

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

MONDAY, 3 DECEMBER 1917

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

MONDAY, 3 DECEMBER, 1917.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from His Excellency the Governor conveying his assent to the following Bills:—Opticians Bill, Treasury Bills Bill, and Government Loans Sinking Fund Temporary Suspension Bill.

QUESTION.

REFUND OF WAGES DURING RECENT MARITIME STRIKE.

Mr. PETRIE asked the Treasurer and Secretary for Public Works—

"1. Has application been made by the Queensland branch of the Federated Seamen's Union for refund of wages paid into the shipping office at Brisbane for desertors from the various vessels in Queensland ports during the recent maritime strike, which occurred about August and September of this year?"

"2. If so, what action has been taken by the Government in regard to this matter?"

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*) replied—

"1. Application was made for a refund of the wages due to the crews of certain vessels which were laid up during the strike."

"2. The matter was referred to the Marine Board, which recommended that the wages should be refunded. Action is being taken accordingly."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Mr. BAYLEY (*Pittsworth*): I desire to make a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the hon. member for Pittsworth be allowed to make a personal explanation.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BAYLEY: On Thursday, 22nd ultimo, during the course of a speech which I made in this House I referred to a meeting which I attended in the Trades Hall, Brisbane, on a Sunday evening prior to the taking of the last referendum vote on the conscription question. Several speakers addressed the meeting, and I was under the impression, from information given me at the time by two persons who were present at the meeting, that the speaker who made the objectionable utterances which I mentioned was Mr. J. S. Collings. Mr. Collings has quite recently assured me that he did not give vent to the expressions which I referred to, and that I must have been misinformed in this regard. He said he did not voice these sentiments in any way, and I am quite prepared, and indeed I am pleased, after seeing Mr. Collings—who was a complete stranger to me previously—to accept what he has said in this regard. However, I emphatically claim that the words which I stated were used on

that occasion were used. I emphatically claim that the record I gave was a correct one.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is going beyond the bounds of a personal explanation. He may explain himself to correct a wrong impression which may have been made by portion of his speech, but he is not in order in going over his speech again.

Mr. BAYLEY: I have no intention of going over the speech, but I simply wish to make this plain—

The SPEAKER: Order! If the hon. member wishes to explain a portion of his speech, he may do so, but I hope he will not go beyond that, and make another speech on the matter.

Mr. BAYLEY: I had no intention of speaking more than a minute or a minute and a-half. While I am prepared to admit that the man who made those statements was not Mr. Collings, I still maintain that the statements I made were correct both as regards the words used and the manner in which they were applauded by those present.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must not reiterate his statements.

Mr. BAYLEY: I have no desire to say anything in this House under cover of Parliamentary privilege which I would not say outside, so I take this opportunity of accepting the explanation which Mr. Collings has made, and saying what I have said this afternoon in ordinary justice to Mr. Collings.

WOONGARRA TRAMWAY BILL.

INITIATION.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. H. Coyne, *Warrego*), in moving—

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the advisableness of introducing a Bill to ratify and approve an agreement made between the Treasurer of the State of Queensland and the Commissioner for Railways of the said State and the Council of the Shire of Woongarra, providing for the acquirement by the State of the Woongarra Tramway, and for other purposes incident thereto or consequent thereon."

said: This is a Bill to ratify and approve of an agreement made between the Treasurer, the Commissioner for Railways, and the Woongarra Shire Council with regard to the purchase of the Woongarra Tramway. This tramway is 12 miles 20 chains in length, and junctions with the Millaquin Railway, a short branch which was purchased by the Railway Department in 1912. It is an earth-packed line laid with 42-lb. rails, 2,280 sleepers to the mile. It was built in 1912, and is in practically good running order. The Bill and agreement, however, provide for the purchase of the tramway with sidings, etc., at the Commissioner's valuation, viz., £32,919. The actual cost of construction of the tramway was £35,319. A great tax has been imposed on the Woongarra Shire Council in regard to the time taken in looking after the business of the tramway. Apart altogether from the fact that they are anxious that there should be no further tax imposed on their time in connection with this tramway, it is a good business deal for the

[Mr. Bayley.]

Government, and as the policy of the Government is, of course, to have all railways owned and controlled by the State I am sure hon. members will have no objection to the acquisition of this tramway. The Woongarra Shire Council has for some considerable time past urged the Railway Commissioner to take over this tramway, and they also want him, in the alternative, to hand over about a mile and a-half of the Millaquin branch tramway, so that their line could be worked with it; but the Railway Department will not consent to this. They wanted to have the right to run the tramway from Bundaberg to Pemberton, but the department would not agree to it. The line is a paying line. It is a sugar line mostly, although a number of passengers are conveyed over it, and in holiday times there is a considerable passenger traffic to Nielson Park and the coast, which is one of the seaside resorts for Bundaberg. The Commissioner for Railways and the Treasurer are perfectly safeguarded in the matter of purchasing this tramway from the shire council, and I commend the speedy passage of this Bill, at a later stage, to the House.

HON. J. TOLMIE (*Toowoomba*): I am not going to take very strong objection to your leaving the chair for the purpose of the Bill going into Committee. Still, at the same time, I think it is only just and right that I should mention that the Secretary for Railways is not treating the House fairly in rushing through an important measure of this kind in the way it is being rushed, and without our having an opportunity to consider the whole question.

The SPEAKER: The hon. gentleman will notice from the wording of the motion that it is not proposed to go into Committee at once, but at the next sitting of the House.

HON. J. TOLMIE: I have not much objection to the House at its next sitting going into Committee to take the matter into consideration, but I want to point out some facts that might be of importance at that next sitting. I remember the time when this Tramway Bill created all the sensation in the closing days of the then session as it appears to be creating at the present time.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: There is no excitement to-day.

HON. J. TOLMIE: The excitement will be manifest later on. I want to know from the Minister, if he does introduce this Bill, what are the relations between the Government and the Millaquin Sugar Refining Company? I have been over the line, but I am not acquainted with the relationship between the Government and the Millaquin Refinery. I want the Minister to tell us whether the Millaquin Refinery line comes in as a section between the State line and the tramway. If it does it will be objectionable to purchase the line. That is the chief point that I notice at the present time. I will reserve other arguments until we deal with the Bill at a later stage.

Mr. BEBBINGTON (*Drayton*): We have to be very careful in taking over these railways held by shire councils.

Hon. J. Tolmie: The Government have plenty of money—pen and ink.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: It is possible that the Minister may take tramways over from

private owners, and we want all the information we can possibly get. I know a lot of tramways in sugar areas the owners of which would be glad if the Government took them over.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Name one.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: There are several local authorities in sugar districts which would be glad to have their tramways taken over. They would be glad to get their money back and have the tramway just the same.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Name one.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: There are several of them. Anyone would be glad to subscribe money to have a tramway built if they could get the Government to take it over afterwards.

Mr. GLEDSON: Don't you know that this belongs to the shire council?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: We could easily influence the shire councils to build tramways if they thought that they could get the Government to take them over afterwards.

The TREASURER: That is a charge of corruption against the shire councils.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Some men might be dear, but every man has his price.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: What is your price? (Laughter.)

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): I have seen this tramline, and, if I am not mistaken, it is a losing proposition.

Mr. BARBER: It never has been a losing proposition.

Mr. SWAYNE: I only raised the question for the purpose of eliciting information, and I think I am justified in raising it.

Question put and passed.

CITY OF BRISBANE BILL.

PROPOSED INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. Huxham, *Buranda*): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move—That you do now leave the chair.

HON. J. TOLMIE: Mr. Speaker, before you leave the chair I would like the Treasurer to present the complete message from His Excellency the Governor.

The TREASURER: The full message has been presented.

The SPEAKER: I might point out to the hon. gentleman that it is not necessary to present the Bill with the message from His Excellency the Governor. The message is merely an approving of the appropriation.

Question put and passed.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

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

The HOME SECRETARY, in moving—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced for the good government of the city of Brisbane,”

said that at the present time there were 50,000 people in Brisbane, and there were a number of local authorities which had control of local Government affairs in Brisbane and its surroundings. The Bill conferred

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greater powers on the newly-formed local authority, and would bring Brisbane up to a high position in Australia, and would also give the new council greater dignity in carrying out its many duties than it had at the present time. The Bill repealed several Acts. It repealed the Brisbane Drainage Act of 1875. The provisions of this Act were obsolete, and they would be wiped out. The Bill would also repeal the Victoria Bridge Act of 1897 and the Victoria Bridge Act Amendment Act of 1898. These Acts provided for the constitution of a board for the control, management, and maintenance of the Victoria Bridge, but under provisions contained in the Bill these powers would be exercised by the Council of the Greater City of Brisbane. The City of Brisbane Enlargement Act of 1902 empowered the Governor in Council to include areas in the city of Brisbane. Similar powers were conferred on the Governor in Council under this Bill. The Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Acts provided for the constitution of the Water Supply and Sewerage Board. All the powers contained in these Acts would be conferred on the Council of the Greater City of Brisbane. The provisions of the City of Brisbane Improvement Act of 1916 were also embodied in the Bill. The Act was passed last session, and gave the Brisbane City Council greater powers to enable them to take land. These would be included in the Bill. It was proposed that the council should consist of a mayor and twenty aldermen, all elected by the electors on the basis of one adult one vote. Hon. members would agree that at the present time political colour was introduced into the council when the mayor was being elected, and it led to a lot of wrangling and misconception. Under the provisions of the Bill the mayor would be elected by the electors. The qualification of an elector would be a person who was resident of the city and enrolled on an electoral roll under the Elections Act. The city would be one undivided area, and no provision was made for wards. All the present wards would be abolished, and all the aldermen and the mayor would be elected by the whole of the electors for a term of three years. The boundaries of the proposed City of Brisbane comprised the following local authority areas:—City of Brisbane, City of South Brisbane, towns of Hamilton, Ithaca, Sandgate, Toowong, and Windsor; shires of Balmoral (part), Belmont (part), Coorparoo, Enoggera (part), Kedron (part), Sherwood (part), Stephens, Taringa, Toombul, and Yeerongpilly (part). The council was empowered to establish and conduct a number of trading undertakings. The new council could go in for the generation, manufacture, and supply of electricity, the manufacture and supply of gas, gas fittings, and appliances, the generation and supply of hydraulic power, and they could also conduct the business of a ferry service other than for a street ferry on waters within or adjacent to the city.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: They will be able to take over the present ferry service.

The HOME SECRETARY: Under the Bill the new council would be able to run a ferry service up and down the river, and enable people to settle on the banks of the river. The Council could also conduct the business of omnibus services for the conveyance of passengers for hire.

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They could also establish the business of parcel delivery and of the conveyance of goods or merchandise for hire by locomotive and transport appliances with animal or mechanical motive power. The council could also carry on the business of cold stores, and carry out tar paving and similar work on private land. They could also deal with the purchase and sale of milk, with the supply and sale of stone and manufacture of bricks, tiles, etc. Additional powers and functions which would be conferred on the new council, and which were not at present held by the Brisbane Council, would be remuneration, with the consent of the electors, of the mayor and aldermen. The initiative and referendum was provided for under the Bill. The council could appoint a committee of local citizens and delegate to them the care, control, and management of a park or reserve and the expenditure of such moneys as the council might decide. Additional powers would be given to the council to provide trading undertakings and public utilities, and they would also have the control, management, and maintenance of Victoria Bridge. The council would also be able to undertake the construction and maintenance of water-works and sewerage works. Loans could be raised by the council either by debenture or through the Treasury. That, briefly, was an outline of the Bill. Hon. members would see that it was intended the whole area should be one electorate, and the ward system was done away with. The mayor and aldermen would represent the whole area. That would have a most beneficial effect, because it would make it non-contentious, and there would be no fighting as between the different wards of the city, and they would not have the wrangling that took place at the present time on local authorities between representatives of different subdivisions. He had much pleasure in moving the desirability of introducing the Bill.

HON. J. TOLMIE: He did not know whether it was proposed to carry that Bill through all its stages in one day or not.

The HOME SECRETARY: I will do that if you give me permission.

HON. J. TOLMIE: He was very much interested in the details of the measure as outlined by the hon. gentleman. He had not seen a copy of the Bill, but it appeared to him that the principle of democracy was being entirely departed from in the measure.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That will annoy you very much.

HON. J. TOLMIE: It did not annoy him, but it was a matter for very grave consideration by hon. members. The principle of democracy was decentralisation to the fullest possible extent—giving individual communities the highest possible advantage—but this was a departure from that principle, and it seemed to him to be a recurrence of old conditions. They were told that they walked in a circle, that they argued in a circle, that they legislated in a circle, and that history repeated itself; and now they were asked to go back to the conditions that prevailed in the early part of the Christian era, when, instead of having countries, they had walled cities; when the country was always at a disadvantage as compared to the cities. The Minister, in introducing the Bill, said it was going to enlarge to a very great extent the power of the citizens. What he (Mr. Tolmie) was fearing at the present

time was that there would be a recurrence of old conditions, that history would repeat itself, and that they would have what they had at the early part of the Christian era and extending right up to the tenth century, before national life was introduced and there was no such place as the country. There was the city of Rome, but no Italy; just the same as there was the city of Athens, but no Greece. It was the city that had the power and the unfortunate country had to fight under the most adverse circumstances. It was only about the eleventh century that national life began to manifest itself.

Mr. JONES: This Bill does not affect the country.

HON. J. TOLMIE: He was pointing out, for the benefit of the hon. member for Oxley, that the Bill meant a return to the conditions that prevailed in the early part of the Christian era. It was a demolition of the democratic principle, and

[4 p.m.] he did not want to see that democratic principle demolished.

He knew that hon. members opposite were working their hardest to destroy the country life of Australia and bring about centralisation, to bring about the government of the people by large cities instead of giving them the wide and extended franchise that they possessed now. The centralisation of power was something to which he was not very favourable.

The HOME SECRETARY: Do you believe in federation?

HON. J. TOLMIE: He believed in federation.

The HOME SECRETARY: This is a federation of the local authorities.

HON. J. TOLMIE: That was what the hon. gentleman was trying to bring federation into. The hon. gentleman wanted to destroy the federal idea just as he wanted to destroy the democratic principle. In and around Brisbane they had a large number of self-governing communities just as they had it in other places, and the Government sought to destroy that interest which communities had in themselves for the purpose of developing all that was best in them. As the hon. gentleman said, if the Bill was passed, instead of having wards and divisions within the city, the city was to vote as one and thus the mass of the population in any part of the city was going to control the wellbeing of the whole lot. Was that not a destruction of the democratic principle? He was extremely sorry that an idea of that kind should emanate from the Government. However, at that stage he was not going to say anything further. He was glad to understand the contents of the Bill from the message read by the Speaker and from the explanation given by the Home Secretary who, he knew, was thoroughly conversant with the matter, and to whom they were under an obligation for having so succinctly stated what were the proposals in the measure.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a resolution, which was agreed to by the House.

FIRST READING.

On the motion of the HOME SECRETARY, the Bill was read a first time, and the second reading was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

FARM PRODUCE AGENTS BILL.

CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL'S MESSAGE.

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

“That the Committee do not insist on their disagreement to the amendments on which the Legislative Council had insisted.”

Question put and passed.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had not insisted on their disagreement to the amendments on which the Legislative Council had insisted, and the report was adopted.

The Bill was ordered to be returned to the Legislative Council with a message stating that the Assembly did not insist on their disagreement to the amendments on which the Legislative Council had insisted.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

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

TRUST AND SPECIAL FUNDS.

STATE SAWMILLS.

Question again stated—That £60,000 be granted for “State Sawmills.”

Mr. BEBBINGTON: They could not get away from the fact that the Government, in their management of the State sawmills, had practically broken every principle of good government.

The TREASURER: You are a great authority on good government.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Certainly, he was. The foundation of good government was the development of the interior of the country, and when production increased the surplus riches would naturally flow into the cities and enrich the cities. Under those circumstances both the country and the cities would be doing well, but the Government were trying to centralise everything. They were trying to draw everything into the cities and simply crush the people who were in the country. In that way they were preventing work of any kind, being obtainable in the country districts, and the inevitable result must be the impoverishment of both the cities and the country. As proof of what he was saying, they found that the Government were sending timber from the sawmills in Brisbane right up to the Central district, and out to Charleville. How was it that they could do that? They were told that the Government were losing money on it.

Mr. PETERSON: That is not true.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: That fact was given in evidence before the Select Committee. Mr. Brady, when giving evidence, was asked—

“Are you aware that timber can be bought in Rockhampton at 6s. per 100 feet below your price?”

The reply was—

“It may be bought cheaper, but I do not say 6s. per 100 feet cheaper.”

That was an admission that the timber could be bought cheaper.

Mr. PETERSON: They did quite right.

