed.

Resolutions 41 to 78, inclusive, put and passed.

On resolution 79—“£512,805, Salaries and Contingencies in connection with State Schools”—

Mr. FORSYTH: The Government last year and this year have blamed the late Government for not giving automatic increases. They raised a great hue and cry over that matter, but now we find that this department is practically starved so far as any increases in wages are concerned, because the Minister owned that only about £8,000 was provided for increases for the huge staff of teachers throughout the length and

Mr. Forsyth.]

breadth of Queensland, although the Government can give £150,000 or £200,000 to workers in other departments.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The increase is £12,000.

The PREMIER: If you had to do with it, you would be retrenching them.

Mr. FORSYTH: That statement is wrong. Every single shilling that we gave last year would have been given by the late Government, because they had the money, and they made the promise that in that case it would be done. But the hon. member has been squandering money right and left, regardless of who pays for it, instead of being careful and working within their income, as the last Government did. That is more than the hon. member is likely to do.

The PREMIER: Four shillings and sixpence a day and a poll tax.

Mr. FORSYTH: A poll tax would not be a bad thing. (Uproar.) Ten shillings a head for a man getting £3 a week is a mere bagatelle. And I believe that the working classes in Queensland would be very glad to pay 10s.

The PREMIER: On 4s. 6d. a day.

Mr. FORSYTH: Where are they getting 4s. 6d. a day? The teachers who have passed their examinations and qualified for grade promotions are going to get £10 only, when they are entitled to £20.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Some of them.

Mr. FORSYTH: Male pupil-teachers in the fourth class who passed for Class III. after examination, and who receive £80 a year and ought to be getting £110 a year, are going to get only £10 increase. Thus, the hon. member, with that wonderful generosity which he has been displaying towards all the people under his care, is depriving them of £20 a year, although under the regulations—that is, the automatic increase which ought to be given, and which hon. members opposite said they would not dream of taking away—

The PREMIER: You say that they should get nothing.

Mr. FORSYTH: I did not say anything of the sort, and if the hon. member says that I did, he is making a statement that is absolutely untrue.

The PREMIER: Judging by your history.

Mr. FORSYTH: These are facts. They are bad enough, but I am coming to a very much worse case. Take the case of the pupil-teachers who are receiving £40 on probation. After they pass the examination for pupil-teacher of the third class, they are entitled to get automatically £70 a year, and they this year are getting the magnificent increase of £10. In other words, the Government are robbing those people of the £20 to which they are justly entitled under the regulations. The female teachers are even worse paid. The female pupil-teacher is entitled to get £20 a year to start, and if she passes an examination she is entitled to get £50; but this wonderfully liberal Government, who believe in paying all the automatic increases, are giving that girl an advance of £10 a year, so that she is getting the magnificent income of £30 a year. These are facts that no one can deny, because I have taken good care to be in a position

[*Mr. Forsyth.*]

to know that they are correct. I think the Minister said that he hoped next year to give them more. I say that when people are receiving such a miserably low salary, and are automatically entitled to the higher rate, they ought to get it, no matter who misses it. I understand, also, that all teachers over £200 are to get nothing. So much for the automatic increases, so far as the present Government are concerned.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The hon. member for Murrumbidgee has railed against the alleged disproportional increases in the Education Department, when compared with other departments in the public service. The same rule exactly has been laid down with regard to automatic increases, and in no case is the Education Department being treated differently from other departments.

Mr. FORSYTH: Then no department is getting the automatic increases?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: In all departments they are getting automatic increases, and they are getting more automatic increases than they were last year under the Denham Government; and not only are more automatic increases being given, but, in addition to that, we are carrying on this year the increases that were restored to them last year, which were refused by the Denham Government.

Mr. FORSYTH: They were not refused. They got them at the end of the year.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: They were suspended. As has been pointed out over and over again, we are not only giving them last year's increase, but we are giving them also automatic increases this year up to a certain limit, in worse times than were experienced by the late Government. This Government are doing far better than the last Government. As pointed out in special cases pupil-teachers who were entitled to £30 are limited to an increase of £10, under the rule laid down. I admit that, under a general rule laid down by the Government, there no doubt are cases of hardship.

