

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**THURSDAY, 27 JUNE 1918**

---

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

THURSDAY, 27 JUNE, 1918.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. W. Bertram, *Maree*) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

QUESTIONS.

EMPLOYEES IN RAILWAY SERVICE.

Mr. BRENNAN (*Toowoomba*) asked the Minister acting for the Secretary for Railways—

“1. The number of employees of the Commissioner for Railways at present with a period of service extending over six months who have not obtained a certificate of fitness from the head of the branch?”

“2. The number of such employees having obtained a certificate of fitness who have not been put on the permanent staff of the Commissioner for Railways?”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. J. H. Coyne, *Warrego*) replied—

“1. 770.

“2. 741.”

SOLDIERS' VOTES.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*) asked the Assistant Minister for Justice—

“1. The total cost of the cable system of securing soldiers' votes at the late State election?”

“2. The total number of votes counted?”

HON. W. N. GILLIES (*Eacham*) replied—

“1. This information is not yet available.

“2. I would refer the hon. gentleman to the return laid on the table of this House on 11th instant.”

GRIEVANCES OF RAILWAY EMPLOYEES.

Mr. RIORDAN (*Burke*) asked the Minister acting for the Secretary for Railways—

“1. Has his attention been drawn to the issue of the ‘Cairns Times’ of Saturday, 16th June, which contains a report of a deputation of railway employees to the Commissioner for Railways, stating that the Commissioner insulted these men and refused to listen to grievances which were properly placed before him?”

“2. Will he inquire whether this report is accurate?”

“3. If it is a faithful account of the proceedings, will he take steps to ensure that a reasonable and just man is appointed to the Commissionership of Railways when Mr. Evans's term expires, so as to ensure a more contented and loyal service?”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS replied—

“1. No.

“2. Yes.

“3. Mr. Evans denies that he insulted the men in any shape or form, and that the statement that he refused to listen to grievances which were placed before him is absolutely untrue.”

RESULTS OF PROHIBITION IN ONTARIO.

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

“Has he seen a copy of the Premier of Ontario’s cable in reply to inquiry of the Mayor of Geelong, Victoria, wherein it is pointed out that prohibition has resulted in a reduction of crime, improved moral conditions, and other beneficial results to the workers and the country?”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (Hon. H. F. Hardacre, *Leichhardt*), on behalf of the Home Secretary, replied—

“No.”

LIQUOR ACT AMENDMENT.

Mr. ROBERTS asked the Acting Premier—

“1. Is he aware that it is generally understood that the platform of the Queensland Labour party has been amended so as to provide for a Liquor Act Amending Bill, appointing triennial State local option polls which will decide all liquor questions, including total prohibition?”

“2. Is it the intention of the Government to give effect to this plank by introducing a Bill during the present session of Parliament?”

The ACTING PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*) replied—

“1 and 2. In my opinion it is advisable that questions purporting to refer to facts should be confined to matters the information concerning which is in a public department. As for Ministerial intentions, they will always be disclosed to the House precisely at the proper time.”

BREACHES OF SUGAR AWARDS.

Mr. PETRIE (*Toombul*) asked the Acting Premier—

“Will he lay on the table of the House all correspondence that has passed between any of the Government departments and Mr. A. P. Hartley, solicitor, at Mackay, relative to the institution of proceedings by him on behalf of any canegrower or canegrowers, against any millowners for breaches of awards made by local boards, or the Central Board, under the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act of 1915?”

The ACTING PREMIER replied—

“The correspondence referred to includes confidential and privileged communications relating to legal proceedings not yet completed, and the disclosure of such correspondence cannot be made at this stage.”

EXPENSES OF FARLEIGH MILL APPEAL.

Mr. PETRIE asked the Acting Premier—

“Will he state—

“1. Whether the expenses incurred in connection with the recent appeal against the magistrate’s decision in the Farleigh Mill case were borne by the State or the sugar-cane prices fund?”

“2. Who were the counsel employed for the respondent, and what was the amount of the fees paid to each of the counsel so engaged?”

“3. What was the amount of the taxed costs awarded under order of the Full Court against the respondent?”

The ACTING PREMIER replied—

“1. The expenses will be charged against the sugar-cane prices fund.

“2. The Attorney-General and Mr. H. D. Macrossan. No fees have yet been fixed.

“3. The costs have not yet been taxed. I may add that the High Court has granted special leave to appeal against the judgment of the Full Court.”

DEPUTATION OF SMALL SHAREHOLDERS IN BRISBANE TRAMWAYS COMPANY.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE (*Oxley*) asked the Home Secretary—

“1. Did he, as was stated in the ‘Brisbane Telegraph’ of 20th June last, refuse to receive a deputation from a number of small shareholders in the Brisbane Tramways Company, Limited, who wished to place their views regarding the proposed Tramways Bills before him?”

“2. Is it to be inferred from this that he has no regard for the interest of the less important shareholders in public companies?”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION, on behalf of the Home Secretary, replied—

“1. No.

“2. No.”

SALES OF STATE STATIONS CATTLE OTHER THAN “FATS.”

Mr. GUNN (*Carnarvon*) asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

“Will he state—

“1. The number of cattle, exclusive of ‘fats,’ sold through the Enoggera Saleyards on behalf of the State Stations Department between 30th August, 1917, and 1st June, 1918?”

“2. The average price per head paid for such cattle during the above period?”

“3. The greatest number of State cattle sold at Enoggera on any one day during the period?”

“4. The quantity of stock, sheep, and cattle purchased by the Government, directly and indirectly, at the Enoggera sales during the twelve months ended 1st June, 1918?”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS replied—

“1. Nil.

“2. See answer to No. 1.

“3. Eighty-eight.

“4. I would refer the hon. member to the Chief Secretary, to whose department the matter belongs.”

VIEWS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES’ ASSOCIATION REGARDING STAMP DUTY.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*) asked the Assistant Minister for Justice—

“1. On page 223 of current ‘Hansard,’ dealing with the question of stamp duties, he is reported to have said—

‘I would point out in regard to the attitude of the Local Authorities’ Association, that they have known for the last fortnight that this Bill was to be

introduced, and they have not paid me the courtesy to wait upon me; but, in order to make political capital, I presume, they have placed their views before the Opposition. Was the department informed by official letter, dated 10th November, of the views of the Local Authorities' Association, with a request that he consider the same?

"2. Did not the department reply on 14th November stating that the requests received would be carefully considered?"

HON. W. N. GILLIES replied—

"1. The letter referred to, dated 10th November, 1917, was received by the department five months before I took office. I repeat that the Local Authorities' Association did not wait on me in regard to this matter. Since my protest in Parliament, however, the president of the Local Authorities' Association has called on me and explained that no discourtesy to me was intended.

"2. Yes, and such requests were fully considered at the time by my predecessor."

#### NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING CONTRACTS.

On the motion of Mr. SIZER (*Nundah*), it was formally resolved—

"That there be laid upon the table of the House a return showing—

1. The names of newspapers outside Queensland with which the Chief Secretary's Department has or has had advertising contracts during the past nine months, with the cost of each separate contract.

2. For what purpose the space contracted for with these newspapers is used."

#### EMPLOYEES IN STATE INSURANCE DEPARTMENT.

On the motion of Mr. SIZER, it was formally resolved—

"That there be laid upon the table of the House a return showing—

1. The number of persons appointed to the State Insurance Department since 1st March, 1918.

2. The names and salaries paid to each."

#### POLLING IN RECENT GENERAL ELECTION.

On the motion of Mr. ROBERTS, it was formally resolved—

"That there be laid upon the table of the House a return showing the detailed results of the voting at the various polling-booths throughout the State in the recent general election."

#### TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

##### INITIATION.

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION, it was formally resolved—

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of

the Whole to consider of the desirability of introducing a Bill to amend the Technical Instruction Act of 1908 in certain particulars."

#### WAGES BILL.

##### THIRD READING.

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*), this Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council for their concurrence by message in the usual form.

#### PROPOSED REDUCTION OR REMOVAL OF LAND TAX.

##### RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Question stated—

"That, in the opinion of this House, the prosperity of the State of Queensland depends upon increased primary production, and that, in order to increase such production and enable producers to compete in the markets of the world, the application of the Land Tax Act of 1915, in respect to lands used for agriculture and dairying, be either removed or reduced."