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Mr. BEBBINGTON: He was surprised at the hon. member for Normanby excusing the Government for sending timber to his electorate. That timber could have been cut in the hon. member's electorate, and have given work to people there. He (Mr. Bebbington) would not care two straws if it cost 10s. per 100 feet more in his electorate; he would rather see work given to men in the district. He had always objected to men being sent from Brisbane into the country districts when the country people needed the work. He would have given the Government a real good slating; but the hon. member could not do it, as he had taken their part, and said they had done right in sending the timber up to the Central district. It was a very bad thing for a man to get out of work, and it was very bad policy to throw men out. Men who were drawing large salaries did not know what it meant for a man with a wife and family to find out that he was not wanted, and not to know when he was going to get the next job. He did not say that they should have stopped the work of the men in Brisbane; but every truck of timber that they sent up to the Central district meant that much less work in that district. They were told that the railways got paid for it. Perhaps they did; but it was a case of the Government taking it out of one pocket and putting it into the other. They were told, too, that they sent the timber right up to Charleville.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: There are no sawmills at Charleville.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: There was no reason why there should not be. There were plenty of sawmills a great deal nearer Charleville than Brisbane. Every door and window and everything else that was required for service up the country was sent from Brisbane. They had been spending £30,000 on a workshop in order that the men might be employed in Brisbane to the detriment of the people in the country. Under past Governments, when a few doors or seats or something else was wanted up the country the worker up the country had the chance of a few days' work. Now everything was sent down to Brisbane and was centralised here, and the country was practically starved. That was a very bad policy. Even the sawmill itself was no benefit to Brisbane. The same number of men were employed under the private employer. As far as he could see the State sawmill did not employ one single man more. He had rung up the city council that morning, and he found that the former owner of that one property paid £62 14s. 2d. in rates to the city council. By the State taking over that mill the city council were £62 14s. 2d short in rates on that one property, and the other people in the city had to make that up. What benefit were they going to get?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Cheaper timber.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The hon. gentleman knew perfectly well they were not getting cheaper timber. Timber had gone up. That cry was no good, and the hon. gentleman knew it. To get on to the question of insuring the timber, a private employer would be compelled—for his own safety—to insure the timber to at least 75 per cent. of its value; if he did not, he would run a very big risk of being ruined. But they found that the sawmilling department under the State were not insuring to anything like

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the amount they should, for the reason that, should they have a fire in their timber yards, the ordinary taxpayer had to pay the balance—it would not fall on to any private person. Why should the ordinary taxpayer have that risk put on him, as well as others? If the State were going to run a sawmilling or any other business, let them run it on business lines, and not have the railways of the State used to throw out of work hundreds of men in the country, and bring everything down to Brisbane. How long would that kind of thing last? It would have to come to an end very soon if they were going to centralise everything in Brisbane. They should come to ordinary methods of business in the State department. Unfortunately they had had business methods come down on to a very low plane indeed. The Minister for Justice had told them that the Insurance Department was to be run on what they could practically say was a co-operative basis.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order! The hon. gentleman is not in order in dealing with the Justice Department.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: It was in respect of insurance in the timber department that he wanted to refer to, as he had referred to before. They would see that it was a most unusual proceeding, where a dead man was insured.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member will not be in order in discussing that on the State sawmilling vote.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: It was given in evidence in connection with the sawmill before the Select Committee of the Legislative Council, where the sawmill refused, in the first instance, to insure their men. They decided in the first place to carry the insurance themselves, he understood. Then, by-and-by, apparently after one of the employees of the sawmills was killed—so far as they could see from the evidence—the sawmilling department—or the State sawmill manager—decided to insure his men.

Mr. ROBERTS: He paid his premium and drew the compensation.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: He supposed he must have decided to insure, and paid up the premium after the man was killed, and threw on the Insurance Department a claim of £600, which would have had to be paid by the State sawmills out of profit and loss. Was that straightforward business? Was it business that they should expect from the Government? Some members of the Government had led them to believe that someone got some benefit from this. No one got any benefit from it except the manager of the State sawmills. The State sawmills were responsible for paying that claim, and not the Insurance Department. Was that straightforward business? He considered it was not. He thought it was more a low, downright rascaille practice—something sharp, taking the other fellow "down." The fund from which that money was drawn to pay that claim of the sawmills was really supposed to be worked on a co-operative basis; that was, when the receipts exceeded the expenditure the policies were supposed to be reduced. The paying of that £600 from that fund for the State sawmills was nothing more nor less than a fraud on that fund. Any man who would stand up in that House and defend such business as that was not a business man at all. Even the

manager of the Insurance Department should be censured for agreeing to such an action.

Mr. ROBERTS: Under the Act there is a penalty for not insuring.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

Mr. BEBBINGTON: A private employer would not be allowed to do such a thing. He thought that both the manager of the sawmills and the manager of the Insurance Department should be censured in regard to that, taking into consideration question 1542, which was—

“After a man was killed, you insured him and got the amount of the insurance policy?”

Mr. D. RYAN: After he was killed?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Yes, deliberately.

Mr. D. RYAN: Were you there?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: There was the evidence given at the commission.

Mr. D. RYAN: You would rob the widow.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The hon. member must know that it made not a bit of difference to the widow. The State Sawmilling Department was responsible for the full amount of £600. Instead of paying that, they insured the man after he was dead, and shoved it on to the Insurance Department. In view of that, he was going to move that the vote be reduced by £10,000—that it should read “£50,000.” He was doing it as a vote of censure upon the business methods of both the Sawmilling and Insurance Departments. They could class it as nothing less than a low-down business, and a business intended to deceive.

Mr. SWAYNE: He rose to support the amendment moved by the hon. member who had just resumed his seat. There was one good thing that had arisen out of the establishment of those State sawmills. They all knew before they were established how much political capital was made out of allegations as to timber “rings,” and the fact that the timber merchants were exploiting the public to the extent of 4s. or 5s. per 100 cubic feet. The establishment of those mills had completely disproved that. They all knew that one of the chief political weapons of the Government supporters at election and other times was an attack upon “rings.” It was a strange thing that as soon as their existence was inquired into they found that those rings were not existing—that it had simply been an electioneering gag. Of course, the more that course was pursued, the more awake the public would be to the fallacy of all those assertions, and the sooner they would take them at their proper value. Seeing that it had knocked the wind out of one charge that had been made, and had disproved the alleged big profits made out of the industry, he thought that the purchase of those sawmills had achieved some useful purpose. On the whole, [4.30 p.m.] he was opposed to the expenditure of loan money in these enterprises at the present time. All over the country there was a general outcry for increased development. People wanted loans for roads, and bridges, and railways, and he objected to this money being expended in State sawmills.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must confine his remarks to the reduction of the vote.

Mr. SWAYNE: He took it that the motion to reduce the vote was a mark of disapprobation on the part of the hon. member for Drayton, and he was supporting it and giving reasons why he disapproved of the money being voted. He disapproved of the expenditure because the money could be more usefully spent in other ways than in the purchase or establishment of State sawmills.

The TREASURER: There is no proposal to purchase or establish State sawmills under this vote.

Mr. SWAYNE: The money was for the carrying on of these sawmills. He objected to this vote because he thought the sawmills should be discontinued. To show how much better this money could be employed in other directions, he had here a letter from the Under Secretary for Lands, Mr. Graham, to a group of farmers in his district at Owens Creek, who had been asking for a short railway line. He was not going to read the letter, but it concluded with these words—

“I am directed to inform you that this matter was brought up before the Cabinet on 5th inst.”

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. SWAYNE: That was only one of dozens of similar cases, and this letter went on to say there was no money for building this line.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! We are now dealing with a vote from trust funds, and not from loan funds.

Mr. SWAYNE: He was objecting to the vote for the reason that the money could be better spent in other ways.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I must point out to the hon. member that we are now dealing with expenditure from trust funds, and not from loan funds.

Mr. SWAYNE: He took it that on the State sawmills vote they could discuss the whole principle and the details in connection with which they were being carried on and as to whether it would not be better policy to close them down at the present time, as they were losing money on them. On page 13 of the Auditor-General's report on State industrial undertakings, they found that last year there was a net loss of £1,330, and this year there was a further net loss of £532. Why should they go on losing money year after year? The hon. member for Drayton had given good reasons for moving his amendment. They knew that such enterprises had been embarked on by other States and had, in the great majority of cases, been failures. He had here the results accruing from socialistic ventures in Western Australia for the year ended 30th June, 1916, from which it appeared that the loss from the various undertakings—steamships, hotels, and other undertakings—was £30,000 for that year. Anyone who had followed the history of these enterprises in other States would have it borne in on their minds that that had been the result all through. He had not got the figures, but if he had he could show that the same state of things had resulted in the other States of the Commonwealth where State enterprises had been brought into being. The only justification for establishing these concerns was, first, in case the public were being exploited; secondly, that the resources at hand did not satisfy public wants; and thirdly, when the methods were extravagant and could be cheapened by State control. It

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was said that the public were exploited, but that has been disproved by the lips of the manager of the State sawmills himself. He did not think there had been any difficulty lately in getting timber. As to the methods of private enterprise being extravagant, he did not think there were any grounds for saying that such had been the case. As to whether the public had been exploited, he found Mr. Bromiley, the manager of the State sawmills, on page 63 of the evidence of the Select Committee, said—

“1088. By the Chairman: How do the Brisbane prices to the general public compare with the prices charged prior to the purchase by the Government of the Valley mill?—They are considerably higher than they were then.”

The prices had gone up since the purchase of these mills—

“1089. For the same classes of timber, is there any difference between your prices and the prices charged by the members of the Timber Merchants' Association?—Yes. I suppose our prices are about 7½ per cent. lower than their prices.”

He noticed that that was denied later on, but as a set-off against that they had been run at a loss and had paid neither rates, taxes, income tax, nor land tax. Then—

“1090. For the same classes of timber?—Yes.

“1091. Do you remember your people at any time wanting to have the prices raised because you found you could not make the business pay at the old prices?”

That was the time it was said the timber merchants were overcharging to the extent of 5s. per hundred—

“Yes. I discovered very quickly that we could not sell at the prices we started selling at. The prices then were ridiculous.”

The contention that the people were being taken down by the private sawmills was amply disproved. That was one of the very few reasons to justify the State venturing money in concerns of this kind. Again, bearing on the subject of whether the State was being exploited before the embarkation of the State upon this business, at question 1092 the evidence states—

“Was the increase made as the result of an agreement between yourselves and the Timber Merchants' Association?—No. They told me that they proposed altering their prices, and I said that I could not see that they could do otherwise unless they were prepared to sell at a loss, and, of course, they altered their prices, and I did likewise.”

Where was the truth in the statement they heard about election time that the people were being taken down by a timber ring? It was amply disproved, and that very valuable evidence should be produced at the next election when they might be confronted with extravagant charges about trusts and combines. He noticed that Mr. Bromiley contended that the State sawmills had no advantage in regard to royalty, and that they were paying rather more than the ordinary sawmills. He noticed that Mr. Campbell, on page 84 of the evidence, said—

“Have you any knowledge as to the royalties paid by the State sawmills and the private mills?—Yes. On page

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1675 of ‘Hansard’ for this session, in reply to a question which I asked Mr. Petrie to put, the Treasurer said that the prices at Taromeo paid by the State run from 2s. 3d. to 3s. 6d., and that the general public are paying from 3s. 3d. to 6s. 1d. I notice in Mr. Bromiley's evidence a statement I would like to take exception to. He stated that they are paying more royalties than we are. That is not a fact. They get their royalties at a basis fixed by the Government, with no competition; whereas we have competition all the time—not only competition amongst ourselves, but amongst the timber-getters. Further, the State sawmills have the advantage at the present time in the fact that the block of timber they are working is far nearer the mill than a lot of others who are paying a higher price, and that gives a tremendous advantage to a mill.”

He quoted that to show that there was no reason for the State locking up between £30,000 and £40,000 of loan money in a venture of this kind. As regarded State management, there was no doubt that the State was at a disadvantage compared with a private individual in carrying on a business successfully. They might utter platitudes about the general benefits of the State carrying on ventures, but, after all, they had to be run on business lines. If they were not, somebody had to pay, and as the loss went on increasing the time would come when the taxpayers could not bear the burden, and general disaster would accrue. As making good his argument on that point he had here a pamphlet on the matter, which said—

“Some of the reasons for these failures by the Government to make their departments pay is summed up by ‘M. Yves Guyot,’ once ‘Minister of Finance in France,’ where Socialism has a strong hold. He says: ‘The State is always generous, because it had the spending of other people's money’; and again, ‘The State is the great fiction by means of which everyone tries to live at the expense of everybody else.’ It is always politically popular for a department to spend plenty of money, and the more industries it has to look after the greater its importance.”

Of course, there was no doubt that they went in for a good deal of electioneering and, if he might use the words, “the buying of votes” by the State taking these things in hand. Again, as dealing with the whole subject of the disadvantages the State laboured under in these matters, he had here a book on “Collectivism,” by Paul Leroy Beaulieu. It said—

“but history and experience show that State administration, so far from being infallible, is, on the contrary, far inferior to private administration in respect of certainty and promptitude of conception and execution. On the one side there is private interest, always alert and active; on the other, officials hampered by rigid regulations imposed by a bureaucracy, slaves of red tape, capable of dealing with normal conditions only, and impotent when confronted with the exceptional difficulties and unexpected vicissitudes to which the economic world is always liable. Again, on the one side we have the energies of millions of men freely and actively engaged in work

which they understand, on which their living depends, and which, therefore, they perform with great keenness; and on the other, the cool indifference of administrators, who would be quite as much benumbed as stimulated by the responsibilities thrown upon them. No doubt, there are certain services which can be satisfactorily performed by the State, but this does not justify the inference that all services may be nationalised with safety."

Mr. ROBERTS (*East Toowoomba*): He understood an amendment had been moved by the hon. member for Drayton to reduce the vote by £10,000. He was inclined to think the amendment would have been better in another place. Personally, he thought it was rather a good deal for the manager of the State sawmill to come to an understanding with the Insurance Commissioner that he would pay this sum of money. He wanted to make it clear that, as he understood it, whatever action was taken on that vote it would not in any way make any difference to the widow of the man who lost his life in the employ of the State sawmill. That had to be paid by the employer, as provided under the Act. The Government, as he understood it, had come to the conclusion that it would be better to carry their own insurance and pay the Commissioner 3 per cent. for managing their business. That was to say, when a claim came along he would inquire into it, come to a decision, and pay it, looking to the State sawmill, or any other Government department, to refund that sum of money. He was inclined to think that the State sawmill manager had done a good stroke for the business he was in. Under the ordinary conditions he would have been liable, at the least, for £600, which would have had to come out of his very small profits, if there had been a profit made in the last eighteen months. As against that, he had had to pay about £200 to the Insurance Commissioner. He certainly proposed to make his attack on the Insurance Commissioner. He thought it was most remarkable that the Government could be allowed by an officer free from interference to make those arrangements.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member has admitted that he would be out of order in discussing the question on this vote.

Mr. ROBERTS. He had not admitted anything of the sort. He said he was prepared to make an attack on another vote. That was the position he wished to confine himself to.

Amendment (*Mr. Bebbington's*) put and negatived.

At five minutes to 5 o'clock p.m.,

Mr. ROBERTS took the chair as Temporary Chairman.

Original question put.

HON. J. TOLMIE: Before the vote was put, he desired to enter his protest against the business that had been carried on by the Government. They had the evidence elicited by a special commission and by the Auditor-General.

The TREASURER: Not a special commission.

HON. J. TOLMIE: A special commission appointed by the Legislative Council.

The TREASURER: There is no such thing. There is a great difference between a Royal Commission and a Select Committee.

HON. J. TOLMIE: They were just quibbling over a word. He was sure no one was more fully alive to the position than the Treasurer. A Select Committee of the Legislative Council had been sitting for some considerable time for the purpose of dealing with these enterprises of the Government, and the evidence that had been elicited to the present time showed a shocking condition of things, inasmuch as in connection with some of these enterprises—particularly the one they were now discussing—the purchases were made in a very haphazard manner. On examining the evidence that had been adduced, they found that there was no proper overhaul of this business at all. The officer who was entrusted with the purchase received clear and definite instructions from the Treasurer—"We have got to buy a sawmill"—and they went and purchased a sawmill. It did not matter whether the sawmill was value for the money that was paid or not. That was a matter immaterial to the department concerned. The instructions laid down by the Treasurer were, "We want a sawmill, and a sawmill we must have"; and they got a sawmill, and up to the present time the sawmill had been a losing concern. The officers of the department associated with the mill would accept no responsibility either for the condition of the mill or for the quantity of timber there when they purchased it. Under examination as witnesses, they were unable to say whether the timber they purchased was there now, or portion of it, or whether they received value for the timber that had been sold. They were unable to discriminate between new timber cut and sold and the old timber that was disposed of, and consequently they had no adequate idea as to how the transactions turned out. The only thing they knew was that the Auditor-General, in his report, showed there was a distinct loss in the working of the sawmill. What was the object of purchasing that sawmill? They said it was for the purpose of supplying Government contracts. And they did not supply Government contracts from the mill, except for the metropolitan area, because they had to depend upon the country sawmills for the supply of timber in the country districts, and there they had to pay the prices of the ordinary timber merchants. There was no evidence that in Brisbane they were giving cheaper timber to the public, and that was one of the objects for which the sawmill was purchased. He remembered visiting the Beerburum settlement a little time ago, and there he learned that, whilst the Government purchased timber from the State sawmill for the purpose of erecting the State buildings, the men who were putting up their cottages did not do so. They purchased timber from another sawmill in the district, some considerable distance away, from which, so far as his memory served, they had to take the timber by wagon instead of by rail, and, notwithstanding that disability, those men preferred to purchase the timber at that sawmill rather than purchase it from the Government, for the simple reason that they found they could get better timber—because they had not to take the seconds foisted on them by the Government, as they were foisting them on workmen's cottages and in other cases where the unfortunate persons had to take timber from the Government—and they were also able to get cheaper timber. If, then, the sawmill was serving no utilitarian purpose, why should

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it be continued? It was an enterprise that had been a failure, and from what he could gather it was likely to be a failure, although the Government were in the happy position that they did not tax themselves on the land and they paid no municipal or shire council rates the same as other people, and, notwithstanding all those facts, they were not able to come into competition throughout the State with the ordinary sawmillers. If it were an enterprise that was going to cheapen timber to the general public there might be something in it. They said their sole object was to cheapen timber to the Public Works Department, and there was no conclusive evidence that they had even supplied the Public Works Department cheaper than the department could be supplied elsewhere. It was one of those fads the Government introduced for the purpose of showing the public what excellent business men they were, and showing the extent to which they could carry out private enterprises. But the evidence had been that for the time it had been in existence they had not been able even to make both ends meet. He wondered if that was the position of all sawmillers in the State of Queensland. As a matter of fact, the other sawmillers said that, although they were not making great profits, up to the present time they were able to carry on and make both ends meet. What was wrong with the Government that they could not do that? They had all the advantages on their side, but they could not do it. Their loss was a serious loss—probably not to the Queensland Government, but to any private person engaged in the same line of business, with the amount of capital invested that the Government had, the loss that had been experienced would be regarded as a serious loss, and if that loss were persisted in over a length of time he was afraid the persons carrying on the industry would find themselves, not only in the Insolvency Court, but before a judge of the State to explain why, when they were running a losing business for the length of time they were, they did not take an opportunity of calling their creditors together and putting them in possession of the facts, and either having the business wound up or getting an opportunity to carry on under other conditions. That is what would happen to any person engaged in private enterprise if losing as the Government were over so long a time—playing with other people's money in the way they had been. It would be regarded as a criminal act: but because the Government had the State of Queensland behind them they were of opinion that they could continue in the course they had been following and play with the people's money in the way they had been playing with it. It fact, it was a most reprehensible practice, and one that should be nipped in the bud right at the very beginning. That state of things should be brought up with a round turn, and the Government should be made to realise that the people were not going to stand the public finances being played with in the way they were. There could be no justification for the action of the Government, because they should be able, with the advantages they possessed, to do what a private sawmiller was able to do. That was the point of the greatest importance. The Government stood in the position of the best-favoured party. They had a position set apart for them that the private employer had not, and they were free from disabilities that rested upon

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the shoulders of the person engaged in private enterprise. And, notwithstanding that, it seemed to him that those engaged in private enterprise could hold their own, whilst the Government could not do so.