Mr. FORSYTH: There they are.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: My attention had been drawn to it prior to the hon. member mentioning it, and the general rule does not prevent individual cases being considered, and I can assure the hon. member, and also the persons concerned, that individual cases will be considered on their merits.

HON. J. TOLMIE: I want to ask the Minister a simple question. Have the automatic increases been granted in full this year?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: You know already that the rule laid down—

HON. J. TOLMIE: Never mind the rule. Have the automatic increases been granted? Last year the Government laid down a rule and adhered to that rule. The hon. gentleman blamed the Government last year for adhering to that rule. The present Government laid down a rule this year, and the hon. gentleman said they adhered to the rule. I ask the hon. member whether he has granted the automatic increases in full?

Resolution 79 agreed to.

Resolution 80 agreed to.

On resolution 81—"Railways—General Establishment"—

HON. J. TOLMIE: When the Estimates of the Railway Department were going through, I did not speak at any length, because I was anxious to assist the Minister in getting his Estimates through, but members on the Government side took up the refrain, and made very damaging charges against the administration of the Railway Department. I have feelings of very great respect for the officers of the Railway Department, who, I believe, are very ably discharging the functions of their office, and I thought that the actions had met with general approbation, but the hon. member for Brisbane stated that he could save £250,000 on the administration of the Railway Department. Notwithstanding the very high respect I entertain for the Commissioner and other officers of the department, I think if a saving of that kind can be made it is the duty of the Government to see that it is done. If the hon. member for Brisbane is able to save that amount in the administration of the department, we know where he ought to be. (Laughter.) It would pay the country well if he were in that position. The Minister ought to take the opportunity of saying whether he is going to make investigations as to whether the saving indicated can be made.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: In relation to the charges made the other night, which the hon. gentleman has revived, I may say that everything that was spoken about is being inquired into, and the charge particularly that had to do with the engineering shops. It is six and a-half years since that incident took place. I am not going to say anything about the ability of the hon. member for Brisbane to save £250,000. I have confidence that the Commissioner, the Secretary, and some officers are doing their best, and I have every confidence in them; but there are other officers in the Railway Department that I have not the same confidence in, and in relation to these officers there will be a searching investigation. I am very glad the leader of the Opposition assisted me in getting the Estimates through, though I would not again put them through at such a late hour. (Hear, hear!) I never want to burke discussion, and the hon. member knows how it was that there was not so much discussion as usual. Letters have been sent to the different parties who have made charges, and a report was tabled to-day which will be circulated, and the hon. gentleman will find what is said therein. There is a desire for a Royal Commission to inquire into the Railway Department. Personally, I do not care what kind of commission is appointed, but if there is anything wrong it ought to be discovered, and if there is nothing wrong the officers ought to be exonerated. I treat the statement of the hon. member for Brisbane in a jocular way.

Resolution 81 agreed to.

Resolutions 82 to 87 agreed to.

On resolution 88—"Legislative Assembly"—

Mr. BARNES: There are one or two matters which I think might be ventilated under this vote, both of which I think will certainly make for better legislation, and generally facilitate the business of the House. The first question I wish to refer to is the

appointment of a secretary to the leader of the Opposition. It is quite patent to every member of the House that the leader of the Opposition has very strenuous work to do. I remember when the present Home Secretary occupied the position, the strain of the office upon him was very considerable. That has again been emphasised during the tenure of office of the present leader of the Opposition. The leader of the Opposition has, perhaps, more work than any other member of the House. He must be conversant to a great degree with every Bill submitted, and I think it would be wise in the interests of the State, and helpful to Ministers in the highest degree, if a secretary were appointed to assist the leader of the Opposition. It is evident that if the request is acceded to it will make largely for the facilitating of the business of the House. I think that this session, apart from the routine business, we have had the best part of fifty Bills presented. The leader of the Opposition must be in perfect touch with the whole of the Bills presented. I believe the suggestion will meet with the approval of the Chief Secretary. He, of all men in the House, has been more intimately connected with the strenuous work that accompanies the responsibility of leading His Majesty's Opposition. The other matter I wish to refer to is this: I think the business of the country will be facilitated if accommodation is found for country members in some way in this House—not in any gratuitous fashion—in regard to sitting and bedroom accommodation for those who require it. A charge should be made.