On which Mr. Butler had moved—

"That the question be amended by the omission of all words after the word 'That,' on line 3, with a view to the insertion, in their place, of the words 'as the policy of the Government, as outlined in the Speech of His Excellency the Governor, is calculated to increase production, to ensure to producers the full return of their labour, and improve the condition of the people generally, the future prosperity of this State is assured.'"

Mr. PETERSON (*Normanby*): The hon. member for Drayton, when moving this motion, seemed to me to make it a personal matter as far as he was concerned. During the course of the debate, the hon. member "let the cat out of the bag" when he said that he himself paid about £18 a year in land tax.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: It is a dairyman who paid it.

Mr. PETERSON: It is a long time since you did any dairying on your own. I trust that the hon. member will give me the courtesy I gave him when speaking on this matter.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. PETERSON: He is always posing as a friend of the man on the land, and I want to show him where he is wrong and misleading. The treatment he received in his own electorate at the last election shows clearly that his own electorate is getting tired of him.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear! and laughter.

Mr. PETERSON: The hon. member for Drayton used the argument that, on account of the Labour party's land tax, agriculture has depreciated, and in order to strengthen our position in that respect he suggests that the Land Tax Act of 1916 should be repealed. That is the hon. member's case in a nutshell. I want to make this statement as

far as the hon. member is concerned—that I consider it is not so much the question of increased agriculture with him as the fact that as a large landowner he is called upon to pay the land tax. The hon. member said that we have decreased the area of cultivation as a result of the land tax. I want to ask the hon. member how it is that, according to the hon. member for Cunningham, in 1914 the reason why there had been a decline in agriculture was because the agriculturists were beginning to see that there was more to be made out of dairying than out of the cultivating of crops. The hon. member for Cunningham made that statement, and if the question of decreased cultivation was paramount in 1914, when there was no land tax, how does the hon. member for Drayton explain the situation which existed then? The hon. member fails to realise that since this Government has come into power the circumstances have been abnormal. For a very long period during which his party controlled the Treasury benches they had a splendid opportunity of making Queensland the Queen State of the Commonwealth, not only as far as agriculture is concerned but with regard to all other potentialities. When we attained office as a Government, we found that Queensland was the most backward State in the Commonwealth, but to-day she bids fair, owing to the policy which this Government has initiated, to come out on top, as she would have done years ago but for hon. members on the other side.

The hon. member for Drayton laid emphasis on a concrete case. He referred to the iniquity of taxing men like the one I shall quote. He said he knew of a case where a gentleman bought 1,000 acres of land in his electorate, valued at £4 an acre, unimproved, making a total of £4,000, and he is complaining bitterly because this gentleman had to pay £73 a year for land tax. The hon. member knows that we are in favour of perpetual lease, and that there was nothing whatever to prevent that man who came into Queensland—if he ever did come there—from taking up a perpetual lease selection. I have taken the trouble to go very carefully into the statement of the hon. member for Drayton, and I want to give the House the facts in regard to the matter. Firstly, the position this man would have been in had he accepted a perpetual lease selection instead of the freehold one which the hon. member is advocating. Supposing this gentleman whom the hon. member quotes had been able to take up a perpetual lease selection at a capital value of £1, per acre, he would have had to pay only £60 per annum in rent to the Crown. If he had been permitted to take it up as a freehold his rent would have been £200 a year for twenty years. The difference between the two rentals is £140 per annum in favour of the perpetual lease system. If this gentleman had taken up a perpetual lease, instead of a freehold, he could have deposited the difference of £140 a year in a bank at 5 per cent. fixed deposit. At the end of the twenty years he would have, at compound interest, an amount standing to his credit in the bank of no less a sum than £4,270, and still own the lease of the farm.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: You forget the reappraisal of the rent.

Mr. PETERSON: I am speaking of the first term of twenty years; the hon. member

has evidently missed the point I am aiming at. If he deposited that difference of £140 every year for twenty years, those deposits would have amounted to £2,800, and compound interest would have amounted to another £1,470, making a total credit of £4,270 at the end of the twenty years.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: But the property would have been reappraised after fifteen years.

Mr. PETERSON: It is true that the Land Act makes provision for a reappraisal at the end of fifteen years, but it does not make it mandatory that there shall be an increased rental. I am trying to show how the gentleman referred to by the hon. member, instead of paying £4,000 to acquire a freehold of 1,000 acres, would, under our system of perpetual leasehold, by paying £60 per annum for twenty years and depositing the amount he had saved, would have had in twenty years no less than £4,270 in hard cash to his credit.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Where is he going to get the land?

Mr. PETERSON: The hon. member said that we had too much land, and no one would apply for it.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The land that is available is too far from a railway. You have not considered that.

Mr. PETERSON: Assuming that the hon. member's contention is correct, there is plenty of freehold land within reasonable distance of a railway that could be made available by the super tax which the hon. member opposes. I have no doubt that the hon. member's intentions are good, but I hold that the land taxation proposed by the Labour party makes for the cheapening of land to the man who wants to make a living off the land. In my own electorate there are men who took up selections under a previous Land Act. Those men are called upon, now that the twenty years are up, to make good. The Act makes provision that, when the twenty-year period is up, they have twelve months' grace, and, if they do not meet their obligations in that period the Crown can forfeit the whole selection. Fortunately, the Government have foreshadowed an amendment of the Act which I think will meet such cases. In my own electorate men are feeling the pinch, and already I have had quite a number of communications from settlers who are desirous of coming under the perpetual lease system, because they find that, if they deposited the difference between the rent they would have to pay for a perpetual lease and the amount of rent they have to pay in order to acquire a freehold, they would, at the end of twenty years, have a very nice sum to their credit. It is all very nice to get up here and say that such-and-such a thing takes place when the reverse is the fact; but I challenge them to disprove my figures. When I meet landless men who desire to get on the land—men with hardly any capital at all, but men who will become a great asset to this State if they are placed on the land—I know which principle appeals to them. When the real difference between the freehold and the perpetual leasehold systems is explained to them, I am sure they will take the perpetual lease every time. Perhaps I may be pardoned for referring to my own electorate, but I can assure hon. members that, as fast as land is thrown open there it is taken up under the perpetual

*Mr. Peterson.*]

leasehold system. All the decent land that is made available is rushed, and I am trying my best to get more land thrown open under the same tenure. I think that disposes of the main objection of hon. members opposite to the system of land taxation proposed by this Government. I honestly believe that the amendments to the Land Tax Act which we have had under consideration during the last few days, and which make provision for a super tax upon large areas of freehold land, will lead to a very considerable extension of the area of land under cultivation. I am sorry the hon. member for Windsor is not present, as I wish to refer to some remarks made by him during the course of the debate. The hon. member took the opportunity of doing a bit of mud-slinging at the State Produce Agency.

Mr. KIRWAN: You would not expect him to support that.

Mr. PETERSON: No. I am sorry he is not here, as I wished to give him some evidence showing that it is not the Labour party only who have condemned the system of which he approved the other day. In his absence I shall deal with him as gently as I can, although it is not my fault that he is not here. He challenged the hon. member for Lockyer, or any other member on this side, to show that there is a ring among produce merchants in this city.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I must ask hon. members on my right to cease talking, as it is difficult to follow the hon. member.

Mr. PETERSON: I have had to raise my voice to make myself heard. The hon. member for Windsor challenged anyone on this side to prove that there ever had been, or is now, a ring among produce merchants in this city. Now, I am going to take up the hon. member's challenge, and I am going to show, not from expressions coming from this side of the House, but by

[4 p.m.] proof from the other side of the House, whether the hon. member can correctly speak in the way he does. When we were discussing the question of the State Produce Agency, the hon. member for Cooroora made certain remarks. And when I speak of the hon. member for Cooroora I am sure that every hon. member of this House agrees that when he gets up to speak he is listened to intently, because we all recognise that he is a man who invariably talks common sense. Mr. Walker is not a Labour member, and I am quoting now from "Hansard" No. 18, 1917—

"The farmer who sends his stuff down to the middleman to be taken down, as they have been in the past—well, he does not deserve any sympathy from the Government.

"Mr. Peterson: You admit that the middleman takes them down?