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

HON. J. TOLMIE: Had it not been due to the fact that the sawmilling business had in the past been considered one of the gilt-edged enterprises in Queensland that the Government had engaged in it. They did not see the Government start anything new, start off with an enterprise that somebody had not taken up, but when they want to engage in a business they looked round and ascertained what enterprise appeared to be the most flourishing. The only thing that had struck him showed a want of acumen on the part of Ministers was that they had not found it in the soft goods line—blouses and that sort of thing. That was an enterprise that seemed to be most flourishing to those engaged in it, and that being so it was a most remarkable fact that the present Government had not entered upon the business. Perhaps they had it in contemplation. They looked round and thought the pastoral business afforded them scope for increasing the money coming into the Treasury and they engaged in the pastoral industry; and, in order to make that profitable, they were trying to cut under others and put others out of the business. Then they went into the sawmilling business, as it appeared to be a flourishing one. At all events, the gentleman who sold them the mill apparently did a good thing in getting out of it, because it was not a paying concern. He got out of it, the Government got into it, and now they were losing the taxpayers' money. Had they shown any responsibility at all for the position in which they were placed as custodians of the public funds they would, at the very earliest opportunity, have gone out of the sawmilling business, it being a non-paying one from their point of view. He hoped before the year was out that that was the course they would pursue, and say either that the sawmilling business was one that could not be made to pay or that the Government were the wrong persons to take it up. If they could sell out for the same amount as they paid for it, well and good for the State, but if they could not do that, let them make as small a loss as possible and let the first loss be the last loss. It was a very unfortunate thing that the Government should ever have entered the sawmilling business, but it would be a more unfortunate thing still if they were to continue in the business.

Mr. FORSYTH: He found that the stock on hand in connection with the sawmilling business on the 30th June was £27,000. It was quite evident to him that it was a huge mistake for the Government to enter that business, because although they had increased the stock enormously they found that the actual increase in sales was a mere bagatelle. The Auditor-General, on page 14 of his report, states—

“It will thus be seen that for the period ended 30th September, 1916, a slight decrease (£401 0s. 10d.) is shown in the stocks, whilst for the period ended 30th June, 1917, there has been an increase of £14,572 8s. 4d. Thus, whilst the sales for the latter period only increased by £1,491 11s. 7d. (the difference

between £32,211 14s. 11d. and £33,703 6s. 6d.), the production increased by £14,572 8s. 4d."

He could not understand how any business man could go on increasing that enormous quantity of stock. Any one who knew anything about the timber business knew that when timber was once cut it depreciated very quickly on account of weather and other conditions, unless it was used at once. The Auditor-General further said—

"The wisdom or otherwise of this course will reveal itself later, but it should be a matter for consideration whether the present policy of increasing the stock is advisable. The business cannot be expected to show a profit whilst the ratio of the turnover to the production remains as is shown in the last period."

In spite of the fact that they were only doing about £4,000 a month they had a stock on hand of no less than £27,000. Was it necessary to have a stock of £27,000 to run a business doing a turnover of £4,000 a month? He was sure that no sawmiller would ever think of having such a stock on hand. It only showed that the Government had taken on a class of business that they did not know much about, and there could be only one result, and that was a dead loss to the State. He found that the insurance on that stock of £27,000, including the buildings and machinery, was only £13,000. The buildings alone must be worth a considerable sum, and suppose they got a big fire there, what would happen? The Government would lose £25,000 in one act, which would be charged, of course, against the State. No man who runs a mill would ever dream of having his stock insured for such a small amount as that, because, as everyone knew, the risk was exceptional. If the Government had a fire the loss would amount to more than they could make from the sawmills in ten or fifteen years, even if there was any profit at all. It was quite evident, as was stated in the evidence before the Select Committee, that the Government paid far too much for the stock. There was no doubt that Mr. Raymond made an excellent bargain for himself, and it was quite evident from the report of the Auditor-General that they paid too much for the whole deal. The Auditor-General said—

"It was then held by me that the loss was more than accounted for by reason of the fact that the stock of timber on hand at the Brisbane mill at the date of purchase was overestimated, both as regards quality and quantity, and to that extent, at least, too much was paid for the stock."

Could anyone understand a business man buying a large quantity of timber and simply taking it for granted? Every hundred feet of that timber should have been measured and then the Government would have been able to arrive at what the value of the timber was, and what quantity of timber was there. But no such thing was done in connection with Raymond's mill, and it was quite evident that so far as the quantity of the timber and the quality of the timber was concerned, that far too much was paid for it. Yet they were supposed to have a Government who understood business. That was how the people's money was being frittered away. There was no business that

he knew of that was so speculative as the sawmilling business. It was a well-known fact that for many years back the big sawmills were losing money every year. Mr. Bromiley pointed out that when the Government bought those mills in the first case he found out that it was utterly impossible to make it pay under the conditions existing at the time. They were told that when the Government bought those mills that the price of timber was too high and that they were going to take away from the millers some of their large profits. But their own manager, as soon as he took charge of the mill, discovered very quickly that he could not sell at the prices then charged, which showed that the millers were charging too little.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It shows that he was handicapped as compared with the other millers.

Mr. FORSYTH: In what way was he handicapped?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Because the millers had large areas of timber reserves which they bought cheaply years ago.

Mr. FORSYTH: Had not the Government one of the biggest areas in the country? Every reserve belonged to the Government.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: In olden times the millers got the best timber reserves and practically got a monopoly.

Mr. FORSYTH: Was it not a fact that the Government had the biggest timber reserves in Queensland? Of course they paid royalty. Mr. Bromiley stated most emphatically that when he took charge of the mill in December, 1915, the prices charged by the sawmills were simply ridiculous.

Mr. McMINN: Ridiculously high.

Mr. FORSYTH: Ridiculously low. If the hon. member would look at the evidence he would find that his statement was entirely wrong. Mr. Bromiley, when giving evidence was asked—

"Do you remember your people at any time wanting to have the prices raised because you found you could not make the business pay at the old prices? —Yes. I discovered very quickly that we could not sell at the prices we started selling at. The prices then were ridiculous."

As a matter of fact the prices charged by the private millers were so low that they left the sawmills a dead loss.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: No, they were making fortunes.

Mr. FORSYTH: The hon. gentleman knew nothing about it. He knew two of the largest sawmills in Queensland had been losing thousands for the last two or three years.

Mr. McMINN: Who are they?

Mr. FORSYTH: The hon. member would find it in the evidence. There was a big increase in the price of log timber and those things tended to make the profits disappear altogether. As a matter of fact no one knew that better than Mr. Bromiley. He was asked when giving evidence—

"Was the increase made as the result of an agreement between yourselves and the Timber Merchants' Association?—No. They told me that they proposed

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altering their prices, and I said that I could not see that they could do otherwise unless they were prepared to sell at a loss, and, of course, they altered their prices, and I did likewise."

He stated that they could not possibly go on charging the prices they had been charging without making a loss. When he found he could not make a profit he also raised his prices, and the prices had been raised more than once since the Government took over the mills. Later on, on account of a special award given to the men, more expenses were incurred and they had to raise their prices again.

Mr. McMINN: How much does an award put on to 100 feet of timber?

Mr. FORSYTH: That was the reason given by Mr. Bromiley. If a person employed a large number of men, the same as those millers did, even if it was only 2d. per hour, in the aggregate it would amount to a considerable sum. That was the position, so far as he understood it. Mr. Bromiley was asked—

"I presume you know whether the Valley mill is paying or not—is it paying or is it losing?—The last balance-sheet showed a loss.

"Do you know how much?—A loss of about £1,800."

He also stated that that was for the whole period and not for the first year. Another thing to which he objected was that Mr. Bromiley only wrote off a certain amount of depreciation. He said he wrote off 10 per cent., and the question was asked—

"Is it 10 per cent. on the original cost or 10 per cent. on each year's balance?"

And he stated—

"Ten per cent. on each year's balance."

Now, that was a most ridiculous proposal—to take 10 per cent. off each year's balance. What should be done was to take 10 per cent. off the capital value, no matter what the balance might be. There was no doubt that Mr. Raymond made a magnificent sale when he sold that mill to the Government; and Mr. Bromiley and the Government were beginning to realise that now. In connection with writing off, he said—

"Ten per cent. on each year's balance. I do not know that I am quite correct in saying that, but I imagine that it is on the balance each year.

"At 5 per cent. it would have to go on for more than twenty years. Do you think that the life of machinery, taking it all round, would be twenty years?—No; no machinery would last that length of time."

They were not writing off enough. It was 10 per cent. upon the actual turnover, or profit, or balance-sheet. There was no balance-sheet at all, because there had been no profit. It only showed that the Government had got into a perfect muddle in connection with that business. Yet it represented a huge sum of money, and the Government wanted no less than £60,000 for that purpose. The turnover was only £4,000 per month, and the stock amounted to £27,000. They had increased their stock only about

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£1,300 or £1,400. What a ridiculous thing it was for the Government to increase its stock of timber, which was a perishable commodity, and depreciate it! If the business was £3,000 per month instead of £4,000, he could understand it.

Mr. McMINN: It is a funny thing, if they have such a big stock, that so many public buildings are hung up for want of timber.

Mr. FORSYTH: He said distinctly the average turnover was £4,000 per month, which was £48,000 per year; and they had a stock of £27,000. It appeared to him that the whole business could only result in a dead loss. That was what Mr. Bromiley stated. He said emphatically that the ratio of stock as against the ratio of sales could only end up in the one thing. He said if they were going to go on with those huge stocks, with the small turnover, it would only end in one thing, and that was by a deadlock. It will be a very good thing for the Government to give up that business altogether, because it appeared to him that the longer they carried it on the more money they would lose. At the workshops at Ipswich road there had been no less than £31,265 spent, and they were hung up because they could not get the remainder of the plant. The interest on that money which had been spent was going on all the time. What on earth was the good of putting up that machinery until they got the whole of it? There was also an amount of £27,000 in stock, making £60,000 altogether. The whole business showed that the Government had made a huge mistake in going in for this sawmilling business. They had sawmills and timber yards in New South Wales, and the loss there had been enormous. That had had to be wiped out, because they could not carry on any longer. The same thing happened in Western Australia, where they were wiping off thousands every year. They were not the things a Government should go in for. They should go in for something that would stand criticism. In his estimation, if they had a fire—he hoped they would not—the loss would probably be £20,000 or £25,000; and that was more than the profit they would make for the next ten or fifteen years. They were not insured for full value; they were taking the risk with the money of the people of Queensland. They should be fully protected. They could get insurance from the State Insurance Department. They were placing themselves in a position different to that of other people, who had to insure.

Mr. McMINN: A good many carry it because the insurance premiums have been so very high in the past.

Mr. FORSYTH: It was one of the very biggest risks they could have in insurance, and that was why it was so high. Therefore the Government should not run a big risk in that case. It was a mistake to do it. If they wanted to carry on business in a proper way they should see that everything was protected by insurance or otherwise. It was quite evident that the Government had made a huge muddle in connection with the sawmilling business. They started wrongly by paying a huge sum of money in buying a property which everything showed was never worth the money. They paid for timber which evidently was not there, and they paid for a quality of timber that was not there. Whether they had made an allowance for

that he could not say. Yet they found the Government wanting no less than £60,000 to carry on this year. All he could say was that it was a policy he did not believe in, and it was a policy which the Government should get out of as quickly as possible; they should try to save their own skins before there was much more loss made. That was conclusively proved by Mr. Bromiley when he stated that when he started the business the prices of the various sawmills in Brisbane and in the country were far too low—that they were ridiculously low.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: If that mill was put out of existence, don't you think they would all raise the prices?

Mr. FORSYTH: Before that mill came into existence at all they were too low; they were losing money then, according to Mr. Bromiley. As a matter of fact, they did not know yet whether the rate was reduced when the Government came into the business. Mr. Bromiley said the public were being charged 2s. per 100 too low. There was a good deal in that business that wanted looking into. This was not the time for them to speculate in things whereby they would make a large loss to the State.

Mr. SWAYNE: The rise that had taken place in prices since the entry of the Government into that business they were all aware of. They knew that at the last general election the Liberals were defeated wholly and solely through absolute falsehoods being told. One of them was about the way the public were being exploited in the prices of different articles. For instance, in the matter of timber the price was represented to be 4s. or 5s. too high. In reference to that, on page 75 of the report of the Select Committee they had the evidence of Mr. G. Brown. Question 1328 was—

“When did the Government purchase Raymond's mill?—I think it was at the end of 1915.

“At that time were your firm and other sawmills charging reasonable prices or otherwise to the public?—Well, they were not high, but nobody seemed to be satisfied that they were making reasonable profits. Some of the timber merchants, but not all, stated that they were making losses.

“We have evidence that a special reduction in the price of timber was made by the Government for a limited period, apparently to work off their stocks. Leaving that out, do you know whether the Government have cheapened timber to the public, as compared with the prices charged by private sawmills?—I do not think so—not to any appreciable extent. Certainly timber is not cheaper now than when they started, and the price is several shillings higher than it was.

“Are the Government, in common with other mills, charging a higher price now than they were when the State sawmills started?—Yes, a considerably higher price.

“What percentage higher?—I suppose the increase is somewhere about 4s. 6d. per 100 ft., roughly.”

Yet at the time of the last election the public were told that they were overcharged to the extent of 5s. per 100. There was another matter about which he thought the

Minister in charge of the vote might give them some information. It has been stated—he was not prepared to say whether it was true or not—that the State sawmills sold timber to the Day Labour Department at a low price in order that they could show a fictitious advantage over the contractor.

Mr. MCMINN: That is not so. You did not see that in Bromiley's evidence.

Mr. SWAYNE: Question 1435 bore that out, as follows:—

“Do you mean that the actual quantities were not there?—No; I mean the price at which the stock was taken. I cannot say anything about the measurement, because one would have to go and check it all. I am simply taking what I consider to be the inflated value, knowing, as I do, the price at which the stock should have been put in. I think I can prove to the committee without any trouble that the Government at the present time are selling timber at less than what they took it into stock at. That is a pretty big statement to make, but I will prove it. In the first place, according to the answers by Mr. Theodore to questions asked by Mr. Petrie in the House, the timber was purchased for 16s. per 100 ft. right round. We now find that after eighteen months the Government increased their stocks in rough pine up to 20s. per 100 ft., dressed pine 22s., rough hardwood 24s., and dressed hardwood 26s. If you take the selling prices according to the list published by the State sawmills and the average timber sold to the Day Labour Department, the first two items—rough pine—appear in the list price as 23s. up to 3 by 2, and 24s. 6d. up to 10 by 10 for first class, and 20s. and 21s. 6d. respectively for second class. That gives an average price for the two lines of 22s. 3d. This is a point I want to get at, because Mr. Bromiley says that they are selling to the Day Labour Department at a flat rate of 2s. per 100 feet below the price to the public. If he is doing so, then he has not only to handle his timber in the yard, but he also has to cart it to where the jobs are, and the least he can do that for will run from 1s. to 2s. per 100 feet. Therefore, on every foot of timber he is selling at the present time to the Day Labour Department he is losing, as compared with the price at which he took in his stock.”

They knew that that sort of thing had been done before in regard to State enterprises. They knew that in New Zealand at one time the Government were running a coalmine, and they were selling to the Railway Department, in order to get them to use inferior coal instead of bringing coal from New South Wales, at a reduction on that at which they were selling it to the general public, who were so situated that they had to buy their coal. Those assertions had often been made about those Government undertakings, and he thought the Minister in charge should, at any rate, give them the satisfaction of saying that nothing of the kind had been done here. It would easily be seen that it was against good business, and must in the long run result in a loss to the taxpayers at large.

Question put and passed.

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PUBLIC CURATOR.