The PREMIER: Do you suggest that we should provide bedrooms for every member?

Mr. BARNES: I do; bedroom and sitting-room combined, and that a charge should be made. Town members living adjacent to the city do not require them, but it would be an immense advantage to country members if accommodation of that kind were provided. The accumulation of papers is pretty considerable, and business will be facilitated in the direction that members would have more time to study Bills in the quiet of their own room. I hope that that matter will receive the sympathetic consideration of the Chief Secretary.

The PREMIER: The points raised by the hon. member for Warwick perhaps call for some answer in courtesy to the hon. member. The hon. member has raised the question of the appointment of a secretary to the leader of the Opposition. It is a matter I can approach quite disinterestedly, seeing the great confidence that the people of Queensland have in the present Government. I would like to remind the hon. gentleman that, when we were in opposition, and the hon. member for Fortitude Valley held the position of leader of the Opposition for a considerable time, and I was also leader of the Opposition for nearly three years, there was no suggestion that any secretary should be provided, nor that bedrooms should be provided for members of the House, unless they belonged to the Ministry. I might remind hon. members opposite that I had to agitate for a considerable time, as leader of the Opposition, before I even got the use of a telephone. Since the hon. member for Toowoomba has been leader of the Opposition, I have given him every consideration as far as lay in my power. I quite recognise that the leader of the Opposition has very

Hon. T. J. Ryan.]

onerous duties to perform, which occupy a great deal of his time, and it would, perhaps, be a very useful thing if he were provided with a secretary. At the same time, the matter of launching out at present into additional expenditure of that nature, or in the way of providing bedrooms for members of this House, is one that will require very serious consideration. I can assure the leader of the Opposition that if it appears, perhaps, at the beginning of next session, that there is a grave necessity for having some clerical assistance given him, the matter will be considered. More than that I cannot say at present.

Mr. FORSYTH: I think the hon. gentleman must know that the leader of the Opposition is the hardest-worked man in the House. Any leader of the Opposition who carries out his duties as he should must be the hardest-worked man in the House. I think that everyone who knows the hon. member for Toowoomba will recognise that he gives practically nearly all of his time, from early in the morning to late at night, in the discharge of his duties.

The PREMIER: You did not show so much concern when we were in opposition.

Mr. FORSYTH: The work is increasing all the time. We have had an enormous amount of work this session. If the Government bring in such a large number of contentious Bills next session as they have done this session, it appears to me that we will have to give the leader of the Opposition a secretary.

The TREASURER: You have been told that the matter will be considered.

Mr. FORSYTH: We know what the effect of the consideration will be, and I look on it with a very sceptical mind.

Resolution 88 agreed to.

Resolutions 89 to 116 agreed to.

On resolution 117—"Loan Fund Account, Buildings"—

Mr. FORSYTH: In connection with the loan estimates of expenditure, he noticed that the sum of £2,707,749 was provided for the expenditure for 1915-16. That is [8.30 p.m.] for the six months that have just passed and for the next six months, ending on the 30th June. I have always argued in this House, and more especially at a time like this, that it is a fair thing to keep a considerable number of our public works going, so as not to throw a large number of men out of employment. On the other hand, I think it is a short-sighted policy on the part of the Government to spend £2,707,000 this year, especially when they have not got it to spend. They have not got it, and they do not know if they will get it.

The TREASURER: We have made final arrangements under which we will get it.