"Mr. WALKER: I have never said otherwise. I have no time for the middleman who handles produce of any kind, and the very fact that I have taken so active a part in co-operative butter factories, co-operative cheese factories, and co-operative bacon factories proves conclusively that, in my opinion, that is the best method, and that is the reason why I am advocating it to-night in preference to the system proposed under this Bill.

[Mr. Peterson.

"Mr. Peterson: I contend that this Bill will assist co-operation, and that is why I am supporting it."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Mr. Foley: What was the reason for your forming your co-operative companies?"

"Mr. WALKER: The reason was that we were not getting a fair deal."

From whom? From those produce merchants among which the hon. member said there was no ring. Further on he says—

"I recognise that in Roma street we have a number of men who may be termed 'middlemen'; some of them are a credit to the State and are doing excellent work, but there are others who—I say it without any hesitation—are a disgrace to the country. There is more gambling done by a small section of those people at Roma street than was ever done at Gympie or Charters Towers in their early days."

That is what the hon. member's own friends said in regard to that matter, and yet he gets up in his place and challenges contradiction.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: That does not prove anything. That is only a statement.

Mr. PETERSON: I thought that all that came from hon. members opposite was true. I thought that when anyone got up on the other side his remarks were the very quintessence of truth and reality. The late member for Rosewood, Mr. Stevens, who took an interest in this debate, stated in No. 19 of "Hansard" for 1917—

"Like other hon. members on this side of the House, I intend to support the second reading of the Bill. Any measure which will eliminate the objectionable features which the Minister so eloquently described when moving the second reading will always have my earnest support. The pernicious system of forming rings in order to obtain farmers' produce at ridiculously low prices should certainly be eliminated so soon as possible, and with certain amendments which will be proposed when the Bill comes into Committee, I trust that it will be made a more workable measure, and one which will tend to benefit the producers of the State to a very considerable degree."

Now, let us come to the hon. member for Stanley. I am using these arguments to refute the statements of the hon. member for Windsor. The hon. member for Stanley said this in reference to produce rings—

"But it is just his occasional extortion, his occasional rapacity, that has decided me, although opposed to the principle of the Bill, to support this measure, for the good that is in it, and it is, in fact, that which brought me into Parliament, not the desire to support this measure, but the extortion and rapacity on certain occasions of the middleman."

What brought him into Parliament? The fact that there were middlemen—pernicious rings.

Now, I could quote a number of other speeches, including that of the hon. member for Pittsworth, to show that the hon. member for Drayton was not correct. And who could be better qualified to speak on this subject than such members, because they are members

of farming constituencies and know how their particular people were suffering under the system in operation. I am not one of those who are going to assume that all the evils from which the primary producer suffers in the shape of low prices are going to be removed by State markets. So long as we have the same system in vogue at the State markets as at the private merchants' there is nothing to prevent a number of buyers coming along and keeping down prices by refusing to bid.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: And the State Produce Agency joins with them—deals with them. It has dealt more with the produce agents than with the farmers.

Mr. PETERSON: Assuming that the hon. member's argument is correct—I do not say it is altogether correct—nevertheless, the hon. member time and time again has referred to the conditions under which the producer is operating and the low prices for his commodity, and yet, when we make an honest attempt to deal with this state of things, there is no man who tries to throw dirt at it more than the hon. member.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I tried to improve it on right lines.

Mr. PETERSON: The hon. member had a chance for forty years when his Government were in power, but they made no attempt to deal with the matter. But, when this Government, after two and a-half years, bring in a measure trying to do something, they oppose it. I am not going to say it is going to do everything that is desired, but I say that it is an attempt, and I hope it will succeed and I will lend all the support I can to any Government to make any attempt to make the conditions of the producers better than they are at the present time. In fact, I agree with the hon. member in some things. For instance, I believe a minimum price should be fixed for the product of the agriculturist so that he will receive the full result of his industry. (Hear, hear!)

I want to draw attention to the fact that the Labour party has made it possible to increase production. We have only to realise what has occurred in the canefields of Queensland to understand how we have done that. What has brought about increased production? The hon. member was one of those members who, in the early part of this Administration, got up and said that, as a result of Labour legislation the sugar industry would be wiped out.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: The increase in production has been brought about by the establishment of those two large mills which the Denham Government erected.

Mr. PETERSON: I am not going to detract from anything a previous Government did, but I am just comparing the statements made by the hon. member to the effect that as a result of the Labour party's being in power the whole thing would go to the winds. Since this party came into power they have passed the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act, and as a result, the cane farmers were, almost to a man, behind this party, and there is only one canegrowing electorate which returns a Liberal man, and he only got in by "the skin of his teeth."

Mr. MACARTNEY: Have you cane in your electorate?

Mr. PETERSON: No, I have no cane in my electorate, but I hope shortly to have some. I want to read part of a letter which

came from the headquarters of the Farmers' Union in Rockhampton. I received a letter only recently from the head secretary in the Central district, Mr. Black, and he says that the opinion has been expressed that, as a result of the prices assured by the passing of that Act, cane can be grown there and sent to the mills at Bundaberg profitably. (Hear, hear!) They never thought of it before. As a result of that, there is an agitation all over the Central district. Only recently Mr. Easterby was sent up there and addressed a very representative meeting of farmers. Why are the farmers of the Central district who have sugar lands at their disposal so anxious to engage in sugar-growing? The mere fact that they have got something from this party they have never had before—something for the result of their labour—even if we have committed sins, the hon. member has not the decency to get up and say, "They have done that much." The sugar industry is one of the greatest industries which we have from a primary standpoint in Queensland.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: In Australia.

Mr. PETERSON: In Australia, and this party has been responsible for placing it on a proper footing, and we can have no better evidence in support of that than the fact that I have received letters asking me to do the best I can to see that sugar-cane cultivation is gone into in Central Queensland, because it is profitable to do so.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I supported the Cane Price Boards Bill before you ever came into this House.

Mr. PETERSON: The hon. member, as leader of the farmer's party, says that he supported the Bill, and yet his leadership was so weak that he could not get his party to pass it. The sugar party on this side of the House got the Bill passed, and as a result they have come back to this House. As a result of Labour legislation, notwithstanding the land tax the hon. member harps on so much, we find Mr. Powers, the President of the United Canegrowers' Association, gave the Government the credit of having always had the best interests of the growers at heart. He said—

"Had not the Government backed them up their position would not have been what it was to-day. They had every confidence in the Ryan Government, which had at all times endeavoured to obtain the best prices for their cane. As Mr. Lennon had made the suggestion to send delegates it would be no reflection on the Government."

And, as the hon. member for Mackay points out, he was supported by leading canegrowers on his platform during the last election. I have given a good number of illustrations of the increase in primary production as a result of this Government coming into power. If the land tax proposals of the Government are put in their entirety before the people in a manner fairly and squarely, I make bold to say that the people of Queensland will be heartily behind them. The hon. member for Pittsworth gave examples to show how the land tax had reduced land value in his electorate. What I want to know is this: I am asking a fair and pertinent question. The hon. member has recently gone through an election, and both he and the hon. member for Drayton no doubt placed before their people the iniquities of the land tax proposals of this Government, and can he tell me, if

*Mr. Peterson.]*

his electors are suffering in the way in which he indicates in his speech, why it is they gave such a big vote for the Labour candidate?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Conscription. You people worked that and misled the people. That is the reason you are there—on account of false statements.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr. PETERSON: I am asking a fair question, and the hon. member has, by interjection, said that the result was brought about by the conscription issue. I am not going to get ruled out of order, but I hold that as far as that issue was concerned, that that must have been overclouded by the hon. member himself.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: No.

Mr. PETERSON: Because I am positive, from the little of his speeches that I read, that he took every care to place before the people his aspect of it, and his people decided on that, and I am confident that the big bulk of the people he represents do not pay land tax at all, and he knows it as well as I do. As far as the larger areas in the Darling Downs are concerned, upon which some may have to pay land tax, it is not necessary that they should have 1,000 acres on the Darling Downs to make a decent living. Those areas can well stand cutting up, and they could come within £1,230 exemption, and then get the benefit of both a remission of the land tax and a reduction of the income tax. If the hon. member's contention is correct that the farmers were being forced off the land, I would like to ask him this question: How is it that in the returns of the land tax paid we find that only 9.8 per cent. of agriculturists pay land tax in Queensland? How can he reconcile that fact with the statement that the whole of the primary producers are being handicapped by the land tax proposals of this Government?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Some of them owe yet, and have been owing for three years, and cannot pay.