The TREASURER moved—That £12,556 be granted for the “Department of Justice—Public Curator.”

Mr. PETRIE: The late Public Curator, who was in ill health, had to go away for a while, and had asked to be relieved. He understood that something was going to be done for him, or some other [5.30 p.m.] position found for him, but he was not aware that anything had been done. He did not think the Government had altogether treated Mr. Douglas as well as they might have done, and he would like to know if it was the intention of the Government to find him, as promised, some other position in the service.

The TREASURER: He had not heard of any suggestion that Mr. Douglas had not been well treated by the Government; as a matter of fact, Mr. Douglas was selected from a number of applicants for the position by the Government when the position was first created. After some months in the department he signified to the Minister in charge of the department that he wished to retire from the position—he thought principally for health reasons. He thought that the close attendance to duty in the office was not beneficial to his health, and that he desired to go abroad. He understood that he went to New Zealand and subsequently returned.

Mr. PETRIE: His health is all right now.

The TREASURER: He did not hear that Mr. Douglas had made application for any particular position; it had not come before the Cabinet. The Government had no complaint against Mr. Douglas, whose duties were carried out in a manner which was entirely satisfactory.

Mr. PETRIE: He was given to understand that Mr. Douglas's health had now been restored. He thought there was some understanding that something would be found for Mr. Douglas, and he would like the Minister to make inquiries into the matter.

The TREASURER: I will make inquiries. I think the hon. member must be under some misapprehension about any promise.

Mr. FORSYTH: From the report of the Public Curator there was a considerable loss last year, but it appeared that the income and expenditure would soon balance. He had no doubt that this department would be able to pay its way before long. In the Public Curator the Government had got a good officer who, with his ability and energy, would be able to make the department a good one for the State and the people as well. He noticed that there was an enormous increase in the number of hands; he did not say they were not wanted, but this year the number was forty-two as against nineteen last year. The evidence showed that the business of the office was increasing, but he would like an explanation from the Treasurer as to whether the extension of business had been so great as to cause this large increase of officials in the department. He hoped that the department at the end of the year would turn out all right and show that it was able to pay its way.

The TREASURER: This was altogether a new office, only established last year, and it took some organising and preliminary preparation before the office could be established upon a business footing. Since the new

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Public Curator had been appointed he had been very active in reorganising the department, and in making room for expansion in every part of the State. As hon. members would see from the Curator's report, the volume of business was increasing. The vast expansion taking place, as indicated in the report, explained the necessity for the increased staff. The Curator, in his report, stated that there had been an apparent profit of £1,400 19s. 6d. He stated—

“This does not show the true position, however. There has been no charge made for the services of officers at Townsville and Rockhampton, the staffs of the Supreme Courts at the places mentioned having been utilised. The services of the clerks of petty sessions have also been availed of without any cost to this office. Rent had not been charged for the space occupied in the Treasury Buildings, nor has any expense been incurred for lighting and cleaning offices.

“On the other hand, the office has rendered certain services for which no remuneration is received, such as the defence of poor prisoners, the audit of trustees' returns under the Insolvency Act, and the collection of maintenance of patients in hospitals for the insane and charitable institutions.”

Carrying out the recommendation of the Public Curator, he had been given a complete staff, and typewriting assistance. Then, a Local Deputy Curator had been appointed at Townsville, with a staff there, and the office was doing a very large volume of work which previously was done by the staff attached to the Supreme Court, and transmitted to Brisbane for final action. That accounted for the increase and the tremendous growth of the department in regard to the staff.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Having had one or two cases with the office in connection with returned soldiers' estates, he could say that the expenses had been remarkably low. The estates were very well managed in the interests of soldiers who lost their lives. He thought it was only right to make that statement.

Question put and passed.

STATE INSURANCE OFFICE.

The TREASURER moved—That £220,000 be granted for “State Insurance Office.”

HON. J. TOLMIE: The Treasurer seemed to have a knack of dealing with hundreds of thousands and millions of pounds in an off-hand way, but if it was a £5-note he would go to a considerable amount of trouble to explain the details.

The TREASURER: There is no explanation required.

HON. J. TOLMIE: That was an accurate answer in regard to a very considerable portion of the work of the Government—they were unable to give an explanation.

The TREASURER: I was only quoting one of your own members. That remark is not original from me.

HON. J. TOLMIE: They never expected anything original from the other side. There was an increase of officers from seventy-three to ninety-nine, and an increase in the amount of salaries of £11,000, or nearly double what they were before, and surely that admitted of some explanation. He noticed that there

had been a departure in regard to the work of the State Insurance Office. A number of appointments had been made in regard to the life insurance branch. He took up the same attitude on this occasion as he took up last year with regard to these appointments, and the disadvantage under which certain members of the public service suffered. He gathered that the appointments had been made from outside the service.

The TREASURER: Some of the appointments.

HON. J. TOLMIE: A junior appointment at a salary of £35, £40, or £60 a year was made from the service, but the officer appointed at £600 or £700 a year was brought in from outside the service. He was not begrudging the men who had got the appointments, but if there were men in the public service capable of discharging the duties, and there were any increases to be given, the positions ought to go to the men who had given long and faithful service. When the Insurance Office was established there was quite a host of public servants performing duties quite equal to those required of officers in this branch, but friends of the Government were appointed to the positions and the long service of public servants was overlooked altogether. He took strong exception last year, and he did now, to this method of conducting public business. They had had no details supplied. Surely there ought to be some indication of what the duties of the respective officers were, so that they might have an opportunity of learning for what purpose new appointments had been made. How could they safeguard the interests of the public when a lump sum was merely voted in this way? How could they tell whether there were officers who were being overlooked? He remembered last year there was a larger number of officers appointed by the present Government from outside the public service, approximating over 200 officers. He found the same practice was going on now. Where there was a good thing in the public service some friend of the Government was introduced from outside, and the position was not made one of those that came under the public service for the time being. Later on, the gentleman appointed was gazetted as an officer of the public service, but when the office was first made it came within the provision that there was nobody in the public service capable of discharging the duties appertaining to it. Consequently, they had recourse to the section of the Public Service Act that allowed an appointment to be made from outside, whereas if they had a knowledge of the duties they could very quickly make discoveries that those duties could be discharged by officers in the public service. They knew that men had been passed over, and good appointments given to persons outside the service, instead of the persons inside the service. One would have thought that officers who had been in the State Insurance Department might have been selected for some of the appointments in the Fire Insurance Department, but he believed that they were passed over, and the prominent positions, carrying big salaries, were given to friends outside. He was not cavilling at the qualifications of those men. They might have, and he believed they did have, the highest qualifications, but there were in the public service officers capable of doing the work, and those officers were being passed over. That was the point he wished to raise. He maintained

that the Government was not fair and not just to those public servants. He hoped it would be the last time he would have to speak on that matter in the manner he had spoken this year and last year. He was confident it would be the last time for a long while, because he believed the Government would not have the opportunity of making such appointments again for some time.

Mr. McPHAIL: "The wish is father to the thought."

HON. J. TOLMIE: The wish might be father to the thought, but even with the Opticians Bill he saw signs of it. He hoped that before the vote went through the Treasurer, who was in charge of those Estimates, would give the Committee the names of those ninety-nine salaried officers. It was a remarkable thing they could not make it one more, and make it an even 100. He hoped the Treasurer would tell them who those officers were, and what were the duties they performed. He noticed the amount for claims had been reduced by £35,000. That was an indication that there would be less money paid out and more money coming in, because he noticed that they expected to make a profit of £250,000.

The TREASURER: We do not expect to make a profit of £250,000.

HON. J. TOLMIE: No; the profit would be £30,000, the difference between £220,000 expenditure and the estimated receipts, £250,000. He knew the profit was much needed—that £30,000 taken from the public. When the office came into operation they were told it was for the purpose of cheapening insurance. He wanted to know who the ninety-nine public servants were, what were their duties, and who had been appointed from outside the service during the past year.

The TREASURER: The Act under which the State Insurance Commissioner operated, as the hon. gentleman knew well enough, because the principle was discussed when the Bill was going through the House, and the hon. gentleman did not raise any opposition to the principle, gave the Commissioner considerable power of discretion in the matter of raising and organising his staff, and necessarily so because, as the hon. member for Murrumba would recognise, it would not be right for the Minister to be butting in and advising the Commissioner in regard to that.

Mr. FORSYTH: There is no reason why we should not have a list of the employees.

The TREASURER: It appeared in the Blue Book, and it would be a ridiculous thing to burden the Estimates with a full list. They had no such thing in regard to the railway employees.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: They give us a special list.

The TREASURER: And hon. members had a list of the employees in the State Insurance Office in the "Blue Book," which gave more information than he could now, and more information than the Commissioner for Railways gave in regard to his officers. The "Blue Book" gave the year of the individual's birth, the date of his entrance to the service, his emoluments and allowances, and the date of his last increase. In the railway list they simply gave the date of his appointment, the position he occupied, and his age. He thought that hon. members would find the "Blue Book" gave much more complete

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information, and no good purpose would be served by including in the Estimates a huge list of the particular officers in that department.

Mr. BEBBINGTON said he was of the opinion this would be the vote more particularly on which to censure the manager for taking out that policy on the dead man.

The TREASURER: You want to deprive the unfortunate widow of that money.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: He was surprised at the Treasurer's statement. The Government knew perfectly well there was no such thing as the widow being robbed of that. They knew that every employer was responsible, and it was only a bit of sharp practice in transferring the loss from one department to another. Would the Treasurer say that the Government were not responsible for that amount?

The TREASURER: We were responsible and we would pay; that is more than you would do.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: It was only a bit of sharp practice in transferring that amount from one department to another to prevent a bigger loss being shown on the sawmills. The Insurance Department, they were promised, would be run practically on the co-operative principle—that was, it would not be a revenue-producing department.

The TREASURER: You complain against the State sawmill because it makes a loss, and against the State insurance because it makes a profit.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: It was transferred from the Sawmill Department, so that that department would not show a loss, and it was a low-down way of financing, and nothing short of sharp practice, and it was a system which no Government should stoop to. If the manager of the Insurance Department was going to be "had" by every department, if he was no sharper business man than not to know when he was being "had," he would not get on very well. The Insurance Department should be run as a co-operative department, and if the manager allowed himself to be taken down by every department, then he would lose money that belonged to others.

The TREASURER: He showed some sympathy with the widow, at any rate.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: It did not matter 1s. to the widow, and the Treasurer knew that. He was only trying to make political capital out of something that was not true. He knew perfectly well it was not true, and he was making an untrue statement when he said it made a difference to the widow. The Insurance Commissioner made a bad bargain when he relieved the Sawmill Department of nearly £600. It did not make any difference to the widow, but it certainly made a difference to the Insurance Department, which was supposed to be run on a co-operative principle—that was to say, if the receipts were more than the expenditure, next year the premiums would be reduced or a portion of the profits would be returned as a bonus to the insurers. That was the principle they were told the Insurance Department would be run on, and he would tell hon. members why that assurance was required. In starting the Insurance Department, the Government practically ruined at least two co-operative insurance companies; one, as the Acting Chairman would remember, was the Too-

woonba Co-operative Company, which repaid to its insurers from 50 per cent. to 60 per cent. of its premiums. If the manager of the Insurance Department allowed every Government department to put its burdens on to him, he would have less money to return to the policy-holders, or the policy-holders would have to pay increased burdens. He maintained that each department should stand on business principles, and show clear business methods of conducting their business, and they could then have some idea of the amount of business transacted. So far as the appointment of persons from outside the State service was concerned, he thought that where there were men already in the service who could fill the positions, and it would be promotions for them, they certainly should have the opportunity of taking the appointment. That was apparently not the case, according to the leader of the Opposition, who said a number of persons had been brought into the service and put into good positions. Hon. members knew there were a number of lawyers recently appointed. He did not know that lawyers were profitable people to employ. He knew that when a lawyer got hold of a small grievance between two neighbours, he would often work it up into a big thing.

Mr. MURPHY: You have no faith in lawyers?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: No. He believed that there was a saying something like, "They that live by the law, shall die by the law," and for that reason he would not advise the Government to employ too many lawyers from outside. With regard to the State Insurance Department, he thought there were plenty of public servants suitable to do some of the work. Referring again to the matter of the Insurance Department being conducted on a co-operative basis, he understood that the department had notified insurers that they could insure for 10 per cent. less this year.

At 7 o'clock p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: It would be a good thing if some arrangement were made in the future for an extension of the insurance business, so long as it was carried on on co-operative lines. He certainly objected to the Insurance Department being made a revenue-producing department. It should be on the co-operative principle, so that the payments could be brought down as low as possible and the benefits made as high as possible. It might be made compulsory on the lines of the superannuation scheme.

Mr. ROBERTS: Reference had been made to the action of the Insurance Commissioner in entering into an agreement with the State Sawmills Department under which compensation was paid to a certain employee. If a private individual failed to insure his employee it might be through an oversight or want of thought, but in that case the department entered into an agreement with the Insurance Commissioner and undertook to do certain work, and then when a serious loss occurred it was most unsatisfactory that they should come along and agree to accept the premium, which was about one-third of the claim they would be called upon to pay. He would like to know from the Minister if there was any other department working on a similar basis. It was most unfair to the private employee, because the insurance

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premiums were assessed on the amount of the liability. If they were going to get those claims paid from the insurance fund when it was no risk in the ordinary sense of the term, it was not fair to the outside employer, and he would like the Minister to assure the Committee that that procedure would not be adopted again. They had to recognise that the insurance premiums in connection with the sawmilling business were somewhat heavy as compared with other businesses.

Question put and passed.

CENTRAL SUGAR MILLS FUND.

The TREASURER moved that £1,000,000 be granted for "Central Sugar Mills Fund."

Mr. SWAYNE: This vote was connected with one of our principal food items, and he had noticed the way that the cost of production in the mills was leaping up. As showing how the cost of producing sugar was advancing, he had some figures that he had taken out in 1913 which showed that the cost of salaries and rations in that year amounted to £1 11s. 1½d. per ton of sugar. Taking last year's figures he noticed that those items had increased to £2 4s. 4½d. From information supplied to him he had found that the cost of refining had also increased from £1 5s. 9d. per ton in 1913 to £1 12s. 3d. per ton in 1914. It would be plainly seen that if the cost of production continued to jump up in that way any hope of getting cheap food was very slight. He supposed if the truth were known that the same thing would apply to the production of other food-stuffs. On page 1 of the report of the General Manager of the Central Sugar Mills, the following appeared:—

"The manufacturing results of the mills, with the exception of Babinda, were not very satisfactory. Owing to the drought in the Central and Southern districts the cane crops were light. Moreover, there was a cessation for some weeks in several of the mills' operations during the period of the year when the cane was mature. This was due to a strike on the part of the farmers, who protested against harvesting their crops under the Dickson award. Upon resumption of operations the wet season set in, and on account of the favourable weather conditions the cane took on a new growth, and as a result there was a marked decrease in the sugar contents. Further, it was impossible to harvest much of the cane, and it was allowed to stand over."

What he wanted to point out was that, whatever was the cause, there was no doubt it led to a very grave loss indeed to Queensland and to Australia. It was owing to the utter refusal of the judge who heard the case that brought about that loss to take into consideration the cost of working. It must be obvious that if that sort of thing was to continue and no attention at all was to be paid to the position of one party to the arrangement, not only would that loss happen, but it would be a loss all round. As to the action the farmers took in the matter, it amounted to this—that unless something was done to draw public attention to this matter their plight would have been very bad indeed. As it was, they were faced with ruin. Their cost of working was put up to such a pitch that to continue—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

Mr. SWAYNE: He was quoting from the report upon the Government central sugar-mills. Surely when they were voting money for those sugar-mills—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is now discussing a question which was very fully discussed on the vote for the Industrial Court.

Mr. SWAYNE: Would the Chairman look at the official report?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order! The hon. member is now repeating a speech I have heard at least two or three times.

Mr. SWAYNE: No. He differed from the Chairman there. He had not referred to that matter; he had never mentioned the action of the farmers on that occasion.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: This is the first time you have mentioned it to-day.

Mr. SWAYNE: This was the first time this session. If the Chairman looked up what he had said on any other question, he would find that he had not mentioned the action of the farmers in that phase. He had mentioned other strikes, but not this. Certain interjections were made from the other side to him about it, but he had never replied to those interjections. What he wanted to point out was that—as shown by that report—there had been a considerable loss to the State in an important article of food, and the Government must be held chargeable to a considerable extent for that. He might mention that previous to the case being dealt with he and the hon. member for Burrum waited upon the Treasurer, and drew his attention to what was likely to happen. Unfortunately, their forecasts had been only too well borne out. They pointed out that, under the Act then in existence in reference to those matters, the hon. gentleman had certain powers that Parliament had provided. He absolutely refused to exercise those powers—to act under them in any way. He stated at the time it would be most improper for him to do so; but he afterwards did use those powers on behalf of the other section interested in the matter—under the very section of the Act of Parliament to which they had drawn his attention on that occasion. It was most decidedly differential and partial treatment given to one party as against the other. What he wanted more particularly to refer to was that it was true that the farmers were confronted with ruin if they went on; they would simply go on working at a loss. He thought it could be taken for granted that unless they had done what they had they would not have got the extra 3s. which they were getting now, and there would have been no variation of the award. Unless they had ceased operations they would not have had any improvement in the deplorable position, which meant insolvency, as it then confronted them.

Mr. GLEDSON: The member for Mackay got the increased price.