Mr. FORSYTH: I am glad to know that you will get it, but it does not alter the fact that in my mind you have no right to spend so much money, especially when you find a great deal of difficulty in getting it. We know the state of the finances in the old country, and we know that the Federal Government want every shilling that they can get. We know that the Home Government want more money if they can

get it. For Queensland to insist on spending £2,707,000 in one year is a very short-sighted policy altogether.

Mr. POLLOCK: Yet you wanted the Government to give £20 increases to every public servant.

Mr. FORSYTH: Why not? You have put on extra taxation, amounting to £500,000 a year. Why should they not get the £20 increase? The taxation was put on for that purpose, and the increases should be granted. It is a huge mistake for the present Government to spend £2,707,000 a year. If you could get a further loan to go on with the railways and public works I would not complain.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Don't you know of the arrangement come to between the Commonwealth and the States?

Mr. FORSYTH: The Treasurer says he has arranged to get the amount specified. This money is for the present financial year, which expires in six months' time. How are you going to manage next year if you spend every shilling you have got this year?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The arrangement is for longer than a year. You ought to know that.

Mr. FORSYTH: It is too much to spend in any one year, at any rate. I think myself that you should not spend more than £2,000,000 on any year. It has been practically laid down by both sides of the House, even before the war started at all, when we were not in a bad financial position, and were able to get loan money, that the expenditure of £2,000,000 of loan money was a fair thing.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You will have to make a fresh speech. You have been saying that for a long time. You have been saying it for the last ten years.

Mr. FORSYTH: If the hon. member can get up and make a speech in connection with finance we will be glad to listen to him. The hon. gentleman does not know, through his ignorance, that my advice on that matter has been fairly well carried out in the past. I can remember the time, not many years ago, when the Liberal Government spent £1,000,000 a year, just about one-third of what the Government is going to spend this year. When the Government were spending £1,000,000 a year some years ago, members of the Labour party used to go for them and say they were absolute spendthrifts.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Yes.

Mr. FORSYTH: The hon. gentleman says "Yes," and yet he proposes to spend nearly £3,000,000 this year. It does not matter for an extra £100,000 or so, but this is not the time to spend more than £2,000,000 a year. The Government should not spend all the money they have got; they should save a little bit for next year. We know the trouble the Treasurer has had this year to get the money. He told us a short time ago that he had sufficient loan money to carry on until March. If he could not have got this money, a large number of men would be thrown out of employment. I do not believe in that. We should be careful until such time as

[Hon. T. J. Ryan.]

the clouds roll by and we are in a better financial position to go in for the expenditure of more money.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It shows what a bad thing it would be if you were in power.

Mr. FORSYTH: We would not spend it all. We would keep a little for a rainy day until we had got our financial equilibrium back again.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You asked us to build the Enoggera to Terror's Creek Railway.

Mr. FORSYTH: I hope the hon. member will not make silly, stupid interjections. I am saying that I hope the Treasurer will not spend more than £2,000,000 this year. The biggest item will be railways, and he can keep it to that amount.

Mr. KIRWAN: You want us to stop the Terror's Creek Railway?

Mr. FORSYTH: If it is necessary to stop it, then stop it. What I say is that the Government should not spend the whole of this £2,700,000 in one year. It will be infinitely more difficult to get money next year, and that is why it is unwise to spend so much. You ought to go slow until you can see your way to get the next loan.

The TREASURER: The hon. member is always advocating cutting down the loan expenditure year by year. The hon. member is consistent in that, but he is inconsistent when he asks us to carry out certain proposals of expenditure in his own electorate.

Mr. FORSYTH: If my electors ask me to see you, I must do it.

The TREASURER: Hon. members are always asking for various public works to be carried out. When these requests are made, it indicates that the Government must have a settled policy of railway construction. No one realises more than the present Government the necessity for building railways for the purposes of opening up land for settlement and making some provision for ex-service men after the war is over.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: You are not doing that.