Mr. PETERSON: I presume some of them are holding very valuable land, when it should be cut up into smaller areas, and thus give more people a chance to get on and to escape the land tax. The whole burden of the song of the hon. member has been against the land tax proposals of this Government, and in speaking against these land tax proposals he brought in the statement that agricultural production had decreased. We have shown, on the other hand, that, although agricultural production may have decreased, production has increased in other directions—that is, the farmers have found it more profitable to go in for dairying, pig-raising, and so on, because of the high prices obtained for those commodities, and, although production may be decreasing in one way, it is increasing in other ways. When we come to sugar lands, we find that the demand for those lands is greater than ever, notwithstanding the land tax. I make bold to declare that if normal times come back again once more, and this Government is given an opportunity equal to what other Governments have had—a fair run and fair seasons—we could make Queensland the best State in the Commonwealth. I know a number of young fellows only a few weeks ago came up from Dorrigo to settle here in Queensland. These people are eager to take up land under perpetual lease tenure, and if this policy is in

[Mr. Peterson.

force in normal times, and with reasonable seasons, I am sure that the hon. member, if he does live to see that time, will be with us, and will say he made a mistake, and that the policy of this Government has done more in the same period than his Government did during their period to send Queensland ahead to a greater extent than ever before.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): I find myself unable to support the amendment, because I do not think that the policy that is outlined in the Governor's Speech is calculated to increase production or to increase land settlement, and I do not think that the actions of the Government during the past three years have been of a sort that will encourage production. In fact, we know that exactly the opposite is the case. We know quite well that a protected industry, such as the sugar industry, where they have got a fixed price given by the generosity of the people of the Commonwealth—you would naturally expect, when you get prices such as they are getting, and conditions such as they have got, that the industry would not be inclined to go back, but ordinary dairying and ordinary farming has not gone ahead. I would like to point out that this was realised even before the Labour party came into power, and I would like to quote a few remarks made by the present Premier in his Barcaldine speech, because I think they go right to the root of the thing. He said—

“Direct taxation in this State falls very heavily upon the shoulders of the most industrious and most useful of our citizens; and many who can afford to contribute largely to the State revenues are allowed to evade their obligations. Thus agriculturists, dairymen, and settlers generally, who exert all their energies in improving and cultivating their holdings, frequently contribute more in taxes than they should.”

That was the Premier before he got into power.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: We want to put it on the shoulders of the wealthy people, and you object every time.

Mr. MOORE: You have put it on the farmers. The Premier further said—

“In order the more justly to apportion the financial burdens among the people, the whole incidence of direct taxation will be remodelled. Small farmers will be relieved of the necessity of paying certain taxes and imposts.”

The farmers were not relieved of any. One of the first acts they did when they came into power was to impose direct taxation on the farmers.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: Not on the farmers.

Mr. MOORE: It is all very well for the hon. member to say not on the farmers. It was put on a large number. It is not the mere paying of £5 or £10 in a year that is the difficulty. The farmer carries on his business just as the State carries on its business—on credit. When a farmer gets his freehold property he can raise money on it, and when the value of his land is decreased by, perhaps, 50 per cent., his producing power is reduced, and he is not able to carry on as before.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: The crops won't grow.

Mr. MOORE: It is not a question of crops not growing; it is a question of not having the capital to put into his crops. I am not saying that under present circumstances the man with a perpetual lease will not be better off. Of course, he will be better off when you take into consideration the taxation on freehold property. You have to take into consideration all the people who put money into land. I would like to point out that a large number of people have come here and put their money into property. I know of many in my own district—and probably many members know of them in their districts—where people went on the land twenty years ago, worked hard on it, put all their energy and labour into it. To see that land depreciating in value through no fault of their own, up to 50 per cent., is not encouraging, not assisting them. It is reducing their ability to cultivate their property, because when the dry times come, and they want to get advances, they have no crops. I have seen it all over the Downs. I don't know the sugar districts, and I say that industry is in a different category, because it is protected.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: That protection really is no good at the present time.

Mr. MOORE: It must be good.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: The world's market is operating just now.

Mr. MOORE: Still, they are getting a price given to them by the Federal Government which allows them to carry on their business. As far as the ordinary dairying and wheatgrowing is concerned, in a State like Queensland—which does not grow enough wheat for its own consumption—we must realise that something is wrong. New South Wales is a State which produces enormous quantities of wheat for export.

Mr. PETERSON: We haven't got the soil for wheatgrowing. The soil is too deep on the Darling Downs.

Mr. MOORE: The soil in many parts of Queensland is equally as suitable for wheatgrowing as it is anywhere else.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: We did not grow enough wheat for our own consumption before the land tax, so there is nothing in that argument.

Mr. MOORE: It wants to be encouraged. In New South Wales at the present time you see the farmers are getting a fixed price for their wheat. They are also given an advance to enable them to put their property under cultivation. In Queensland we have nothing of that.

Mr. KIRWAN: Did you see what the Minister for Agriculture in Victoria said the other day?

Mr. MOORE: The Minister for Agriculture in New South Wales a short time ago recommended that no one should grow any more wheat. He was immediately taken to task by half the other Ministers for saying such a thing.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: He was not a Labour Minister.

Mr. MOORE: It is very easy to pick out what certain Ministers in other States have said.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the hon. member to speak to the question, and not be led away by interjections.

Mr. MOORE: It proves there is something wrong when you find that instead of increased cultivation in a State which cannot

produce enough wheat for its own consumption, it is going back. Some encouragement should be given. It is no good picking out one industry like the sugar industry, and saying "this is going ahead." We want them all to go ahead. When you find that land settlement is going back in the way it is, it requires some explanation.

I think the explanation is to be found in the actions of the Government on the lines that they are adopting at the present time. People are not going to take any notice of promises. Promises were made before, and we find that they have not eventuated. Consequently, people have got sick of them, and they are going in for something else where they can make a living, and where they don't have to pay labour but have a return guaranteed. Now, when you find that settlement is reduced from 2,845 selections, with an annual return of £46,000, in 1914, to 1,111 selections producing £24,857 in 1917—a drop of three-fifths in the number of selections, and nearly one-half in the annual return—it shows there is something wrong. I agree with the hon. member for Lockyer that a great deal of it is due to the market. I cannot agree that the State Produce Agency is likely to benefit them. I cannot see that that is going to cure it. The member for Lockyer, when speaking the other day, was arguing about the different prices. He said when a farmer goes to a storekeeper he says, "Here is my corn; here is something else I produced; how much will you give me for it?" He has to accept the price offered to him. I do not think the State Produce Agency is going to remedy that. We know at the present time the farmer sends his produce to the State Produce Agency, and it is put up for sale. He may get the highest price available from a limited circle of buyers. That does not say he is going to get the full value of the produce. The only possible way for him to get the full value is in the way the Cheese Association did—through co-operation. I would like to point out the conditions under which that industry, to which I have referred, laboured a few years ago. It was then an open market, one factory being induced to sell against another one by different agents, or, perhaps, the factories themselves underselling one another, until it came to a point when it was not profitable. Then there was an association formed, at which every factory had to send its returns every week—what it made, what it was likely to make, and how much it had on hand—so that there was an exact knowledge of how much there was, where the market was, what demand there was. They were able to regulate the price accordingly, and export what was not required here. Each factory exported according to its daily supply. I think that is a reasonable way. Now, when we come to marketing the farmers' produce the same principle will have to be resorted to. We have the machinery there at the present time. All we want is to get the farmers to go in for combined action.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: Do you suggest the State Produce Agency will stand in the way of that?

Mr. MOORE: I am suggesting that the State Produce Agency is not going to do anything to remedy the existing state of affairs.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: Do you suggest it will stand in the way of doing anything such as you have outlined?