Mr. SWAYNE: He did not. Something had to be done to impress the public with the urgency of the case. What had happened since had demonstrated that what he was saying was correct. He was pointing that out as showing the marked partiality of the Government in dealing with public matters. It was suggested when that deplorable position was on for six or seven weeks last year that Parliament was sitting at the time, and if the Treasurer did not like to

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exercise his powers under section 46 of the Industrial Peace Act it was quite open to him to take the necessary steps to give them a court of appeal. That was what they asked for. It was urged that they should have a court of appeal generally throughout the industry.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is not in order in discussing that matter on this vote.

Mr. SWAYNE: The position this year was largely affected by the occurrences of which he was speaking. They would see that that was so by looking at the report upon the Government central sugar-mills, which was presented to Parliament. Surely when he was dealing with a vote with which that report dealt, he was justified in quoting from the report?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is quite justified in quoting from the report; but he is not justified in dealing with the effect of the Dickson award or repeating a speech I have heard two or three times.

Mr. SWAYNE: It was distinctly mentioned there by the manager of those mills which they were now discussing. Dr. Gibson said, "This was due to a strike on the part of the farmers, who protested against harvesting their crops under the Dickson award."

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member has very fully discussed the question of the Dickson award on a previous vote.

Mr. SWAYNE: He did not think so.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I cannot allow the hon. member to continue on the lines on which he is now. He must confine his attention to the vote before the Chair.

Mr. SWAYNE: He was speaking in regard to the position of those mills this season. This was a matter he had not spoken of before. (Government dissent.) Others might have done so. He was pointing out that the Treasurer was requested by the farmers to provide a court of appeal. He absolutely refused to do so; and yet when the railway men entered on a strike, within three weeks he gave them a court of appeal. It afforded a splendid opportunity for pointing out the discriminatory treatment given to one class of the community as compared with the other.

Mr. GLEDSON: That is not correct.

Mr. SWAYNE: Another matter to which he wished to refer in regard to those mills was that in their accounts the matter of depreciation was mentioned. With regard to the Proserpine Mill, there was an item of £814 for depreciation. That was in addition to redemption, renewals, and maintenance. What made him more particularly refer to it was that he had asked a question the other day and elicited the fact that that depreciation was paid into trust fund. Then, when dealing with the Central Bureau, the Treasurer told them that the consulting engineer's salary was largely paid out of trust funds. It would appear that something over £2,400 was taken from trust funds and used for the maintenance of the central office. He quite realised that that was a fair charge to make on the mills, but he questioned whether depreciation should be used in that way. The Treasurer distinctly stated that a large proportion of the expenses of the central office was paid out of trust funds, and that depreciation went into the trust

funds. What he wished to know was whether depreciation was used towards defraying the cost of the central office.

The TREASURER: I am afraid that you will never understand the situation.

Mr. SWAYNE: He understood this much, that depreciation should not be taken for management expenses, but judging the Treasurer by his own utterances, it did appear that depreciation might be used for defraying a portion of the costs of the management of the central office. It would be a good thing if depreciation were used for defraying the indebtedness of the mill to the State, but the State could not very well apply depreciation to management salaries.

The TREASURER: You have absolutely no comprehension whatever of the position, and it is no use my trying to explain the position to you. Have a conversation with the hon. member for Murrumba, and he will put you right.

Mr. SWAYNE: If he had made any mistake in the matter, it was entirely due to the way the Treasurer had answered his question. There was another matter that he should like to mention in connection with this vote, and that was the satisfactory position, generally speaking, of the Babinda and South Johnstone mills, which were erected under the Sugar Works Act of 1911. They were the first mills which had been built under that scheme, which provided certain safeguards to prevent the mills ever becoming proprietary mills. As long as they existed they would be of a co-operative character, as precautions had been taken to prevent the shareholders being other than canegrowers, and against any dividend being paid until after the State was paid off. After the State was paid off, there was a limitation for all time to the effect that the dividends must not exceed 5 per cent. That was a splendid feature in the Act, and it was one well worthy of imitation in other undertakings in which assistance was given to agricultural enterprise. It reflected great credit on the Government who passed the Act. The two mills during the time they had been in existence had contributed towards Queensland's wealth something over £400,000. The manager of the mills pointed out that they had treated over 200,000 tons of cane last season. That was a good thing for the community, because it afforded a considerable amount of employment; and it was a testimony to the good work done by the Denham Government. Another matter about which he would like to have some explanation, was the alteration made in the method of furnishing chemical returns. In the manager's reports it was shown by the chemical returns for the season 1915 that so many tons of sugar-cane had been treated, and that 1,200 tons of sugar had been lost. That was an unduly large amount, and inquiry should be made as to how that came about. He had the returns for the same mill this year, and he found that the percentage of loss was given, but not the total loss in connection with the milling of sugar-cane, the same as in previous years, and no particulars as to loss in extraction. This matter of loss in sugar raised the question as to whether it was the fault of the management or the fault of the cane—for instance, unnecessary burning—but no particulars were given which would enable one to arrive at a conclusion regarding this matter. The present chemical returns

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were a departure from what had been the practice in previous years, and he hoped the Treasurer would give his attention to the matter.

The TREASURER: You give notice of a question to-morrow, and I will answer it.

Mr. SWAYNE: Very well, he would take the hon. gentleman at his word, and ask him a question on the matter, and he hoped the hon. gentleman's reply would be such that there would be no mistake about it.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: This money, apparently, was mostly for co-operative mills. He supposed the people had an opportunity of owning them when they had paid [7.30 p.m.] off the money owing to the Government. He saw that the amount of sugar this season was nearly double what it was last year, which was very pleasing.

The TREASURER: More than double.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: He was very pleased to hear the intelligent way in which the hon. member for Mirani grasped the sugar situation. He had had very high respect for the hon. member ever since he lifted the dark cloud which hung over the sugar industry when he went down to Melbourne.

The TREASURER: When he went down to Melbourne! My word, yes!

Mr. BEBBINGTON: They knew what a dark cloud hung over the industry in consequence of a proclamation issued by the Premier, and that nobody would even send a ship to Queensland, as the Queensland Government was in the habit of laying their hands on everything which was loose, and a steamer was considered as something which was loose if it came into Queensland waters. On that account the sugar industry was under a dark cloud, and the loss and unemployment in the North were very great.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The policy of the last Government was in the direction of making it possible for the growers to buy out any mill, or build a new mill by advancing 75 per cent. of the value of the mill.

The TREASURER: They did not use it on one occasion.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: They had not been in operation long enough to make any application. He did not see that any application had been made and granted by this Government. That was the policy of the last Government, which was supported by a large number of farmers' representatives, about twenty-seven in number. He had supported the Cane Prices Board Bill when it came before the House, and he hoped it would be a success. They had to thank the hon. member for Burrum for that Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You are talking rot.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: He would defy the Minister for Agriculture to say that they could fix a price in connection with the product of any mill or industry before they saw what the production was. They must wait till they sold their product, so as to know what it would fetch. They could not say what they were going to get till the product was marketed.

The TREASURER: You want to rob the farmers.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The sugar industry was one which wanted handling very care-

fully. Men were perhaps making bigger wages in the sugar industry than in any other industry in Australia.

Mr. PAYNE: Are they getting too much?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: He did not say they were getting too much, but were not £8 or £10 a week big wages?

Mr. PAYNE: They work for it.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: They knew that when the war was over, and sugar could be imported very cheaply from other countries, it would be a question as to whether the people in the South would consent to pay an extra £6 or £7 a ton for sugar.

Mr. MOORE (*Subigny*): He did not quite see what position these mills were going to be in. He noticed in one part of the report that they wanted to encourage the sugar industry so as to stop the gold going out of the country; and then, in another part, it said that if everything had gone favourably this year, and there had been no strikes in the sugar industry, they would have produced 300,000 tons of sugar, and they would not have known what to do with it, as there would have been 40,000 tons over requirements. What was the extension of these mills going to mean? From the report of the accounts of central sugar-mills, it appeared that several mills paid far more than they ought to have paid. When a co-operative bacon or butter factory got an advance from the Government they had to carry on on a business footing and pay a sufficient margin to meet Government liabilities. The report said—

"The price awarded by the Central Cane Prices Board for cane of the quality above specified was 3s. 10d. per ton less than the price of 25s. per ton ordered to be paid by the board on delivery, and the result was an over-payment of approximately £29,000."

In every case it seemed to him that these mills had paid more than they ought to have paid. How long was this going to continue? These mills had in nearly every case paid more than they ought to have paid.

The TREASURER: Last year was such an exceptionally bad season.

Mr. MOORE: There was an estimate of 300,000 tons for this season.

The TREASURER: That is the 1917 season—the season which is now on. It is a record season.

Mr. MOORE: What position were the mills going to be in if they got these good seasons?

The TREASURER: With good seasons they will pay their way.

Mr. MOORE: It seemed to him they would not pay their way.

The TREASURER: If there is a surplus, we will carry it over till next year.

Mr. MOORE: If they were going to extend the planting of sugar-cane, the production of sugar would be more than the consumption.

The TREASURER: The average production for many years past has been short by 60,000 or 70,000 tons.

Mr. MOORE: He knew that more cane was being planted, and the farmers were being encouraged to plant cane by the Director of Agriculture, and he did not know what the result would be. He thought there was a danger of over-production.

The TREASURER: There is no danger of over-production with our present mills. This year has been an exceptional year.

Mr. Moore.

Mr. MOORE: But the increase was going on all the time, and it seemed to him it was going to be a pretty risky business, particularly with the directors of some of these mills paying more than they ought. In one case the Auditor-General made a particular reference to a mill, because it did not pay too much to their suppliers and met all their liabilities in consequence. In many cases they paid higher than the surrounding mills, and had nothing left afterwards to meet their liability.

The TREASURER: You want us to screw the last penny out of the farmers?

Mr. MOORE: He did not want to see anybody overpaid, and he did not want to see one section having their own way and another section kept up to their payments. It looked to him from the report that the sugar-mills were going from bad to worse, and it seemed to him to be the fault of the directors in paying more than they ought to pay, and the fault of the boards in fixing prices before they were competent to do so. It seemed to him there was loose business management somewhere.

The TREASURER: Do you disagree with the principle of co-operative mills?

Mr. MOORE: He did not disagree with the principle of co-operative mills, but with the principle of men being allowed to pay more than the stuff was worth, and then not being able to meet their liabilities. They had the same position when the Minister for Agriculture said in connection with the Sugar Cane Prices Bill what a ridiculous position it would be to fix prices before they knew what they were going to get for the produce. Fortunately, it had been amended, but all the co-operative mills seemed to be in the same position, and that was the part he could not understand. How were they going to get out of it, unless they paid a price that would leave a margin that would enable them to meet their liabilities, especially when the extension of planting was to be encouraged and over-production would take place?

Question put and passed.

HARBOURS AND RIVERS.

The TREASURER moved—That £106,637 be granted for "Harbours and Rivers."

Mr. FORSYTH said he noticed the amount was less than last year, but not very much less. He was under the impression that the amount would be very much less.

The TREASURER: You said yourself last year we were spending too much on the Brisbane River and ought to steady down.

Mr. FORSYTH: He did not say that. As a matter of fact, it did not affect the revenue at all, because as soon as the Brisbane River works were complete and those huge sums of money had been spent, the harbour dues would rise very much. Last year they spent on the vote £137,000. The estimate was £121,000, and the revenue derivable was £68,000. He noticed a very large amount of work had been done in connection with the removal of the Gardens Point and other works on the river. In the Hamilton Reach cutting a commencement had been made to deepen the cutting to 26 feet, and the Parker Island cutting was widened to 600 feet, with 26 feet throughout. What he was anxious to know was when this huge amount of work was to be stopped? Had they arrived yet at a stage when there was no occasion to go on? He understood there was a depth of 26 feet now available right

Mr. Moore.

up the river, and if that was so, when did the Treasurer anticipate he would be able to reduce the liability in connection with the Brisbane River? He noticed there was an amount of £61,000 received in connection with harbour dues in the port of Brisbane, and no doubt when shipping got back to its normal condition that amount would be very much increased. It had fallen away during the last twelve months more than 10 per cent. It was £70,000 in 1915 against £61,000 last year. That was caused, of course, by the fact that shipping was interfered with by the war. They were spending an enormous amount of money in connection with the harbours and rivers, and this year they estimated to spend £106,000.

The TREASURER: We are reducing it.

Mr. FORSYTH: A big item of the vote was for dredges and plant and working expenses. What he wanted to know was how long were those big works going on and how long those big items would appear on the Estimates. Would they appear for the next two or three years? He was under the impression that, so far as the Brisbane River was concerned, it was pretty well finished, and vessels drawing 25 feet could come right up, and, therefore, he hoped the amount would decrease considerably and that the revenue derived from harbour dues would reduce the liability, which was certainly a very heavy one. There was an item in the report about some repairs effected to the jetty at Thursday Island. He understood that the Government received about £600 a year as rental for that jetty, and he noticed that from the report last year £555 was spent in repairs. That was a big item. At one time the firm which he (Mr. Forsyth) represented used to pay £600 or £300 a year for the lease of the Thursday Island jetty and they were also responsible for the repairs to the jetty. It appeared now that the Government had to pay for the repairs of the jetty, and it looked as if they made a bad bargain with the Torres Shire Council at Thursday Island. He would like to know what rental the Government got from the Torres Shire Council. Burns, Philp, and Co. used to lease the jetty, but they gave it up, and now the Government had to pay the repairs themselves. That looked like a bad bargain.

The TREASURER: What do you suggest we should do?

Mr. FORSYTH: He thought it would have been better to leave the jetty in private hands, as the Government would get more money by it. Last year the Government had to pay £555 in repairs.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That does not need to be repeated each year.

Mr. FORSYTH: It had to be repeated every solitary year. These things continually cropped up. The piles always had to be replaced, and the lessee had to pay for that. His firm were only too delighted to give up the lease and let the Government take it over.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Are you anxious to take it up again?

Mr. FORSYTH: No, unless the conditions were altered. The conditions were too drastic altogether as his firm had to pay a rent and also pay for repairs too. He would like to know who was responsible for the repairs at the present time.

The TREASURER: The shire council

Mr. FORSYTH: Who paid for the repairs last year? If the shire council also had to pay for the repairs he had nothing further to say.

The TREASURER: The position with regard to the jetty at Thursday Island was exactly as the hon. gentleman pointed out. At one time, Burns, Philp, and Co. leased the jetty, and they were also responsible for repairs, but the Torres Shire Council were pressing for the jetty to be handed over to them at a reasonable rental. When the lease with Burns, Philp, and Co. expired, that firm showed no inclination to renew it. In fact they wanted to give it up.

Mr. FORSYTH: That is right.

The TREASURER: An arrangement was then made with the council to take it over at an annual rental of £500 a year and the council to be responsible for all repairs. Certain repairs had to be done, and as they wanted to hand over the jetty in a reasonable condition the Government paid for the repairs last year.

Mr. FORSYTH: Will the council have to pay the £555 for repairs last year?

The TREASURER: No. The Government paid that because they wished to hand the jetty over in a reasonable condition. If hon. members opposite looked at the vote they would see that there was a considerable reduction. The Government were desirous of keeping down expenditure these times as much as practicable without injuring the respective ports.

Mr. FORSYTH: I was referring particularly to Brisbane.

The TREASURER: If the hon. member would look at page 15 of the Treasurer's tables he would see a statement of the harbour dues trust account. He would see that the expenditure on the Brisbane harbour was £99,521 and the receipts £61,388. There had been an increase in the overdraft of £38,000 and the debit balance of the fund so far as the Brisbane harbour was concerned was £492,054. The port of Brisbane had now reached a fairly satisfactory degree of development and it was thought that the time had arrived when they could steady down on the expenditure. If the hon. member had been following the annual reports of the Harbours and Rivers Department he would see the policy outlined by the engineer was to deepen the main channel as far as Pinkenba and subsequently to the New Farm wharves, to remove a certain amount of ground in the Gardens area, and make a new cutting at the wharves and carry out other improvements, which were

[8 p.m.] all part of one scheme. That scheme had advanced so far that the engineer had recommended that the steadying down should take place. The engineer pointed out that it was not too profitable to carry improvements too far ahead. They would simply be making provision for vessels with a draught which did not call here at present, and consequently he had recommended ceasing the bringing of the cutting to 26 feet at low water springs at a certain point. Therefore, the large suction dredge "Hercules" had been laid up, and probably would be laid up for some considerable time. That would enable a reduction in the expenditure to take place, and probably continue, so that the overdraft in that respect would not increase.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: How many men will that put out of employment?

The TREASURER: Fortunately, so far as he was able to understand, it had not thrown any out of employment. All of them had received employment suitable to their callings in the vicinity of Brisbane—some from the Government, and others in private employment.

Question put and passed.

STATE FISHERY BUSINESS.

The TREASURER moved—That £34,000 be granted for "State Fishery Business."

Mr. FORSYTH: He felt very dubious about this vote altogether. He was inclined to think that, while the Government might have had good intentions with regard to fish, they would find that they would come out of it like Sydney and Melbourne, with big losses. They had spent a great deal of money, and if there were any reasonable chance at all of making it a success it would be a good thing; but, so far as one could judge, the report from the Auditor-General showed that £66,000 was likely to be spent in connection with the fish supply of Brisbane. The estimate in connection with Brisbane was some £36,000 for the whole of the buildings, plant, machinery, etc., and they found that the Government went £18,000 over their own estimate. How they were going to make a profit on that outlay was a mystery to him. He did not think they would ever make it pay. They had been told by the Government that they wanted to go in for trawlers, and before they finished with trawlers it would cost them £250,000. How was New South Wales doing? Their business was showing an enormous loss. The same thing happened in Western Australia, and it was more likely that the same thing would follow here. The Government started with good intentions to give the people cheap fish, but where were the people who were getting cheap fish? He lived in Toowong, and he could not get it. The only place where you could get it was in town at the fish shops.