The TREASURER: We are making provision for it. The Government is looking ahead, and is making provision for building railways into new territory, so that Crown lands will be made available for settlement at a greater rate than has been done in the past. The hon. gentleman suggests cutting down the amount to £2,000,000. That will cut out £700,000 of the appropriation. I would like to point out that there are certain definite commitments which will be met by these appropriations. For instance, there is the South Johnstone Sugar Mill and the Babinda Mill, the contracts for which have already been let and the work well advanced; the money for these must be paid as the work progresses. Then in regard to local authorities, £500,000 will be needed for this year. Every penny of that will be required, because it has been authorised by Executive minute and the local authorities have been promised the money. The works are going on, and when the local authorities present their vouchers, we have to pay them. The works authorised by the late Government and the present Government total £1,125,000. They were authorised by Executive minute by both Governments.

Mr. FORSYTH: Not in one year.

The TREASURER: No, not for expenditure in one year; but we must provide for £500,000 for the local authorities this year. I think it is inadvisable to cut the amount down at all.

Mr. FORSYTH: Cannot you cut down the amount for buildings?

The TREASURER: No. The new school buildings and extensions to old school buildings is a matter that has been too much neglected in the past, and it will have to be taken in hand as soon as possible.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: A lot of the old buildings are coming in now.

The TREASURER: Yes; and sooner or later they will have to be attended to, and it is necessary to meet the necessary commitments year by year.

Mr. FORSYTH: You are going in for purchasing State sawmills and State coalmines.

The TREASURER: They are only small items. The vote asked for for State sawmill is £10,000, and then there is £35,000 for a new fish market. The hon. gentleman seems to be perturbed about the possibility of financing these works. On that score the hon. gentleman urged the necessity of watching the expenditure very carefully. I mentioned, by way of interjection, that we had made final arrangements with the Commonwealth to get our quota of the loan arrangements. This will be the position of the loan fund for the next calendar year—

Loan cash balance, 30th November	...	...	£1,118,951
Allowing expenditure for December at the average rate of the previous five months of the year, we would have at 31st December, 1915, a balance of	...	...	875,494
Add amount which we are to receive from the Commonwealth to 31st December, 1916	...	...	2,562,000
Total	...	...	£3,437,494

There is a certain proportion of that tied up in extended deposits and Australian Bank of Commerce shares. The amount tied up aggregates only £142,000.

Mr. FORSYTH: How much did you get from the Savings Bank last year?

The TREASURER: I can give the hon. member the figures if he requires them. Taking away the money which will not be available during the year, it will leave a total of £3,295,494, provided, of course, the amount mentioned as Queensland's quota of the Commonwealth loan is forthcoming. That will be the position, which will enable us to carry on at the present rate of expenditure until a reasonable length of time after the end of 1916. We are in a safe position to continue our present rate of expenditure until about April, 1917; and, under the arrangement with the Commonwealth, we are entitled, in 1917, as our quota from moneys raised overseas, to over £2,000,000. No one can say what will happen in twelve or fourteen months' time, but about the money available for next calendar year there can be very little doubt.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Hon. E. G. Theodore. }

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: There has been no one more opposed than I, in times past, to the policy of "borrow, boom, and burst," and the hon. member for Murrumba has agreed with me that in good times we should go slow and in times of depression we should spend as much as we reasonably can. I have always maintained it would be suicidal, in times of depression, to cut down our loan expenditure, and the proposal of the Opposition shows how much worse it would have been for the people of Queensland if they had been in power and had cut down the expenditure on public works. It would have thrown men out of employment; it would have reacted in commercial circles; and it would have intensified the depression. The Treasurer has shown that, fortunately, we have been able to carry on loan expenditure at the same rate as last year, and it has been a most fortunate thing for the people of Queensland that we have been able to do that. So far as the future is concerned, we have been able, not only to maintain that rate, but we have managed to secure that rate for the next twelve or fourteen months.