*Mr. Moore.]*

Mr. MOORE: I do not see that it is of any benefit at the present time. I know that they are purchasing from other middlemen and selling to other middlemen. I don't know that that is going to be of any advantage. The only way the farmer will be able to get the best price for his produce is by having accurate information sent to co-operative factories in order that every farmer will be able to show what his crop is. That information can go to a central bureau, in Brisbane or in some other centre, so that everybody will know how much there is available, and where it is available. When the Treasurer was bringing in his Labour Exchange Bill the same sort of thing applied. He said that in one place there was a surplus of labour and in another place a dearth. He wanted to bring those two centres together, so that they would be able to distribute it more equitably. That is what we want to do with our produce. We cannot do it except by having accurate information, and by having information from all the farmers as to what there is available in the different districts. Under that system we will be able to fix a price that will be payable to the farmer, and we will be able to carry on an industry which we are not carrying on satisfactorily at the present time. I think the remedy is going to lie in that way. It is hard to get a lot of farmers to give the information. I know even amongst our own factories they were not prompt and not careful in giving information. At certain times that led to difficulties. It was only when they realised the absolute necessity of accurate information that we were able to fix the price and regulate the market in such a way as to ensure the dairyman a proper price for his product. We were able to do that only in a moderate way, but still it was better than the haphazard way that goes on at the present time. With farm produce we have not got that system at all. Everybody is underselling others, and you have buyers going round among the men, who really do not know the worth of their produce. It is not a question of what it costs him to produce, but how much he can get. At times of glut, just after the harvest or some such time, the price always goes down. The only possible way is by storage and information. I hope and trust that that time will come when the farmers will realise the advantage and make use of their co-operative society which they have at the present time, so that later on they will be able to organise themselves into a body so that it will be no difficulty for a man to purchase supplies.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: And all deal with the State Produce Agency.

Mr. MOORE: No; deal with themselves, so that the profits go into their own pockets. I am quite satisfied, from my knowledge of co-operative companies, that they can manage their concerns a great deal better and more economically than the State Produce Agency is managing theirs.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: Because they didn't help themselves in the way you have mentioned, the State stepped in to help them.

Mr. MOORE: I don't know that the State did step in to help them. I think hon. members will remember that when the Secretary for Agriculture was bringing in his Bill he did not say it was to help the farmer so much as to give cheap food to the people.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: No; to bring the producer and consumer together.

[Mr. Moore.

Mr. MOORE: That is in his speech. He said he wanted to give cheap food to the people. I don't think it was so much benefit to the farmers. Then there was [4.30 p.m.] another promise which I would just like to refer to, about which a great deal of capital was made three years ago. In the same speech it says—

"An agricultural machinery works will be established to protect the man on the land from the rapacity of the agricultural implement trust"

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: Are you against that?

Mr. MOORE: The Government were very careful to bring in anything that was for the benefit of the class they represented, but they were not so careful to bring in these wonderful schemes to assist in regard to cane prices boards. The one thing they harped on was the sugar industry.

Mr. SMITH: It is the chief industry in Queensland.

Mr. MOORE: It may be the chief industry in Queensland, and it is on a different footing to any industry in Queensland, and the one hon. members opposite always take as an example—

Interjections from GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask hon. members to allow the hon. member for Aubigny to proceed without interruption.

Mr. MOORE: It goes on to say—

"Action will also be undertaken in the direction mentioned in other parts of my speech with regard to a State export department, freezing works and granaries, sugar-mills and refineries, coalmines, ore-reduction works, Government produce agencies and markets, abattoirs, and other State undertakings."

All the other State undertakings have come into force except those that are going to assist the farmers.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: We are going to use our own judgment about that. We know as much about the farmers as you do.

Mr. MOORE: You may know about them, but, unfortunately, you have never brought your knowledge into effect.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: You never advocated that.

Mr. MOORE: I am talking about promises which were made, which were not fulfilled. What is the use of a man getting up and moving an amendment, and saying that the policy advocated by the Government is going to increase settlement and encourage production, when everything the Government has done up to the present has been in the opposite direction.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: You are absolutely wrong.

Mr. MOORE: A short time ago the Premier was in Sydney talking to a sympathetic audience about the meat business. He said the meat companies had to sign an agreement, because, if they did not, the Government would take it. A little further on he said, "We intend not only to control the trade, but the open market." Is it any encouragement to anybody to go in for agricultural pursuits in Queensland when the Premier of the State says that they are going to control the open market; and you have the Secretary for Agriculture saying that the Government are opening a State produce

agency with the object of giving cheap food to the people? I do not think that is going to encourage trade. There are many ways in which an industry can be encouraged. I would like to quote what is being done in another place. This happened in Victoria the other day—

“The Developmental Roads Bill which passed through both Houses of the Victorian Parliament last week promises well-deserved assistance to settlers in remote districts. A sum of £500,000 is to be raised over a period of five years for the construction of roads in those undeveloped portions of the State where roadmaking is difficult and costly. One of the cardinal errors of land policy in Victoria has been that settlement has frequently run in advance of communications, and the consequent waste of effort and the dispiriting failures have been at times almost tragic. The money provided under the new measure is to be spent by the Country Roads Board, so there is a fair guarantee that it will be applied to thoroughly good purpose. The intention is to provide new roads leading to railways, and in that way to increase not only the value of land, but the earning capacity of the railways. Mr. Barnes, Minister for Railways, who had charge of the measure in the Legislative Assembly, said he came many years ago to the conclusion that it would have been better in many districts to have provided good roads where short cockspur non-paying railways had been constructed. The maintenance of the roads will be a charge on the municipalities, but as the land served will be greatly increased in value no hardship will be imposed on even the poorest of the local bodies. There is every reason to believe that the spending of this half million of money will be a measure of true constructive economy. In this, if in any direction, a State Parliament is warranted in going to some additional expense, even in time of war.”

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: What paper are you quoting from?

Mr. MOORE: The “Australasian.” I do not mind what paper it is in; it is sound common sense and something which should be realised by every Government.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: And it implies a land tax, because they say the increased value of land will enable them to pay.

Mr. MOORE: It says municipalities will get higher rates to pay for it. I say that the land tax has depreciated the value of the land to such an extent that it has taken from production, owing to the reduced capital that a man has with which to work his holding. I do not think anyone will deny that. It is not the few pounds a year that the man pays which takes away from his capital value, it is the reduction of the producing capacity which is affected.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: It does not reduce his producing capacity.

Mr. MOORE: It does reduce the producing capacity when a man has not got the money to work his property. You find men have their property mortgaged, and most of them have not paid off 50 per cent. of their debt.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: It does not say much for the previous Government if they had all to mortgage their properties.

Mr. MOORE: These men have come here and purchased properties and paid down a certain proportion. We have had that in connection with Government estates. Some of them have met their obligations on repurchased estates by borrowing money from the banks to pay off the Government. Those men not only pay land tax, but they have had their properties reduced in value, while the people opposite them have not had to pay a land tax previously. We find that land is being thrown up on the repurchased estates. From a return recently presented, we find that forty-four farms were abandoned. There must be something radically wrong when you find that going on. I cannot help thinking there is some help required other than the method forecasted in the Governor's Speech. We want to have some of the promises made in the previous Speech carried out first, but, apparently there is no prospect of them being met. People get sick of waiting. It is no use telling them, year after year at each election, that the Government are going to do these things, they want to see some result. But, the sole result at the present time has been the State Produce Agency, and nobody can say that that is likely to do anything for the farmers. The only way for the farmer to get sufficient for his produce is by co-operation. I would like the Government to make it easier for money to be secured for the different co-operative organisations than it is at the present time.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: More socialism.

Mr. MOORE: I would like to quote from a New Zealand paper, because it is evidently being realised there what it is leading to. It says—

#### “CO-OPERATIVE TRADE.

#### “IMPORTANT LABOUR PROPOSAL IN NEW ZEALAND.

“An important proposal which aims at bringing about practical co-operation between the producer and the consumer in the Auckland district was (says the Auckland ‘Weekly News’) made by several representative Labour leaders to the directors of the Farmers' Union Trading Company last week. The spokesman of the Labour men said they recognised the benefit the trading company was to the farmers and the success it had achieved. Their object was to ask the directors if it would be possible for the articles of association to be so amended as to admit of industrial unions, or members of industrial unions, becoming members of the trading concern on the same terms as the farmers. They had more in view than the financial benefits accruing from co-operative trading, great as these would undoubtedly be. They hoped to see established a community of interests between town and country workers, such as had been established recently in several States of America, particularly California, where organised workers, farmers, and co-operators had formed the Californian Union of Producers and Consumers, which its founders expected would become an economic, political, and educational force, which might influence legislative changes, and further the principle of public ownership of all public utilities in the State, including transportation and communication, to free the State from privilege and monopoly, and to provide a practical

*Mr. Moore.]*

plan of co-operation in the production and distribution of the necessaries of life. The deputation hoped that something on the lines of the Californian body might be brought into being in Auckland for the benefit of producers and consumers alike. The Farmers' Trading Company had already taken the first step, and the trades unions would co-operate in the development of the scheme.