Mr. PETERSON: Did we not require a new fish market?

Mr. FORSYTH: What was the good of it when they could not supply the people with fish? Where were the carts that were to go round all the various suburbs of Brisbane for miles outside the city?

The TREASURER: Did you expect us to start business before the market is built? You are a fine business man!

Mr. FORSYTH: They were told that carts would be in all the suburbs, and it looked all right on paper, but, like almost everything else in the way of State enterprise that looked well on paper, when it came to the actual facts it was a failure. He predicted that the fish supply would be a huge failure. He could not see anything else for it, because he could not see how the Government could give them fish any cheaper than the fisherman, more especially when you considered that the Government were spending £60,000 odd as capital. Where was the end going to be? Where was there any sign at the present time that the industry was going to be a success, and going to supply the people with cheap fish? No sign whatever! Look at the returns for three months! The Auditor-General, of course, said that you could not get a profit and loss account for that period, but what was the account going to be at the end of the twelve months?

Mr. Forsyth.]

With that huge amount of money, and the interest that would have to be charged on it, where was their profit going to be? He predicted that when they got the balance-sheet it would show an enormous loss. They knew how every State which had started State enterprises had paid. Where they had a monopoly they had paid, but the large majority of State industries of that description had shown huge losses, both in New South Wales and Western Australia. Look at their sawmills and fishshops. He had sent for their report, and found that up to the end of June thousands upon thousands of pounds had been lost. The same thing would apply here, because they had not shown the slightest sign of any special business capacity. It would only end in the people of Queensland having to pay the piper. They would have the experience, and somebody else would have the money.

Mr. GUNN (*Carnarvon*): He did not mind the people of Brisbane having cheap fish, as cheap as they could get it, but he did not see why the people in the country should have to pay for it. So far as he could see, all the legislation since the present Government had been in power had been for the big centres of population. The producing areas were not considered. They got nothing—nothing at all. If Brisbane wanted to spend £65,000 on fisheries, Brisbane should pay the interest on it, and not saddle the country with a burden.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: What about sending a trawler to the Barwon and getting some Murray cod?

Mr. GUNN: They might be trawling in worse places than that. He noticed in connection with the Government trawlers in New South Wales there was a loss of £30,000, and the people who were living in the country in Queensland did not want to lose any money over the fishing industry. At the present time everything was centralised in Brisbane. Brisbane for everything.

Mr. PETERSON: Would you carry that argument to our railways?

Mr. GUNN: That was a different thing. Brisbane was kept going by the railways. The railways brought the produce from the country to Brisbane. This £65,000 could more profitably be expended in building railways into country districts. They might just as well have a possum-curing establishment in the country as have the fish markets in Brisbane. They had a rabbit-curing establishment in his electorate, but it was not run by the Government. In his electorate nothing was done by the Government; it was all done by private enterprise.

The TREASURER: Who built the railways up there?

Mr. GUNN: The railways were paid for by the whole community, and they were paying extremely well under this wonderful Government.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. PETERSON: What about the guarantee?

Mr. GUNN: It was a mistake to do away with the Guarantee Act. If he had his way he would have kept the guarantee on. If people had those things they should be prepared to pay for them. He would not grumble at having to pay the guarantee on his railway, and if he had a fish market in

his electorate he would be quite willing to pay the interest on it, but he did not see why the country people should have to pay interest on the fish markets in Brisbane.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: He objected to this amount being expended in the capital while they had schools in the country without windows. They had a school in his electorate with windows about a foot square, and they wanted something better so that they could get a little fresh air in. The Minister himself admitted that something should be done.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Some of that money should be spent in the country instead of spending it on fisheries in Brisbane. If it meant that the people of Brisbane would get cheap food, they would not mind so much. In the country some people had to travel forty or fifty miles to get their mails, and, if that amount of money were spent on railways, it would be very much better.

HON. J. TOLMIE: When the present Government came into power the ink was hardly dry on their commissions before they sent South to ascertain what was being done there in regard to the fishing business. It was understood at that time that they were going to revolutionise the fishing industry, and, as had been stated by the hon. member for Murrumba, every elector around Brisbane was going to have fresh fish on his breakfast table. The position now was that the city electors were worse off than they were before, as they not only could not get fresh fish on their breakfast tables, but apparently they could not get fresh fish on their tables at any time. The Government had not made a success of the industry. They had taken over assets in the shape of the old fish market, worth £3,900, and since then they had succeeded in spending £36,000 in building a fish market in Brisbane and storage down at Wynnum, and they wanted another £18,000 before they could say their fish markets were complete. Surely, after an expenditure of £36,000, if they had given any encouragement to the fishermen there ought to be an abundance of fresh fish in the city of Brisbane, even though they might have to go without fresh fish at Goondiwindi and Charleville, and away out at Birdsville, unless the electors succeeded in catching it for themselves. After the expenditure of £36,000 the city of Brisbane should not be deprived of the advantage of fresh fish. He had been reading the newspapers—he had not the slightest doubt that the statements were true to the extent of 90 per cent., at any rate—and he found that there was a general complaint that fresh fish had been unobtainable in Brisbane since the present Government took office and erected markets at a cost of £36,000, with another £18,000 to come. If they looked at the report of the Auditor-General they would see that to send a case of fish from the boats at Wynnum to markets in Brisbane it cost 1s., of which the Secretary for Railways took 2d. The other 10d. was distributed in various ways. To get a case of fish from the boats, at Wynnum, to the railway station it cost 7d. He remembered the figures that were obtained by the hon. member for Toombul some little time ago, much to the consternation of the hon. member for Bulimba, who thought his preserves had been invaded. Those figures showed that the handling which took place at Wynnum, at the present time, was out

[*Mr. Forsyth.*

of all proportion to the handling that took place before the present Government came into power.

The TREASURER: That is so, because before that the fish was handled under insanitary conditions, and was left out in the sun. Now we have cold stores. Perhaps you would rather have stinking fish.

HON. J. TOLMIE: The charge of 7d. per case for putting the fish on the railway station was extortionate, and when the hon. gentleman spoke of stinking fish it suddenly crossed his mind that the hon. gentleman, in answering some questions in relation thereto, indicated that some thousands of cases of fish that were handled in the cold stores by the Government had gone rotten, and had to be disposed of.

The TREASURER: Your Government dumped tons of fish. The fish we dumped was fish that we had been experimenting with.

HON. J. TOLMIE: That was what he wanted to get at; they were experimenting.

The TREASURER: Your Government did not experiment; they simply dumped tons of it.

HON. J. TOLMIE: They had not been told that the Government had been experimenting in that direction, but as soon as they discovered that the Government had malhandled or badly handled the fish, and that it had become rotten and had to be dumped somewhere, they were told that the Government were only experimenting with the fish. Was that not a lovely story to spring on the people who had been watching their experiments all through? Did they think for one moment that the intelligent elector of Queensland was likely to be beguiled with the story they told—that they were experimenting? If they had been doing that experimentation with fish, would they not have had a nice little report presented to that House showing the various kinds of fish they had handled?

The TREASURER: If you pursue that argument I will read you letters from members of the Opposition praising the fish.

HON. J. TOLMIE: Even in face of the possibility of the Treasurer carrying out his threat, he still wanted to point out to the public of Queensland that if the Government had been experimenting, as they said they had been, they would have had nice little pamphlets issued showing what they had done for the fish supply of Queensland. It would have read well, together with "Hansard," No. 37, which they issued the other day, and the Australian Imperial Force leaflet showing what the Queensland Government had done for the returned soldier. But to come along with a little pamphlet showing "How we caused the fish supply to become rotten" was not quite what they wanted, and they would sooner have that little story buried in the sea along with the fish. But all that meant expense to the taxpayer, and expense to the taxpayer outside the city of Brisbane, which was supposed to be benefited. They had the declaration made by residents of the city that the fish supply was not improved; if anything, it was in a worse condition that it was before the Government took a hand in it. He supposed the position they took up was the same as that in regard to the butchers' shops—"if you want the fish you can come and get it."

Mr. FORSYTH: The interest bill comes to £60 per week.

HON. J. TOLMIE: There was about £20 per week for wages, and the interest was £60 per week, on top of the money they were asking for; and they said they were going to make a profit.

The TREASURER: When did we say that? Which vote are you discussing?

HON. J. TOLMIE: Fish.

The TREASURER: Look at the Estimate again.

Mr. FORSYTH: The Estimate shows a loss of £2,000.

The TREASURER: We estimate a loss.

Mr. FORSYTH: Does that include interest?

The TREASURER: That includes interest, yes.

HON. J. TOLMIE: The scheme was not proving of advantage to the public, and at a time such as this it was very necessary they should put those facts before the public, so that they could see what the Government were doing in regard to all those public enterprises. They were spending money that they were not making provision for, other than flying paper kites, and asking somebody to come along and pay for them. It was a very improper attitude to take up, because it was all added to the public debt. It was an unfair proposition to put before the public, and it was misleading the public when they were led to suppose from the Estimates they had there that the Government were paying for those transactions in regard to public enterprises in cash. Instead of that, they were using trust moneys which might or might not be lost. It was an improper use to make of trust money. They were using loan funds and asking posterity to foot the bill. In matters of that kind, where the industry was evanescent and might pass away at any time, it should be financed out of consolidated revenue, so that, if there were any loss, the persons who were immediately benefited by it had to pay the loss if that loss happened to come at the present time. Instead of that they were passing the loss on five, ten, fifteen, or perhaps twenty years, and then another Government had to face the difficulties that had been placed upon their shoulders by the present Government. He did not think that the Government should continue this fish business. It was an industry that had not the appearance of paying; it was an industry that had been tried in the other States and had been a failure; and as had been pointed out by hon. members before in the House, if it were properly carried out it meant a fleet of trawlers, and those were going to be exceedingly expensive to build now or in the future; and the return from the capital invested was not likely to be sufficient to pay the interest that they had to pay to the public creditor.

Mr. MACARTNEY: He noticed that a sum of £19,000 was earmarked for the loan account for this industry, and £35,000 was taken from the same account last year.

The TREASURER: We are not discussing that.

Mr. MACARTNEY: That was a total of £54,000 taken from loan account for two years. He had not the figures of the amount taken the year before. He was only mentioning that as showing the large sum of money which was being spent, and backing up the argument used by the hon. member for Drayton that large sums of money had been diverted from useful and practical work in carrying out the railway policy for the purpose of those sideshows. As a matter of fact,

Mr. Macartney.]

the people in the metropolis had not been getting that service of fish which they had prior to the Government's taking that business up. The distribution had practically ceased. The people living out in the suburban areas were likely to get no fish supplies whatever. Apart from that, they found that the cost of fish was greater, comparatively, than the cost of meat. The hon. gentleman laughed.

The TREASURER: I was laughing at your misrepresentation.

Mr. MACARTNEY: Those things were done for the purpose of vote-catching. The fact remained that they were steadily going back in the metropolis. The conveniences which, up to the present, the public had enjoyed were gradually disappearing. The distributing butcher was disappearing, and the fish hawkers had disappeared altogether. It was not necessary to stress the point. The fact was that in the suburbs—out in South Brisbane, Toowong, and other places—the conveniences regarding the supply of fish were not what they were before.

Mr. FORSYTH: They don't get any at all now.

Mr. MACARTNEY: They did not get any at all; and the time was fast coming when, unless they lived next door to the fish or the meat shop, they could go without, unless they had a Government motor-car and a chauffeur, whose principal occupation was collecting the daily supplies.

Mr. MOORE: There was a great deal of money being spent on this Government fish industry, and he did not quite see what the country people were going to get out of it. Although there were cool stores being built in connection with the fish dépôt, and a good deal of refrigerating machinery was being put in, the stores were very small. The cry at the present time amongst the people in the farming parts was for cool stores. He would like to quote something to show the absolute necessity of cool stores at the present time, when the money was all being frittered away on fish shops which were going to do no good to those outside, but only to a small section in Brisbane. There was a passage in the Agricultural report which said—

“On several occasions relief fortunately has been afforded by the storage of butter in other than appointed places, and naturally in these cases the facilities provided for the examination of the produce are imperfect, and the storage of the product at desirable temperatures is impracticable. The insecurity, too, of the existing position must also be considered, for it is unreasonable to expect that owners of what may be termed private cold-storage chambers will be always free and agreeable to accept the overflow of butter which is tendered spasmodically from factories which ordinarily send their products to other premises for cold storage.

“The producers of the raw products utilised in dairy factories are apprehensive of the danger that is threatening by congestion of dairy foodstuffs within the Commonwealth, and under the existing limitations of cold-storage space, the development of the dairy industry will remain curbed until this risk is removed.

“Early consideration by those concerned should be given to the matter of providing increased cold-storage accommodation, and action should be taken to

[Mr. Macartney.

insure that ample cold-storage space is made available for the storage of dairy products under satisfactory conditions.”

The conditions at the present time were getting acute; the stores were getting full, and there did not seem to be much prospect of shipping becoming available. Yet £60,000 was being frittered away on fish shops in Brisbane. What he wanted was ample cold storage. The report of the Agricultural Department drew the attention of the Government to the advisability of not running any risk of having a deficiency of food. The season had been a good one, and produce was being sent to Brisbane day by day, and yet the country was running a risk for the want of proper storage accommodation for dairy and other products. A large amount of money was being spent on the fish shops which would not be a bit of benefit to anyone except a few persons in Brisbane. It was stated in the report of the Department of Public Works that—

“To facilitate work there are fixed twenty-three reinforced concrete fish-washing troughs; also hot and cold washing tanks for public use. There is also suitable lavatory accommodation, fitted with basins and showers, and a coffee stall furnished with hot-water boiler, counter, and sink.”

The report also said—

“The space under arch over show window will be handsomely treated. The butcher's shop now under construction will be finished in every way similar to the fish shop, and fitted with cold storage.”

All sorts of elaborate pictures were given of this fish shop, which was not going to be a great benefit to Queensland. The Treasurer should take into consideration the needs of the country, instead of going on with fads which were only going to be a benefit to one small section of the people and a probable heavy tax on the taxpayers.

Mr. BARNES (*Warwick*): The expenditure in connection with the fishery business was certainly alarming, and it was about time that members of Parliament made a protest against expenditure which in the long run was not going to show any real income. There was no evidence forthcoming that the venture, or the experiment, as the Treasurer called it, was going to be a payable one.

The TREASURER: I did not term it “an experiment.”

Mr. BARNES: Just now the hon. gentleman by interjection referred to it as an experiment.

The TREASURER: No; I said we were experimenting in the curing of fish.

Mr. BARNES: It was a pure experiment. This was a business that private enterprise had not made any serious attempt to develop, but the Government had been too ambitious in the matter, and had been altogether immoral in their expenditure. It would have been very much better in setting out on a business of this kind to have gone on moderate lines, and to have proceeded step by step, not to have gone the whole hog at once. The total cost of the business was set down at some £60,000, but there was no guarantee that they were going to stop there. This time twelve months hence it would probably be found that a further expenditure was necessary. Looking at the

expenditure and the business generally, he did not think it likely that it would pay interest on the money invested.

The TREASURER: Have you read the Estimates—£34,000 expenditure and £33,000 receipts?

Mr. BARNES: That showed a loss of £1,000, and was a proof that the Government did not anticipate that they would be able to make ends meet. There was depreciation constantly going on.

The TREASURER: That is charged.

Mr. BARNES: And things were not likely to pan out as they were expected to pan out. The Government took the business over practically as a going concern.

The TREASURER: No; we had to put up new buildings.

Mr. BARNES: The Government certainly had to put up a new market. The business the Government took over was a paltry one, but the Government, in carrying out their purpose, had been most extravagant, and had gone to the other extreme. They should simply have undertaken part of a scheme, and then if success had attended their efforts they could have widened the scope of their business. This expenditure was a charge the whole country had to pay, and it would serve almost exclusively a few people in Brisbane who were able to visit the market and buy fish for themselves.

HON. W. D. ARMSTRONG: He would like the Treasurer to give the Committee some information about finding fish to supply the market. The whole success of this huge experiment must be based on a plentiful supply of fish.

The TREASURER: I believe the hon. gentleman was out when I gave that explanation earlier in the evening.

HON. W. D. ARMSTRONG: Oh, did the hon. gentleman? He did not know that the hon. gentleman had given an explanation.

Question put and passed.

STEAMER "ALLINGA" CHARTER ACCOUNT.

The TREASURER moved—That £40,000 be granted for "Steamer 'Allinga' Charter Account."

HON. J. TOLMIE: The Treasurer should give them some information with regard to the steamer "Allinga," which had played a very important part in the work of the Government during the last three months. The "Allinga" was a vessel which the Government had relied upon when the railways failed them; she was the one hope of the Government, and had it not been for the fact that private enterprise stepped in, she might have been used to carry food supplies to the people in the North. He believed that on the Supplementary Estimates they were asked to vote £10,000, which would make £50,000. The Government, he thought, might have bought a steamer outright for less than that sum of money.

The TREASURER: Does the hon. member suggest that the whole of that amount was paid for the charter?

HON. J. TOLMIE: He did not suggest anything, he was only dealing with the figures before him. The modesty shown by the Treasurer in regard to this vote was charming, as he only expected a surplus of £2,000. If the Minister for Lands had been handling the steamer, he would probably have

shown how, in the course of a few months, they would have made something like £200,000, but the prospects in this regard did not seem to be quite as good as they were in connection with the State cattle stations. If the Treasurer was able to give them some indication that the estimated receipts of £42,000 would be realised, they might be more happy in passing the vote, but possibly the hon. gentleman had very grave doubts about it. They should have had some information from the Treasurer with regard to the expenditure of this amount. He did not know whether the Government were anxious to get their Estimates through, but if they were very anxious they should show some inclination to give information. The probability was that they rather enjoyed information having to be dragged out of them piecemeal. He hoped they would get some further information with regard to the expenditure of this £40,000, and the necessity of continuing the services of the "Allinga."