Mr. FORSYTH: By the thrift of the late Government.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: We have not refrained from availing ourselves of the Commonwealth assistance, and, if the late Government had adopted our policy, we would have been in a better position.

Mr. MURPHY: Do you not think £3,000,000 a big rate?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: I think it a most fortunate thing that the present Government have been able to carry on loan expenditure at the present rate.

HON. J. TOLMIE: It appears to me that the hon. gentleman is the financial star humourist of the Ministry. He has told us if the country had been so unfortunate as to have a Liberal Government in power the most fearful things were going to happen, and yet he has told us he is living upon the money that we left to him by the careful financing of the late Government. The Treasurer told us the other day that, because of the thriftiness and careful administration of the late Government, the present Government were in the position of having loan money sufficient to carry on until March of next year. Seeing that for all the years the Liberal Government were in office, they were able to make both ends meet and have a surplus, I wonder by what process of reasoning the Hon. the Minister for Public Instruction has arrived at the conclusion that the continuance in office of the late Government for another two months was going to transform this State into a condition of destitution.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The policy of "cut down."

HON. J. TOLMIE: It is wonderful what a knowledge the hon. gentleman has of what the policy of the late Government would be. I think the hon. gentleman ought to be very well satisfied with the position in which he finds himself by the careful administration of the late Government. It is exceedingly gratifying to hear Ministers getting up, one after another, and pointing to the fact that, without the thriftiness of the late Government, they would have been on the financial rocks. The Minister for Public Instruction

got up for the purpose of telling us he did not believe in the "borrow, boom, and burst" policy. At one time, in the days gone by, he did not believe in borrowing. It was the policy of his party not to borrow at all. The policy of the party to which he belonged was opposed to borrowing; and in the days gone by, when he was a new disciple of the Labour party, he was opposed altogether, as his party was, to borrowing.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: I never was.

HON. J. TOLMIE: And now the party is just like the New South Wales party—the more they can borrow the better they like it.

Resolution 117 agreed to.

Resolutions Nos. 118 to 153, inclusive, agreed to.

WAYS AND MEANS.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

(Mr. Bertram, Maree, in the chair.)

The TREASURER moved—

"(a) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty for the service of the year 1915-16, a further sum not exceeding £3,166,572 be granted out of the consolidated revenue fund, exclusive of the moneys standing to the credit of the loan fund account.

"(b) That £980,141 10s. 3d. be granted from trust and special funds.

"(c) That £1,807,749 be granted from loan fund account.

"(d) That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty for the service of the year 1914-15, a further sum not exceeding £525,189 3s. 8d. be granted out of the consolidated revenue fund.

"(e) That £453,107 18s. be granted from the trust and special funds.

"(f) That £499,309 3s. 8d. be granted from the loan fund account.

"(g) That, towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, on account, for the service of the year 1916-17, a further sum not exceeding £325,000 be granted out of consolidated revenue fund.

"(h) That £50,000 be granted from trust and special funds.

"(i) That £150,000 be granted from loan fund account."

Question put and passed.

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

The resolutions were received and agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL No. 4.

FIRST AND SECOND READINGS.

The TREASURER presented a Bill founded upon the resolutions and it was read a first time. He then moved that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. SWAYNE: Before this Bill goes through I want to draw attention to the general attitude of the Government and their conduct in regard to questions put by hon. members.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is not in order in discussing that question on the second reading of the Bill.

[Hon. H. F. Hardacre.

Mr. SWAYNE: I understood that we are within our rights always when supply is asked, in bringing up any grievances, or making any comments.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member had 135 resolutions before the House a few moments ago, and had ample opportunities of discussing any grievances he may have. The question now is that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. SWAYNE: What I would like to point out is that although we have had those resolutions before us, I do [9 p.m.] not think there was any opportunity of drawing attention to the conduct of the Government, and it seems to me that it is a time-honoured custom that we have the right to discuss grievances when granting Supply

The SPEAKER: The hon. member will not be in order. The hon. member well knows, or should know, that on the second reading of a Bill, the principles of the Bill only can be discussed, and I now ask him to discuss the principles of the Bill, and to obey my ruling.