"The directors of the company expressed their sympathy with the idea outlined, and promised to give it their favourable consideration. Before any proposal on the lines indicated can be adopted it will have to receive the sanction of a general meeting of shareholders."

It must be realised that the only possible way to do it is through co-operation. The State Produce Agency, or any other agency, is not going to be in a position to bring about the desired result under present conditions. We find that the State Produce Agency is not bringing about the desired result at all, and I do not see how it can. A farmer sends his produce to the agency, and it is put up for sale. There is only a limited number of buyers; he may get the best price offering that day; but that does not say that it is going to be any benefit to him. That does not fix the price of his produce, or give him the full value of his labour, as the advertisements promise. How can it?

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: The only thing is to make the agency a monopoly.

Mr. MOORE: If it were a monopoly, the position would be far worse for the farmer than it is to-day. We have had a painful experience of a Government monopoly in connection with the butter industry, and we do not want any more of that sort of thing. We want to eliminate Government interference as much as possible and keep the industry in our own hands. Only in that way will the farmer get the full value of his product.

Mr. SMITH (*Mackay*): I think there is at least one clause in the motion of the hon. member for Drayton with which we can all agree. Whatever our views may be as to the best methods of government and the best policy to adopt, we can all agree that "the prosperity of the State of Queensland depends upon increased primary production." We can all agree that the first duty of a Government is to foster primary production. We all know that wealth can only be produced by labour applied to natural resources. From the land we derive everything that we live upon and every necessity which goes to maintain life. It is somewhat difficult to understand the continued opposition of the party opposite to our land taxation proposals. Every economist and everyone who has given any thought to the question of taxation knows that a land tax is the soundest form of taxation which any Government can devise. We only need to deal with the question of land values. We know that land increases in value according to the industry of the people and according to the increase in the people's needs. Where there is no population you have no value in land. Where men require to have access to land, then land increases in value, and immediately the community create value, and therefore it is only fitting that the community should receive the

[*Mr. Moore.*

benefit from that which the people themselves have created. The hon. member for Bowen dealt in a very interesting manner with this question. He showed what appears to me to be the real reason lying behind this continued opposition to a land tax. We know that only 9.8 per cent. of the revenue derived from this source is paid by the genuine farmer, the greater part of it coming from valuable city properties and from those who hold land for speculative purposes. Yet we find men here in Parliament who claim to be the representatives of the farmers offering opposition to the land tax and claiming that it is something that is injuring the farmer, whereas their real desire is to take the burden off the shoulders of wealthy land speculators in cities. That is the real reason for moving a motion of this kind. The hon. member for Bowen gave some very interesting figures dealing with the valuation of properties here in Brisbane. We know that those properties pay a very large proportion of the land tax, and the hon. member for Drayton, and those who support him in this motion, are endeavouring to delude the farmer who pays a few pounds in land tax, that his interests are identical with those of the speculator in town or the owner of a valuable city property. Those hon. members are endeavouring to lift the burden that is now placed on the shoulders of the latter class by this Government—the people who are best able to bear that burden. They are merely using the farmer as a screen. We know, of course, that that is part of their general policy. While they claim to speak in the interests of the producer, they are really speaking in the interest of those who exploit the genuine producer. There is another matter that the hon. member for Drayton raises in his motion—that is, the question of enabling the producer to compete in the markets of the world. That opens up a very interesting question—as to whether it is a good thing for a State to adopt a policy which will enable producers to compete in the markets of the world. We know that, if you demand world prices or the world's parity, you cannot have the world's prices when they are advantageous to you and not have them when they are disadvantageous. You cannot have your apple and eat it too. We, therefore, find that this policy requires some little scrutiny. I have referred on previous occasions in this Chamber to the sugar industry, which is, without doubt, the most valuable agricultural industry in Queensland. It employs the greatest amount of labour, and also solves one of the great problems connected with the peopling of the North. It is therefore really a national question. It would not be in the interests of that industry to place it in the position of competing in the world's markets. The hon. member for Drayton says that it is his desire to enable primary producers to compete in the world's markets. We know what that means in normal times. In certain countries, such as Java and Fiji, labour is paid only a very small remuneration. It is out of the question for the sugar industry to compete with sugar produced under those conditions, and I am really wondering whether the Opposition, in supporting this motion, and demanding that the primary producers shall go back to the system of being able to compete in the world's markets, desire that the sugar industry should revert to the old kanaka system, and that sugar should be produced in this State under the

same conditions as those under which it is produced in Fiji and elsewhere. We saw some startling revelations some time ago about the conditions of indentured labour in Fiji. I think it was referred to at one of the missionary conferences held in Sydney quite recently. Those are all conditions which go to enabling the sugar industry to compete in what they call the world's markets. My own belief is that we in Australia have endeavoured to set up new ideals in that connection. We hold that the primary producer is entitled to the full value of his product; and that is the policy which the present Government have acted upon, and which is outlined in their policy speech of this year. We want to enable white men to live under conditions which white men have a right to expect and a right to demand. Therefore, I contend that, in connection with primary production, our first consideration should be how best to develop a set of conditions which will establish an Australian parity—which will enable a price to be paid for products which will enable remuneration to be given in an economic way to all the parties engaged in all the various branches of production. Yet we find members like the hon. member for Drayton shrieking for the world's parity when the world's prices are high; but they do not want the world's prices when those prices are low; consequently, when motions of this kind are moved dealing with the world's parity, we must be very careful and scrutinise them very closely indeed. The statement that land taxation has diminished production is something which is not borne out by facts. We know that the object of land taxation is being realised, and it will become a diminishing tax—that is to say, that the revenue accruing therefrom will diminish as it becomes more effective and carries out its objective. The object of the land tax, in my opinion, is to bring land into cultivation. We know that is one of the effects that the land tax has had in this State.

Mr. BEBBINGTON interjected.

Mr. SMITH: The hon. member for Drayton has evidently been thinking. (Laughter.) It is a good sign, and I hope he will continue to do so. I was saying, when the hon. member for Drayton interrupted in his usual manner, that the effect of land taxation in this State has been to bring land into cultivation. We know, for example, that before the Federal Land Tax was imposed certain banks and financial institutions in the North held up land for speculative purposes. I have in my mind's eye a certain area of land, very fertile land, very suitable for sugar-cane cultivation. But the bank which held it would not treat with anyone prior to the imposition of the Federal Land Tax. Immediately that was imposed it commenced to cut up those estates, with the result that a number of families are living on that land to-day, employing labour and making a decent livelihood where formerly only a few cattle ran. That is a policy which has everything to recommend it; a policy which brings land into its best use value is a thing that every Government should attempt and that is one of the things that have been done by that taxation. The hon. member for Aubigny—I think he must really have said it inadvertently—stated, in the course of his speech, that the land tax reduced the producing value of land.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Quite right.

Mr. SMITH: How absurd! Land has all its natural fertility, irrespective of whether it is taxed or not. (Hear, hear!) Good land is good land whether it is taxed or not, and all the taxation in the world will not decrease in any way its fertility, so that statements of that description are quite beside the mark.