Mr. SWAYNE asked the Treasurer if he was going to charge current rates and freights, the same as other companies were charging, to consignors who sent freight by the "Allinga." He saw by the Auditor-General's report what freights had been charged, and would like to know whether the Government were going to charge the same rates in future. It appeared from the report that the "Allinga" had been carrying general cargo. He supposed that, as the result of suggestions made by the leader of the Opposition and himself (Mr. Swayne) to the Premier, the "Allinga" was put on to the sugar trade for one trip. Was the ordinary rate of trade charged the same as the other boats got, or was it higher or lower?

Question put and passed.

CENTRAL RABBIT BOARD FUND.

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

HON. J. TOLMIE asked for some information with regard to the proposed expenditure of this £10,000. They would like to know if the fences were going to be maintained? If they could not get information now, there would be no reason why the division bell should not ring on every resolution which came up before the House.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: Is this a threat?

HON. J. TOLMIE: They had no dealings with the hon. member. He was dealing with the Treasurer; whether the Treasurer was under the thumb of the hon. member, he did not know.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: Do you know that we made a compact that we would put the Estimates through to-night?

HON. J. TOLMIE: There was no compact that they should go through to-night. He (Mr. Tolmie) was the only one on the Opposition side who could make a compact. If the Estimates were going through to-night, they were going to sit all night. He was not going to have the Government "Whip" making a statement of that kind.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: It is a correct statement, at any rate.

HON. J. TOLMIE: On Thursday last he made a suggestion to the "Whip" on the Government side that, if hon. members would

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close at 6 o'clock on Friday and not sit at all to-day, he would agree to the Estimates going through on Wednesday night. He did that because it was inconvenient for members of the Opposition to sit late on Friday evening. Most of the members of the Opposition were country members and they had to return to their homes, and the running of the trains was such that they could not get back to Brisbane before Tuesday.

The TREASURER: There was a suggestion made on Friday night that the Estimates would close to-night.

Mr. MACARTNEY: No. It was absolutely refused.

HON. J. TOLMIE: The hon. member for Toowong was in charge of the Opposition during his (Mr. Tolmie's) absence on Friday night, and he made no arrangements with regard to concluding the discussion of the Estimates to-night. The Government could put the Estimates through by sitting all night if they liked. The Opposition were prepared to go on; but, if hon. members opposite were wise, they would not try anything so foolish as that. The Treasurer, if he were disposed to get his work through in a reasonable time would give the information asked for. If not, then the Opposition would exhaust the forms of the House to get that information. With regard to the Central Rabbit Board, £10,000 had been spent on the border fence. They knew it was an expensive fence to keep up, and they ought to have some more information about it. They had information that the fences were not maintained as they should be, and that rabbits were allowed to come in from New South Wales.

The TREASURER: The hon. gentleman was indulging in his usual threats. The hon. gentleman could not complain that he had been treated unfairly with regard to information that had been given on the Estimates. He had no wish to burke discussion, but he thought there had been a great amount of idle talk that afternoon, and there was a desire on the part of members opposite to score more or less political points. In regard to the Central Rabbit Board the expenditure last year amounted to £9,754 15s 4d., made up as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Gregory North	3,153	15	10
Maranoa	1,000	0	9
Mitchell	2,194	0	1
Warrego	3,406	18	8

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The farmers on the Downs had to pay a rabbit tax to provide the money for this board. He thought they should be relieved of that tax, and that the destruction of rabbits should be made a national industry—the State bearing the whole cost of destroying the rabbits or keeping them out.

Mr. STEVENS (*Rosewood*): It was an anomaly that the Government, since they came into office, made a commercial industry of the rabbit, and encouraged their increase, while at the same time they spent a lot of money in putting up fences to keep them out. The Government knew perfectly well that since they had made a commercial industry of the rabbits they had encouraged people to breed rabbits and introduce them to the State. They knew that in the Southern States the rabbit industry was placed on a commercial basis and it had been impossible to exterminate them. It had been the ruin of numbers of children who had been

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brought up to follow the rabbit industry. The Government were spending large sums of money in putting up fences, ostensibly to keep the rabbits out, but they were absolutely inconsistent, as they encouraged the breeding of rabbits to make a commercial industry of it.

Question put and passed.

PUBLIC ESTATE IMPROVEMENT FUND.

The TREASURER moved—That £31,691 be granted for "Public Estate Improvement Fund."

Mr. FORSYTH objected to such a large amount being spent on this vote. Last year they spent £10,476, and they [9 p.m.] now proposed to spend another £31,000—increasing the vote by 300 per cent. The thing was ridiculous, and he was dead against money being spent for that purpose.

The TREASURER: We have had to recoup some of the amounts expended by your Government. Some of the accounts were insolvent.

Mr. FORSYTH: The late Government spent a considerable amount of money under this vote, but during the last two or three years the present Government had been spending a great deal more, and the account was in a very bad way. He could have understood £4,000 or £5,000 being spent, but he wanted to know what this £31,000 was to be spent for? If a division were called for, he would vote against the item, because it was only a waste of money. The Minister moved the vote without any information whatever.

The TREASURER: You will find the explanation on page 17 in the annual report of the Department of Public Lands. There were 40 miles of roads on Moonie Improved Estate, in the Dalby district; 27 miles of roads on the Waroonga Estate, in the Roma district; and 25 miles of additional roads, together with the adjustment of river crossings, on the Don River and Dundee Estates, Dawson Valley line.

Mr. FORSYTH: Although they might get back the money spent on some estates, in other cases they would not get back anything like the amount that has been spent. This was not the time to spend money on such a purpose, when the Treasurer was short of money, and was likely to be shorter still.

The TREASURER: Don't you want any roads for the settlers?

Mr. FORSYTH: He would cut the whole vote out.

The TREASURER: And let the settlers struggle along without roads.

HON. J. TOLMIE: This does not benefit the settlers.

The TREASURER: It does benefit the settlers.

Mr. FORSYTH: The account never had been satisfactory, but the position was gradually getting worse. The present Government had wasted too much money in that direction.

The TREASURER: We have written off £40,000 since we came into office of the money expended by your Government.

Mr. FORSYTH: And you will have to write off another £40,000.

HON. J. TOLMIE: The Treasurer said the Government had written off £40,000 in connection with that vote; but, when they came into office, they inherited a surplus of

£240,000. That had been manipulated lest it should appear to the country that the late Government had left the present Government so much money, and one of the ways in which they manipulated it was to write off £40,000 in connection with the public estate improvement fund. If the money had not been spent in that direction, it would have had to go in the reduction of public debt. The hon. member for Murrumba was quite right when he said that at the present time the Government were not called upon to spend £31,000 in connection with the public estate improvement fund. He did not think the Treasurer understood the purpose for which the money was voted. Naturally one would expect his colleague, the Secretary for Public Lands, in whose department the vote was, to come to his assistance and show him how the money was being expended. It was for the purpose of building roads and bridges in connection with estates that were being opened up for settlement. In times past there was a necessity for the expenditure of money in that way, because estates were being opened up and settlement was taking place. But the unfortunate position to-day was that there were no estates being opened up for closer settlement.

The TREASURER: Nonsense! Look at the report of the Lands Department.

HON. J. TOLMIE: He had read the report of the Lands Department, and it did not bear out the contention of the hon. gentleman. According to that report, the amount of land settlement going on at the present time was very small indeed. For the first ten months of this year there had been only 808 selections taken up as compared with 1,846 in the year that the Government came into power—that was over 1,000 less in the same ten months—and as compared with 2,390 in the year previous to the Government taking office—or nearly 1,600 less for the same ten months. For every three selections taken up in the year preceding the Government coming into power there was only one selection being taken up now. When the hon. gentleman talked about land settlement under those conditions it was not settlement of which he had any reason to be proud. He failed to see how £31,000 was necessary in connection with the vote for the purposes of land settlement under such circumstances as those. All the selections that were now being taken up did not require to have roads constructed through the areas, or bridges built, or anything of that kind. It was only when a new area was opened up that that was done, in order to give settlers access to markets.

The TREASURER: Isn't that a good purpose?

HON. J. TOLMIE: It was a good purpose.

The TREASURER: The hon. member for Murrumba would wipe out the vote altogether.

HON. J. TOLMIE: The hon. member for Murrumba would wipe it out for the good reason that practically no settlement was taking place.

The TREASURER: On your own showing that is not so.

HON. J. TOLMIE: He was showing that land settlement was only taking place in a desultory fashion. Suppose that an estate was cut up into, say, 100 farms, or 200 farms, as the case might be.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: Ready-made farms?

HON. J. TOLMIE: Ready-made, inasmuch as they were properly surveyed. He had not known the hon. member to make any attempt to take up a ready-made farm or any other kind of farm to assist in the development of the State. On the contrary, he derided settlement and settlers. He failed to see why he took up that attitude, but it was consistent with that of many other members on the other side of the Chamber. This money was voted for the purpose of preparing roads and building bridges in new territory, because the amount of the tax payable to the local authorities was nil under those conditions, and when a local authority had thrown upon its hands a new territory to be opened up by roads and bridges they had to fall back on the other selectors or the townspeople to provide the revenue—either that or allow the settlers to go without, and the usual practice had been to allow them to go without. The circumstances under which they had to struggle were difficult in any case, but when they were treated in that indifferent manner that they had not roads to take them to market, or that they could not cross streams that were not fordable, their difficulties were merely enhanced. The estate was loaded with the amount of money expended upon it. If it was £20,000 and there were 200 farms, then the value of those farms was increased by £100 each, and that value came back in the course of twenty years to the Treasury and recouped the fund from which it had been taken. That was why—as had already been pointed out by the hon. member for Murrumba—it took a long time before the money came back—probably in some cases it would not come back at all. This was money that ought only to be utilised where a new district was being opened up. They had no evidence that any such new district was being opened, nor had they any evidence of where the money was to be expended. That information ought to be forthcoming, because if they had £30,000 this year, £30,000 next year, and so on for a number of years, the amount became a very considerable sum, and there was great difficulty in getting it back. As was pointed out by the Treasurer, £40,000 had been taken from the consolidated revenue in order to make the fund solvent, because money had been expended by previous Governments in a way that was not remunerative. He knew that when the Labour Government were in power they had an idea that it was so easy to clear prickly-pear that they sent up gangs from Brisbane to the Darling Downs and paid as much as £13 per acre. But within eighteen months that land was alive with young pear growing; and, as no means were taken by the Government to keep it down, in the course of two or three years it was as dense—in many cases more dense—than it was before. That money was all wasted. And it was because of the failures made by the Labour Government at that time that money had to be taken from the consolidated revenue. Fortunately for the trust funds, the late Government left a surplus of £240,000. That was why the Treasurer was able to take £40,000 out of that surplus for the purpose of making the public estate improvement fund solvent. The Government did not do it because of their own exertions. But money would have to be found over and above that £40,000, and if that were so—at such a time as the present, when money was difficult to get—they ought not to go unnecessarily to the trust funds and ask for the

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expenditure of £30,000, more particularly when they had no evidence before them that the Government had any idea of being able to open up new estates. How could they load an estate at the present time under the land tenure they provided? They had to appraise land at a price that would make it attractive to the selector, and if they put £30,000 on top of the rents, what chance had they of getting people to take it up, or of getting it back? If the selection was thrown up the money was all gone. It was just sheer recklessness in administration to do a thing of that kind. There was no binding a selector to the soil under the present tenure, and under those circumstances wherein came the wisdom of throwing £30,000 on to a section of country from which there seemed to be no possibility of return? He thought the Government were very unwise to put down such a sum as that, and, above all, to take it from the trust funds. Under the old conditions, where the amount was being paid to the Government, they got something from the land, as well as the return on the money expended. There was something coming into the Treasury, even though a selector might make default. Under the present circumstances, if a selector made default—and there was no reason why he should not—the Government had nothing to fall back upon. As he had said before, he considered it absolutely unwise, with the finances of the country in the position in which they were. Was it not really foolish on their part, under the present circumstances, to sanction the expenditure of a sum of money such as the vote before them?

Mr. SWAYNE: He noticed from the Auditor-General's report that there was a debit of £65,000 against the public estate improvement fund, and unless there was a change in the policy of the Lands Department, £17,000 of that was likely to be a permanent loss. Some years ago £17,000 was spent in making a road up the tableland at the back of the Mackay district, and that land had not been settled, nor was it likely to be settled, unless there were some alteration in the policy of the Lands Department. It was on the point of being settled when the present Government came into office and changed the form of tenure. In addition to that, all the frontage blocks had been reserved by the Forestry Department, as the area was supposed to contain a quantity of cedar, and the only blocks that were left out of which they could obtain that £17,000 were those right away from the front. He would like to know whether any of the £31,691 was required for repairing that road, which was carried away some little time ago? There had been some negotiations between the local authority and the Lands Department as to who should pay the cost of repairing the road. The local authority contended that, as they could get no revenue from the Forestry Department, and no rates as the land was not settled, they could hardly be expected to pay for the repairing of the road. Speaking from memory, the repairs cost about £600, and while some arrangement had been mooted as to the share to be borne by the local authority and the amount to be paid out of the fund, he understood that no definite arrangement had been made. He would like some information on the point.

Question put and passed.

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STATE STATIONS FUND.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE moved—That £103,833 be granted for "State Stations Fund."

HON. J. TOLMIE: The Committee had got no information as to what this fund was for, and it was very desirable that they should get some information. He noticed that, as a result of that expenditure, it was estimated that the Government were going to raise £300,000. The Government might be able to do that, but surely the Minister in charge of the Estimates ought to be able to give some information as to how that result was to be brought about. A tremendous amount of money had been expended in connection with the business, and a good deal of that money had been taken from trust funds. Not all of it, because he would not be surprised to find that a certain amount was to be provided out of loan fund for purchases of that sort. The Government should only utilise trust funds in connection with what was recognised as gilt-edged securities. Was a cattle station a gilt-edged security?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: At the present time it is better than gilt-edged.

HON. J. TOLMIE: That was where the Government were gambling. If the hon. gentleman were wise he would not talk in that way, because it only made the public keenly alive to what the situation was when they found that the money they were putting into the Savings Bank and other trust funds was being utilised for purchases of that nature. The hon. gentleman said that at the present time it was a gilt-edged security, but in 1904, when the number of cattle went down from 7,000,000 to 2,500,000, and when the number of sheep went down from 21,000,000 to 7,000,000, it was not a gilt-edged security. It was not a gilt-edged security four years ago, when there was a drought on and cattle were dying wholesale. It was not a gilt-edged security when the whole of the Darling Downs was practically denuded of dairy cattle because of the drought that was on; and, because it was a good season now, it did not follow that within the next two years they might not be subjected to a drought again.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: We are only dealing with one year.

HON. J. TOLMIE: In dealing with one year the Government were gambling with £100,000, and that £100,000 was not to be recouped in one year. It was there, he supposed, as a permanent investment, and what the Government expected to get back from it was interest on the money it expended. If they were going to purchase cattle with that money, and if they carried on the business from year to year, they could only make the reasonable profit that was made from a pastoral property; and, if there was going to be a loss—and there might be a loss—then the country was going to suffer. It was absolutely unwise that the present Government, or any other Government, should continue in that enterprise, or any other enterprise, that might tumble to pieces in the course of a few weeks or a few months. The Opposition had resisted that vote and all similar votes, not because they wanted to harass the Government, but because they wanted the people's money that was handed to the Government in trust to be maintained in such a way that the people could get it back again. There was no

evidence that that money was going to come back if it was put into wild-cat schemes, such as the purchase of cattle, when the price of cattle was as high as cattle were likely to go, and when the owners jumped them up £1 to £2 a head every time they were asked to sell cattle to the Government.

At half-past 9 o'clock p.m.,

Mr. O'SULLIVAN relieved the Chairman in the chair.

HON. J. TOLMIE: Then the Government came along seeking to expend another £100,000 out of trust funds. He did not think that was honest business. He did not propose continuing his remarks in regard to that particular matter beyond saying that the extra vote for salaries must mean that there was going to be a considerable expenditure in the purchase of other stations if that was to be carried out. He had already pointed out the unwisdom of the Government further engaging in enterprises of that kind. They had spent nearly £1,000,000 in that direction, and surely that ought to be sufficient for the present! If, at the expiration of six or seven years, they found that the experiments had been a success, they might be justified in launching out.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Why make these doleful prophecies?

HON. J. TOLMIE: Because the disasters following that enterprise were written broadcast over the land. He had seen the time when, from Roma to Cunnamulla, they could track an ant; and they could do the same from Roma right on to Winton and back again to Townsville. The country, in a few months' time, was nothing but a sea of white bones of stock that had been destroyed. That had occurred more than once. Was it doleful to take the right view of the case, and to point out what the danger was? The Government seemed to be rushing headlong into danger. It was the duty of the Opposition to try to bring them to some view of reason, so that they would not further engage in enterprises of this kind. He would not object so much if they did it with money from the consolidated revenue. But it was not money from the consolidated revenue. It was trust funds that they had no right to use in such directions, because there could be no permanency about the industry. They had heard before of all that remained of a station being carried in a sugar-bag.

The PREMIER: No permanency in the industry, you say?

HON. J. TOLMIE: No permanency in a particular phase of it.