Mr. SWAYNE: I have the Bill here, and I notice that we are asked to apply certain sums of money out of the consolidated revenue fund to the service of the years ending on the last days of June, 1916 and 1917, and certain further sums. Before I vote for that, I want to make some comments on the conduct of those who will have the handling of this money during the next few months. This is the last day of the session, I presume, and it seems a fitting opportunity to get the information I desire. I would like to point out that certain information has been asked for by certain members of the House and that information has not been granted. For instance, to-day I asked the Chief Secretary—

The SPEAKER: Order! I hope the hon. member will obey my ruling.

Mr. SWAYNE: I have it here on my authority that at various stages of these Bills we have certain rights in the matter.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member has not the right to make those statements on this question. He knows as well as I do that on the second reading of Bills the principle alone can be discussed.

Mr. SWAYNE: If you will let me quote my authority—

The SPEAKER: The hon. member knows the course to take if he desires to disagree with my ruling.

Mr. SWAYNE: What I could do would be to move that your ruling be disagreed to.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: You must give three days' notice.

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEE.

Clause 1 put and passed.

Clause 2 put and passed.

Mr. SWAYNE: Mr. Coyne—

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is too late.

On clause 3—"Appropriation of sums voted for supply services"—

Mr. SWAYNE: He desired to move the exclusion of the clause on account of the unsatisfactory reply he got just previously.

The TREASURER: From the Speaker?

Mr. SWAYNE: No, owing to the unsatisfactory attitude of the Government. He considered that the Government had been discourteous, and he might say untruthful, in some of the replies to questions put by that side of the House. They were asked in good faith for the public welfare. For instance, a promise that had been made to him that day had not been kept. He asked for certain information as to the disposal of profits arising out of certain transactions. If he understood the Chief Secretary correctly, he promised that before the House rose they should get that information, but it had not been given. Again, he had reason to think that the answer he got to a question regarding a notification to members of the public service in reference to recruiting was an evasion of the truth. He asked whether it was true that a circular had been issued to Government servants, advising them that their positions would not be kept open if they enlisted. He received a direct negative, and yet he found that the following notification was made to professional officers:—

"Public Service Board.

"It is recommended that no further officers of the professional staff be granted leave of absence to join the Australian Imperial Forces."

That had been issued by the secretary to the Public Service Board, and marked "Approved," with the initials of the Treasurer, "E.G.T." Yet he was told that nothing of the kind had emanated from the Government. He also desired to refer to the disgraceful reply to the hon. member for Warwick. Some time ago some people came to Queensland with the avowed intention of preventing recruiting. They had the use of Government steamers, and so on. He had no desire to go into that aspect of the question, but he thought that the Government had every reason to be ashamed of themselves. He was particularly surprised to hear such a reply from the Assistant Home Secretary. He actually sneered at the hon. member's religious belief. He talked about his pseudo christianity, and so on, and he thought that such replies gave them ample cause for complaint against the occupants on the Treasury benches. The question was asked in good faith.

Hon. J. HUXHAM: It was not.

Mr. SWAYNE: Some of them had sent their sons to the front, and it was only too necessary that they should be backed up by others, yet they had reason to think that members opposite had, at any rate, a certain amount of sympathy with such persons as he had mentioned. He could quote many other instances. He did not think that too much emphasis could be put on the sort of reply that members of the Opposition had got from the occupants of the front Treasury bench.

Question put and passed.

Clauses 4 to 8, inclusive, schedule, and preamble, put and passed.

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

THIRD READING.

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

Hon. E. G. Theodore.]

MERINDA TO BOWEN COALFIELDS
RAILWAY.

PLAN, ETC., RETURNED FROM COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Council, intimating that they had approved of the plan, section, and book of reference of the above railway.

At 9.20 p.m.,

The SPEAKER vacated the chair until a quarter to 10 o'clock.

LAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

MESSAGE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:—

“Mr. Speaker,

“The Legislative Council, having had under consideration the message of the Legislative Assembly of date 20th December, relative to the Land Act Amendment Bill, beg now to intimate that they—

“Further insist on their amendments in the Bill to which the Legislative Assembly insist on disagreeing, because these clauses constitute a direct and open violation of one of the most essential terms of contract solemnly entered into between two parties—the Crown and the lessees. The history of the legislation with respect to Crown lands in Queensland shows that it has, with the exception of an interval from 1902 to 1905, always been recognised that some limitation should be placed on the amount of rent which the pastoral lessees were called upon to bear.

“The progress of the country is in no small measure due to the expenditure which the Crown tenants have made on the faith of their contracts with the Crown. The Land Act of 1905, which was passed by the assent of the Legislative Council and by all parties in the Legislative Assembly, recognised, confirmed, and embodied the principle that rent of the pastoral lessees should not be increased more than 50 per cent. at any assessment.

“The Land Act of 1910 again recognised and confirmed this covenant with respect to both pastoral lessees and grazing farmers under the provisions of the 1884 Act.

“The arguments of the Legislative Council are not, as alleged by the message from the Legislative Assembly, necessarily based on the major premiss that all repudiation is anathema; nor can the Legislative Council agree with the reasoning of the Legislative Assembly that because in some instances of relatively minor importance alterations have been introduced into the Land Acts which may affect existing tenants, that therefore wholesale repudiation in every shape and form ‘must be regarded as right.’ In one of the instances given by the Legislative Assembly the rights of existing lessees are expressly protected.

“The reference to the conditions imposed on lessees with respect to the eradication of noxious weeds and of prickly-pear (the Land Act of 1910, sections 136 to 144) are inapplicable, inasmuch as this duty was imposed not only

on lessees but on all occupiers and owners of land in Queensland by the Local Authorities Acts, 1902-1910, sections 154-158B.

“In most of the Land Acts, notably in the Land Acts of 1902 and 1905, where modifications have been made in the existing tenures of lessees, the Crown has offered to the lessee terms which operated as a compensation for any loss sustained by an alteration of the contract.

“In the present instance the proposed violation of the contract goes to the root of the bargain, and would affect disastrously the honour of the Crown and the security of the tenant; and because—

(a) The Legislative Council refuses to repudiate any lawful contract lawfully entered into by the Crown; and

(b) The Legislative Council cannot associate itself with any policy that would tend to destroy that security of tenure on which the development and prosperity of our pastoral industry so intimately depend.

“ARTHUR MORGAN,

“President.

“Legislative Council Chamber,

“Brisbane, 21st December, 1915.”

MESSAGE DECLARING BILL “LOST.”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I move that the Bill be now returned to the Legislative Council with the following message:—

“Mr. President,

“The Legislative Assembly having had under consideration the message of the Legislative Council of date 21st December, further insisting on their amendments in the Land Act Amendment Bill, to which the Legislative Assembly have already disagreed, beg now to intimate that, the Legislative Assembly being unable to concur in the said amendments, the Bill, in the terms of the Parliamentary Bills Referendum Act of 1908, is now lost.

“Legislative Assembly Chamber,

“Brisbane, 21st December, 1915.”

At 9.50 p.m.,

The SPEAKER vacated the chair until a quarter past 10 o'clock.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER: I beg to move that the Assembly, at its rising, do adjourn until tomorrow at 7 o'clock p.m. I regret the necessity, Mr. Speaker, for a motion for this adjournment, as I was in hopes that we would have wound up the business this evening, but on account of the action of the Legislative Council in adjourning on the very eve of the closing of business, and thereby endangering the public servants of Queensland from getting their pay before the Christmas holidays, it is necessary for us to adjourn till tomorrow. I hope that the Council will not take up an attitude that is so unfair to such a large body of public servants.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Question put and passed.

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

[Hon. W. McCormack.]