Another question that has been raised in connection with the Speech as made by the Governor at the opening of this Parliament is the question of the tenure of land. That, also, is an important question and it, too, has a very important relation to land taxation. We know that from the speculator's standpoint—that of the man who buys a piece of land to-day and works, perhaps, only a little of it or none at all in the hope that the land will increase in value in a few years so that he may reap the large unearned increment that will have accrued—I can understand that from the speculator's standpoint the freehold system is the best. He gets into his own pocket all the enhanced value that results from the activities of the general community. From the point of view of the speculator and the man who desires to exploit the genuine wealth producer, the man whom the hon. member for Drayton represents, the man who really farms the genuine producer, I can understand that high land values and freehold tenure are the best for him. But, take on the other hand the individual who desires land for the purpose of using it, in order to bring it under cultivation and so make a livelihood for himself and increase the sum total of national production. It is naturally in his best interests to have the leasehold system. It enables him to start straight away. Any little capital and savings that he has at his disposal he can use for improving the land, and he gets a return much earlier from it than otherwise he would be able to do. The leaseholder is in a much better position than the man who attempts to buy up the freehold. We know that the friends of hon. members opposite—that is, the land speculators—by manipulation have been able to get large sums of money for land in various parts of Queensland. I know of land which has been sold for a very, very high price indeed—£90 per acre and so on. That means that if a man seeks to make that land freehold he has around his neck a load of debt which it takes him probably a lifetime to get rid of. In addition to that, it places him in the hands of financial institutions. He has to pay a certain price down, which exhausts all his savings. It means, then, that he has to go to the storekeepers and get long credit, which, in turn, means that he has to pay higher prices for his stores. He has to go to a mill or financial institution to get money under a lien on his crop to enable him to carry on, and the result is that when you add the various interests which the farmer is forced to pay to financial institutions and so on, you find he is paying immeasurably more by way of interest than the leaseholder is paying in rent.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: And then put the land tax on that.

Mr. SMITH: For the man who desires to go on the land, to make a home on it, to produce a living for himself and increase the sum total of the national wealth out of the land, I say that the terms that the Labour party believe in—that is, leasehold tenure—is the best policy. (Hear, hear!) It ensures

*Mr. Smith.]*

security of tenure and protection for his improvements.

The next matter I intend to deal with is a point that has been raised by the hon. member for Bulimba by way of interjection. I am always interested to hear the hon. member for Bulimba deal with the sugar industry. I can remember the time when, just previous to the 1915 election, when he was responsible for certain things being done, and responsible, as Treasurer, to a large extent, for a certain Bill being destroyed, he said that he was sick to death, as it were, of the continual demands of the sugar-growers.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: What are you quoting from?

Mr. SMITH: That was the sympathy that the hon. member had in 1914 for the sugar-growers and encouraging production—he was sick of their continuous demands. The hon. member has stated that the increased production in the sugar industry is due to the building of two up-to-date mills at Babinda and South Johnstone. There is not the slightest doubt that the building of those two mills has very considerably increased sugar production in Queensland. They are the most up-to-date mills in this State, and I look forward to the time when we shall have more mills of the same capacity, and when South Johnstone will be more fully supplied and worked under better conditions than apparently it has been up to the present. But the point to be borne in mind is that it is one thing to build a sugar mill capable of treating sugar-cane, and it is another thing to get the cane supplied to those mills, and I contend that it is due to the action of this party and of this Government, that the sugar industry has been placed on a sounder basis than it has ever been on before, that the sugar-growers throughout this State have been encouraged to go on producing and bringing greater and greater areas under cultivation. What would the position have been had the other party been in office? What would the position have been if there had been no Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act and the

[5 p.m.] growers in this State were at the mercy of hon. members

opposite and their friends? It would have meant that the prices paid for their product would have been much less than they are at the present time, and the mills, which the hon. member for Bulimba is so proud about, would not have received sufficient cane to justify their erection.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Nonsense!

Mr. SMITH: Every man who knows anything about the sugar industry and who comes in touch with the men who are making their living in that industry, knows that it is only as a result of this Government's legislation that they are in the position they are in to-day which has encouraged them to increase the areas under cultivation. In that connection, I may quote what Mr. T. A. Powell, the president of the Canegrowers' Association, said at a meeting during the recent elections. That gentleman stated candidly that at the 1915 election he opposed my candidature, but he said his first interests were with the sugar-growers and the primary producers, and as a result of three years' experience of the Labour Government, and as a result of a study of the actions of this party, he had come to the conclusion that it was only by retaining the Labour party in power that

[Mr. Smith.

primary production would be placed on a sound footing and that the farmers would have a chance of securing the value of the product which, by their labour, they produced. That was a candid, definite statement made by a man as a result of three years' study of what the Labour party had done. They had seen what we had done, which was an augury of the good things that were to follow. Everything cannot be done at once. We must proceed step by step. In that connection I might refer to this year's sugar agreement. It is announced, as part of the Government's policy, that certain things would be done in connection with the sugar industry, and this has a very important bearing on production. The hon. member for Bulimba said—and I believe it, too—that he desires to have increased primary production in Queensland. That is a thing we should all believe in, and that is what I stand for. We know that last year one of the conditions imposed by the Federal Government was that the State should guarantee that a sufficient area of land would be placed under cultivation in Queensland to enable Queensland to produce sufficient sugar to meet the Commonwealth's requirements. That guarantee was given so far as it was humanly possible. You cannot guarantee to a ton or 100 tons what amount of sugar will be produced, but so far as it was possible this Government fostered the sugar industry with a view to making the production of sugar balance with the consumption of it within the Commonwealth. Now, we have an agreement brought along this year by Mr. Watt, the Acting Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, which absolutely prohibits any new mills being built, or any increase in plant, or anything being done at the sugar-mills which would have the result of increasing the production of sugar in Queensland. Does the hon. member stand for such a thing as that?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: What would you do with the surplus if you had it?

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: There is no surplus.

Mr. SMITH: Here is a motion being moved by the hon. member for Drayton which purports to have for its object the increase of primary production in Queensland, and yet the party which they helped to return to power, and which occupies the Treasury benches in the Commonwealth, by means of an agreement couched in a way which places this Government in a rather awkward position, practically forces us to agree to limit production in Queensland with regard to sugar.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Because you know you cannot sell it outside Australia.

Mr. SMITH: I am interested in that admission. By the hon. member for Drayton's interjection he does not really believe in increasing the primary production in Queensland—(Hear, hear!)—he only believes in increasing the production of some things. (Hear, hear!) He is limited in his vision. He only sees one part of the primary production—important enough! We of the Labour party stand for primary production in all its aspects and in all its phases. (Hear, hear!) All the products of nature we stand to increase and we desire to bring about conditions which will encourage that increase. There is another matter in connection with that agreement which will have the effect of limiting production, and that

is this: there is a section in that agreement which stipulates that no fresh legislation will be introduced dealing with the price of cane or the price of sugar or anything affecting that industry. We knew that primary production has been increased in this industry as a result of our legislation, and greater areas will be brought under cultivation in the future, I hope and believe. We know that certain proprietary interests which hon. members opposite have a very great affection for—I refer to the Colonial Sugar Refining Company—have discovered a method of evading the legislation of this State, which will have the effect of hampering production. We know that the Act deals with two sets of individuals. It deals with the canegrower as such and it deals with the miller, the idea being to establish a tribunal which will hold the balance evenly between them and see that the canegrower gets the full value of his product. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company do not believe in these things. They do not believe in a fair deal or in going before an impartial tribunal and laying a full statement of the whole position on the table. They have found out a method whereby, if the growers sell to a third party, they can evade this legislation. It means that all the canegrowers in the areas which supply mills owned by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company will have no inducement to increase the areas under cane. They are being placed in the hollow of that company's hand. They are told that unless they accept the conditions which the company dictates—and those conditions are that they shall sell to a third party whom the company nominates and at a price which undoubtedly they fix—they will not crush. This all has its effect in limiting production. We know that it has limited production in the past; that where men were forced to accept any price which proprietary interests dictated, there was no encouragement for them to increase their areas under cultivation to the fullest possible extent. But since the Labour party's policy has been in operation, guaranteeing for all interests concerned a fair deal and the full value that is in his product, there has been an encouragement for him to go ahead and increase production. The policy which the Federal Government have embarked upon, which the hon. member for Drayton, by way of interjection, endorses—

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I asked you a question which you have not answered.