The PREMIER: What phase is that? I think you are stonewalling.

HON. J. TOLMIE: He was not stonewalling. To utilise the time at his disposal was not stonewalling. They had allowed a few votes to go through without any discussion at all. It might be stonewalling if they were to move amendment after amendment upon the vote. They were making steady progress with the Estimates. They had another five days at their disposal, according to the Standing Orders.

The PREMIER: What is the cause of the bother?

HON. J. TOLMIE: There was no bother. If the Government were reasonable, there was no question but the Estimates would be finished to-morrow night. He did not know why the Premier dragged him from the

discussion of the Estimates on to that question. He was just about to close by saying that it was unwise to expend trust money in enterprises of that kind.

Mr. GUNN: That was a very important vote. Nearly a million of money had gone altogether in State stations. This was the only time that they had a chance of criticising their purchase, and if he took up a few minutes, he thought it was necessary in the interests of the people. Did they not think it was rather a dangerous practice to go in for that wholesale speculation—buying State stations at the top of the market, when the market was so dear? Everybody acknowledged that cattle were dearer now than they ever had been in Australia. His experience was, if they wanted to make pastoral pursuits pay, they should buy on a low market and sell on a dear market; not buy on a dear market.

The PREMIER: Are you buying or selling just at present?

Mr. GUNN: He would be very glad to sell to the Government—and take their debentures, too. Nearly every other pastoralist would be only too glad to get out of the industry by selling to the State Government.

The PREMIER: How many cattle have you got for sale?

Mr. GUNN: He did not know that that had anything to do with the question.

The PREMIER: I want to consider your offer, that is all.

Mr. GUNN: He was prepared to submit his offer to the manager of the State stations to-morrow.

The PREMIER: I am glad to hear you appreciate our debentures.

Mr. GUNN: Buying State stations with debentures was all very well. They were going to spend a lot of money in debentures in buying State stations. They proposed to buy the Chillagoe mine—costing half a million—with debentures.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

Mr. GUNN: They must remember that those debentures were free from income tax. And who was going to pay the tax, if everybody owned debentures which were free from income tax? The selectors who happened to own a bit of land they could call their own would have to pay all the income tax in Queensland. The Government did not pay income tax, and the people from whom they bought the stations and got debentures were freed from income tax. With reference to State stations as a speculation, everybody knew that we had periodical droughts. His experience was a lifelong one in the industry; and, on an average, they had a drought about every ten years; and when the next drought came along the Government would have a lot of leeway to make up. There was not such a wonderful thing in cattle-raising as the Government imagined; more particularly if the war should end and the price of cattle go down. There were plenty of people who thought the present prices would never go down; but they could never tell. There were a great number of cattle-producing countries besides Australia; and they must remember that when the war was over and the people came back to their homes, they would not eat so much meat as was being eaten by the soldiers in the

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trenches. It was the experience of all wars—the consumption of meat was far less in time of peace than it was in time of war. He thought the Government had gone far enough in gambling in State stations; and he would advise them to be careful before they bought any more. Of course, they bought at a time when stations had just begun to rise. They were very lucky. Anybody could make money as the Government did—in buying before the rise. If cattle stations had gone down, the Government would have lost a lot of money. If the Government had wanted to pioneer the cattle industry, why did they not, instead of buying out somebody else's cattle station, start one of their own? They must remember that the cows did not have any more calves for the Government than they did for the private individual; they did not produce more meat simply because they were owned by the Government. We had millions of acres of unoccupied land in Queensland. Why did not the Government take up some of that unoccupied land and establish cattle stations on it, and do a little pioneering work instead of leaving it to the Kidmans and Jowetts and others? On the face of it, it looked as if the Government had made a good purchase in buying these stations, but if a dry season came along they would be very sorry that they owned so many cattle stations.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: This was exactly what he would call a trust or combine by the State. The Government had conducted their business in the same way as any other trust or combine. They had appropriated something like three-quarters of a million pounds for station properties. Some of the cattle from some of those properties used to come to the Brisbane markets before the stations were purchased by the Government. When the Government bought the stations they prevented any of those cattle coming to the Brisbane market. Like other trusts or combines, they starved the Brisbane market until the prices went up, and did not bring a single beast into the market, but when the price of cattle was higher in Brisbane than it was in Sydney, they brought their cattle into the Brisbane market. When the last Government were in power, there was a great deal of talk by members opposite about bringing in a Bill to prevent trusts and combines. He himself advised that if trusts and combines existed, a Bill should be brought in to deal with them.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I must ask the hon. member to confine himself to the vote before the Committee.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The Government were acting like a trust or combine in this matter. Did they not sell the cattle off those stations to Sydney buyers at about 7d. per lb. and compel Queensland cattle-owners to supply them with meat at 3d. or 3½d. per lb? If that was not the work of a trust or combine, he really did not know what was. If the Government bought those station properties for the purpose of making money, they were right, of course, in keeping their cattle off the Brisbane market until prices were higher and then selling them in the Brisbane market. He had heard the Minister for Agriculture slating every kind of dealer for inflating markets and starving markets in order to raise prices. Yet that was exactly what the Government had done

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with regard to cattle. The stations purchased by them might be a very good bargain. He believed they were. He believed that even Wando Vale was an excellent grazing property, but there was a nasty taste left in the mouths of many people after that inquiry into the Wando Vale business, and the other side did not come too well out of it.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is not in order in discussing that matter, which has been decided by a Royal Commission.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: He was discussing State stations. He would like to know if any of this £103,000 was for the purpose of paying the expenses of that Royal Commission?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: No.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Then members were at liberty to say that the commission was outside this vote, and he would leave the subject for the present, with the remark that while the Government secured no conviction and had to pay the costs, it did not cost their man a "bob." This money spent on State stations might be very well spent, but there might come a time when the assets of the stations could be carried in a bag. They had all seen times when stations were absolutely valueless.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You have said that before. Why repeat it?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: They had to discuss these things over and over again, as the hon. gentleman might forget it. He had a short memory himself sometimes, and he thought the hon. gentleman might suffer in the same way.

Question put and passed

WARREGO RABBIT DISTRICT FUND.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE moved—That £4,300 be granted for "Warrego Rabbit District Fund."

HON. J. TOLMIE said that he was not going to discuss this matter in the absence of the Treasurer. When dealing with the Central Rabbit Board fund the Treasurer had given some information which he thought would be acceptable to hon. members, and he was not going to ask the Minister to give it a second time.

Question put and passed.

THE DISEASES IN STOCK AND THE BRANDS ACTS.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE moved—That £30,583 be granted for "The Diseases in Stock and the Brands Acts."

Mr. GUNN said that the system with reference to granting permits required some alteration. In the country districts it was awkward to find a stock inspector, or an acting stock inspector, to grant permits. A man might be riding along and might be overtaken by a storm, or for some other reason he might want to put his horse on the train, but the instructions given to the railway officers were not to take a horse without a permit, and he had to write to an inspector for a permit and wait till it came along. He had known this to take place between Goondiwindi and Thallon. The department had appointed his son as an inspector at Tallwood, and he could give certificates, but he might sometimes be away from home. Time after time people had been stuck up at Tallwood Station. The difficulty could be got over by anyone who wanted

to truck a horse making a declaration before a stationmaster, justice of the peace, school teacher, or some responsible person, and do away with the necessity of a permit.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It is impossible to get on without them.

Mr. GUNN: The department were in favour of abolishing them in many instances. He knew the idea of the permit was to prevent cattle-stealing and the spreading of disease, but it was very irksome to have to get a permit before you could get a horse away on the train.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Are there any policemen at those stations?

Mr. GUNN: No. Not only on the railway lines, but if they wanted to shift their horses on the road anywhere they had to get a permit. The Minister would find that the department were in accord with what he (Mr. Gunn) had said, and that the permits were in many cases valueless.

Mr. BAYLEY (*Pittsworth*) pointed out that what the hon. member for Carnarvon said in regard to stock permits was quite correct. On several occasions he had reason to see the officials of the department, and they had dealt with matters very fairly. In some localities a good

[10 p.m.] deal of trouble had been caused in connection with the issue of

permits, and it could be obviated by adopting the suggestion of the hon. member for Carnarvon. With regard to the Brands Department, it was admitted by the officials and others that the present Brands Act was not at all satisfactory. He knew there was no time to amend the Act this session, but, when the present Opposition got into power next session, they would amend the Brands Act in quite a number of ways.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: We amended it only two years ago.

Mr. BAYLEY: If the hon. gentleman was in office next year, he hoped he would see that an amending Act was introduced. One or two improvements could be made with very little trouble. It was well known that when people bought stock at the yards, it was very often difficult to locate the brands. He knew a man who bought 200 head recently, and he had to have a crush examination and practically clip both sides of the beast to see the brands. A large number of owners were waiting to do the same, and they were kept about the yards for a day and a-half. That was a hardship that was not at all necessary. In the same way, when men went out to inspect cattle running in the rough bush country they were not able to get good yard or crush examination, and when the cattle had their winter coats on it was an absolute impossibility to tell what brands were on the cattle unless they went to a tremendous amount of trouble. One way in which they could minimise the trouble by at least 50 per cent. would be by putting the brand on one side only, preferably on the near side.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The order of branding was discussed in this House, and the brand was placed where the majority decided it should be.

Mr. BAYLEY: It had been found that that system could be improved upon largely. Even if there were three or four brands, if they were placed in the correct order, there would be no trouble whatever. He hoped that an amending Bill would be introduced as soon as possible.

HON. J. TOLMIE noticed that the vote showed an increase of 25 per cent.—that there were fifty-three compared with sixty inspectors. There was a veterinary inspector at £360, and two acting inspectors at £360. There were also a number of inspectors at various amounts.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The inspectors had been increased on account of the work in grappling with the ticks.

HON. J. TOLMIE: He noticed there were two inspectors at £10 each.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They are police officers in remote places.

HON. J. TOLMIE: He noticed that a laboratory assistant, who had been getting £125, was not provided for this year.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He has gone to the front.

HON. J. TOLMIE: There was other information which the Minister could have given, without letting hon. members drag it out of him. Travelling expenses, etc., had gone up from £6,900 to £9,000, and wages, apparatus, chemicals, experimental animals, and incidentals at Yeerongpilly from £1,800 to £3,000. One would have expected that in such times as these there would have been some economy exercised.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Chemicals cost about three times what they used to cost, and wages have also gone up considerably.

HON. J. TOLMIE: Yeerongpilly Experimental Station was being run at a big loss.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: This vote does not deal with Yeerongpilly alone.

HON. J. TOLMIE: He noticed that the vote for the experimental station at Townsville was decreased by £100. The rigid hand of economy was being manifested there. There was a marked contrast between the expenditure there and the expenditure in the metropolis. Until they were able to effect a reconciliation between the forces operating in the country and the forces operating in the cities, they could not expect the State to progress. Why should there be such a distinction between the people in the towns and the people in the country?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You know very well that the work in Townsville is only about one-third of the work done at Yeerongpilly. They are doing very good work at Townsville all the same.

HON. J. TOLMIE: The whole increase in the vote should not be at Yeerongpilly.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The more vigorous manner in which the department was dealing with ticks and the sporadic outbreaks of diseases in various parts of the State were largely responsible for the considerable increase in the vote this year. There were additional inspectors appointed this year, all of whom had to travel, the number of employes having increased from sixty-seven to seventy-seven; the pay had to be increased on account of the increased cost of living; and, owing to the rise in hotel tariffs, additional travelling allowances had to be granted. Then, the cost of chemicals had greatly increased. He was sorry the hon. gentleman thought that Townsville suffered by comparison with Brisbane, but in course of time the experimental station at Townsville would grow. It was doing

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very useful work now, and Northern stock-owners appreciated its services very much, but there were not nearly as many imported stock to be dealt with at Townsville as there were at Brisbane. The Yeerongpilly station was, therefore, of considerably more importance, but he had no doubt that in the course of time Townsville would satisfy the aspirations of the hon. gentleman.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Miran*): Were the veterinary inspectors professional men?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They were really veterinary surgeons.

Mr. SWAYNE: What was their remuneration?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: £360 and travelling allowances.

Mr. SWAYNE: Did they receive any additional remuneration for attending shows and inspecting stallions?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: No.

Mr. SWAYNE: Had they right of private practice?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: No.

Mr. SWAYNE: Then their remuneration was very low for professional men holding such responsible positions. He noticed that, while there was a big increase in the vote for the chemical laboratory, in the laboratory vote for the same purpose on the Estimates-in-Chief the vote remained the same.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is because we could not get the chemicals we wanted.

Question put and passed.

LIVE STOCK AND MEAT EXPORT ACT.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE moved—That £570 be granted for "Live Stock and Meat Export Act."

Question put and passed.

REGULATION OF SUGAR CANE PRICES ACT.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE moved—That £9,250 be granted for "Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act."

Question put and passed.

SUGAR EXPERIMENT STATIONS ACT.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE moved—That £14,395 be granted for "Sugar Experiment Stations Act."

Mr. SWAYNE: The vote concerned what they might call the basic work in connection with their largest agricultural industry. As had been pointed out, the industry represented this year an output value of £7,000,000. It was an old saying amongst the old sugar hands that sugar was made in the field, and that branch of the Agricultural Department was particularly concerned with bringing about improved methods in the field, and there was no getting away from the fact that there was considerable room for improvement in that respect. The officials were most painstaking. He did not suppose that they could get a better man than Mr. Easterby, but, as he had hinted on a previous vote, there was a certain amount of parsimony in their payment of professional men. For instance, there was Mr. McCready, who had left the department. He was in charge of the station at Mackay.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is so, but we have got as good a man in his place—a highly-qualified man.

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Mr. SWAYNE: He did not know that. It seemed to him that Mr. McCready's salary of £19 a month was too small, and if his successor were as well qualified as he was, he was afraid that the same thing would happen in connection with him. The farmers had a great deal of confidence in Mr. McCready, who had left because he was offered the management of a sugar-mill. He knew that the Minister had to keep a tight hold on the purse strings, but at the same time it was not good policy to lose highly-skilled professional men.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: His salary was £250 a year, with a house to live in.

Mr. SWAYNE: Even that was not a very great sum. The department carried out research in connection with manures, methods of cultivation, and new varieties of cane. As showing the possibilities in that direction, it was only needful to mention their great rival, the beet sugar industry. In the early fifties it was almost unknown in Europe, and yet in about forty years it had almost entirely supplanted cane, through scientific research and legislative action. France gave a bounty upon the production of cane, and Germany upon the production of sugar, so that one took away all encouragement to improve the quality of the raw material. Germany held out every inducement to advancing in that respect, and they found that in a few years they had outstripped France. Coming back to the way in which science had assisted, he found that in 1871 the percentage of sugar to raw material was only 8.28, in 1908 it had risen to 14.37, and in the year before the war it had further increased to 17. That was the artificial improvement brought about in the industry.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Scientific rather than artificial.

Mr. SWAYNE: Well, then, scientific. It was brought about entirely by human agency. Their material—beetroot—in the first place was not of a promising character, but cane, although naturally richer, did not lend itself to improvement so much as beet, which could be propagated by seed, so that there was a better opportunity for cross fertilisation and other methods by which botanists improved the quality of plants. During the eighties, however, it was discovered that a certain amount of work could be done with sugarcane in a similar way, and it was found in the West Indies that cane also could be propagated from seed, and since then they had had a lot of quite new varieties of cane brought into the field. So far as the Agricultural Department was concerned, he did not think they had touched those methods. They had got their seedling cane from the Mauritius and Hawaii and other older cane sugar producing countries of the world. In Queensland the Acclimatisation Society did very good work in their time, and some of the mills also assisted. He thought that the Mossman Mill and the Colonial Sugar Refining Company did something in that respect. The trouble had been that the department had not had an experiment station in a suitable climate. The work ought to be done in a tropical climate, and so far they had not had a station situated there. He noticed, however, that one was to be established on the Johnstone.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That will complete the chain—one at a dry area.

in Bundaberg, medium at Mackay, and very wet at the Johnstone.

At twenty-five minutes past 10 o'clock p.m., The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Mr. SWAYNE: The experiments which the stations were carrying out were very complete, and most instructive so far as they went. He did not think that they went as far as they might so far as the commercial aspect of the improvement through manuring was concerned. They gave the increased tonnage and the increased value, but they did not always give the cost of the work by which it was obtained. In future that might be done, and in every case the increased cost of manuring should be shown, so that it could be seen whether they were getting value for the work done. Unfortunately, industrial troubles again cropped up there, and he found that in the Burdekin alone there had been a shortage of 100,000 tons of cane owing to the strike this year. He mentioned that to emphasise the point he had made several times during the session, that one of the greatest difficulties that the farmer had to contend with at the present time were strikes.

Question put and passed.

STATE COALMINE.

The TREASURER moved—That £7,740 be granted for "State Coalmine."

Question put and passed.

STATE BATTERY.

The TREASURER moved—That £2,700 be granted for "State Battery."

Question put and passed.

RAILWAY REFRESHMENT ROOMS.

The TREASURER moved—That £82,630 be granted for "Railway Refreshment Rooms."

Question put and passed.

LOAN FUND ACCOUNT.

SOLDIERS' SETTLEMENT.

The TREASURER moved—That £200,000 be granted for "Soldiers' Settlement."

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported progress, and the Committee obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

PHARMACY BILL.

RETURNED FROM COUNCIL.

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

PUBLIC WORKS LAND RESUMPTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

COUNCIL'S MESSAGE, No. 1.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Council returning this Bill with an amendment.

The consideration in Committee of the Council's message was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

The House adjourned at twenty minutes to 11 o'clock p.m.