Mr. SMITH: Is seriously limiting production in Queensland. It is a remarkable thing. We know that this question of primary production is the most important one in the world to-day. We find, for example, that one of the greatest weaknesses of Great Britain is the fact that they neglected their agriculture.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. SMITH: They allowed lands to go out of cultivation by a land policy which the friends of hon. members opposite believe in. People were forced off the land, and could not get land except under the conditions which large speculators and wealthy land-owners imposed. They were forced off the land, and as a result of this great crisis they found that a serious position has arisen. No country which neglects primary production can be in anything like a safe economic position, or have any genuine future before it.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. SMITH: All wealth must come from the land, and the encouragement of agricultural production must be the first essential of any sound economic policy in any State or any country, no matter where it may be.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. SMITH: Yet we find members supporting a policy which enables people to speculate in land; supporting a policy which enables people to add field to field, and withhold land from production.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. SMITH: Mankind must have access to the land in order to live. Consequently, if the friends of hon. members opposite are enabled to monopolise that land it means that you have to go to them. The man who holds the land will only allow you to use it under his conditions. What does that mean in the ultimate? You must have access to land to make your living. If you can only have access to that land at the will of some private individual, it means that the private individual dictates to you the terms upon which you shall live.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. SMITH: Under such a system, no man can claim to be free—he is a slave! The land should be for use. The policy that we should adopt is to bring land into its best use value. I claim that that is what the policy of this Government is directed towards achieving.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. SMITH: Another matter in the policy speech which will increase production, and which I am very interested in, is the reference to the North Coast line. I have always stated on the floor of this House, on every occasion when I have been in order in speaking on the North Coast line, that this is the most important national line that is under construction at the present time. I am pleased to see that the Government recognises that this is the most important line, and have promised to accelerate it as much as possible. We know that the line is required to open up vast areas of land and to bring large and important centres into communication with the South.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: That's the point.

Mr. SMITH: We all know the distressing situation which arose at Mackay quite recently. We know that that place, as the result of the cyclone and of the flood, was isolated from the outside world for a considerable period of time. No news could be got in the South as to what had actually happened there, and we could convey no tidings to the people there. Had we the North Coast line—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Does the hon. member propose to connect his remarks with the question before the House?

Mr. SMITH: Yes, I am dealing with the North Coast line, which is contained in the Governor's policy speech.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! We are not discussing the Governor's policy speech.

Mr. SMITH: What is contained in the Governor's policy speech is mentioned in the amendment. I am dealing now with the amendment, which states—

“as the policy of the Government, as outlined in the Speech of His Excellency

*Mr. Smith.*]

the Governor, is calculated to increase production, to ensure to producers the full return of their labour—”

and I contend that the building of the North Coast line and the linking up of Mackay will increase production along the route which that line will traverse.

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Bulimba*): I was following the hon. member with a great deal of interest, Mr. Speaker, with regard to the North Coast line, when you pulled him up. Possibly I may be allowed to say something in reply. Possibly I will be pulled up also. The hon. gentleman got his say in, notwithstanding. I simply wanted to remark that the Government which the hon. member has been condemning—the late Government—were, after all, the Government which were responsible for the introduction of that undertaking, the North Coast line. Let me say that I hope, as a result of that, and I believe, there will be a very considerable increase in production. I followed with a great deal of interest both the hon. member for Mackay and the hon. member for Normanby (Mr. Peterson). I am inclined to think, if it had not been for some references which were made by the hon. member for Normanby, I should not have bothered getting on my feet to debate this particular motion. I want to follow the hon. member for Normanby in some remarks which he made. He practically admitted, in discussing more particularly the settlement of land, that there had been a depreciation in the value of the land. Now, if I have followed his speech carefully and closely—as I desired to do; I have no wish whatever to misquote him—practically the aim and object of the hon. member, through the party which he is supporting, is to see that land in all stages is reduced in value. I think that is the point which he desired to make to this House this afternoon. Now I don't know whether that is not going to be, and is to-day from the point of view of the Government, something which is not in the best interests of the community. I am not here to say it is a good thing to have anything—whether it be land or anything else—at an extreme value. I believe it is a bad thing. But if the policy of the Government is one which is having the effect of pulling down, especially land values in connection with settled areas, where men have embarked upon certain undertakings in perfect good faith, I say it is going to be disastrous. I am perfectly right in saying that to-day, in some districts of the State, financial institutions—and financial institutions are absolutely necessary, are they not, for the development of the State?—as a result of increased taxation—whether it be Federal or State—and as the result more particularly of the land tax—which, by the way, in Queensland is the heaviest in Australia—are advancing less sums of money to the man who needs money at the most difficult period.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It is the most advanced in the world.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Yes, it is the most advanced along those particular lines. Let us look at some of the factors which are responsible to-day for the difficulty in keeping men on the land. I think it will be admitted that there is a very great deal of truth in the statement that there is a disposition on the part of many men to leave the country and get to the cities. I would like to note here what is perfectly true, not only in regard to Queensland, but also in

[*Mr. Smith.*

regard to other States of the Commonwealth. Is there not a tendency for the young and rising generation to gravitate from the country towards the cities?

HON. W. N. GILLIES: How long has that been going on?

HON. W. H. BARNES: That has been going on very much more since the present Government took office.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: No, no!

HON. W. H. BARNES: What is the reason?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION interjected.

HON. W. H. BARNES: There is the hon. Secretary for Public Instruction chirping again. I am going to quote one of his statements made a little while ago. I wish he would keep quiet this afternoon, and let me have an innings. One of the reasons for young fellows coming from the country to the city is because of the conditions in the country, and the necessity of keeping their noses to the grindstone through the interference of the Government, which claims, but is not, to be the friend of the farmer. It is having the effect of driving young fellows to the towns.

Mr. BRENNAN: Which interference?

HON. W. H. BARNES: May I remind the hon. member of their action some time ago in connection with butter, and in nearly everything they have touched. They have said, on the one hand, that they are the friends of the farmer, and, figuratively, on the other hand they have taken them across their knees and whipped them to their hearts' content. There is a decline in agriculture, not only as a result of the dairying industry being interfered with, but because the sons of farmers, many of them, have abandoned their farms and are going into the city rather than continue under the harassing conditions which obtain. Am I not right in saying that there are all kinds of charms in the city which a man does not get in the country, such as picture shows and other things, which make life very much brighter?

Mr. BRENNAN: It is not the result of the Government's policy. It is because the picture shows come to the city.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Then, the hon. member for Normanby said that the conditions which the Government had to deal with were abnormal; in other words, that this Government, in connection with the subject-matter of this resolution, had much greater difficulties to deal with than any previous Government by reason of the abnormal conditions. Then he said that the previous Government were the most backward Government, prior to the present Government coming in, that had ever existed in any State in Australia.

Mr. PETERSON: No; I said Queensland was the most backward State.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I stand corrected. The hon. member said that Queensland was the most backward State in Australia prior to this Government coming into office. That statement is an absolute fallacy, as I will prove. In connection with development, was Queensland the most backward State as far as its railways were concerned? Are the present Government responsible for the magnificent network of railways which exist in Queensland to-day? Was it backward from that

standpoint? I think the evidence clearly shows that Queensland was by no means the most backward State; indeed, in many respects, it led the way. May I point out something else? The Treasurer is not here this afternoon to trot out the widows and orphans; that is getting a bit stale.

Mr. CARTER: It is true, though.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Is it not a fact that even old age pensions were first of all introduced into Queensland, not by a Labour Government, but by another Government? So that when an hon. member says that Queensland up to a certain period was the most backward State, that hon. member is making a very big mistake. Then, as the hon. member for Warwick, by interjection, reminds me of the educational development right away back in the time of the late Sir Charles Lilley. Is his name not famous for what he did with regard to free education, and has not each succeeding Government carried on that work? I am prepared to admit that the present Government are seeking to carry on the work that was done then, but no one dares to say that, as far as Queensland is concerned, it was up to that period the most backward State in Australia. It has led the way. The late Government has been blamed this afternoon by some hon. members on the opposite side, and by the hon. member for Normanby, in connection with their attitude towards the sugar industry. I am going to deal with that a little more fully later on, but I am glad the Secretary for Public Instruction is in his place. I am about to quote from "Hansard" for 1913, page 198. The Secretary for Public Instruction was then speaking, and amongst other things he made these remarks, dealing with the sugar industry—

"The hon. gentleman made a statement to which I am entirely in opposition. He said he hoped the Commonwealth Government would raise the tariff another £1 10s. a ton. I sincerely hope that the Commonwealth will not. I am entirely opposed to any increase in the tariff so far as sugar is concerned, or any other commodity."

The hon. gentleman will see that there was a period, in 1913—a change may have come over the scene now—in connection with the industries of the State when he said that he hoped there would now be an increase given to help that particular industry.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: At that time.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am very glad to hear the hon. gentleman say that. Apparently, he has become a convert, and is looking in another direction in regard to the industrial position.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Do you know that there is a war on? (Laughter.)

HON. W. H. BARNES: When I retire to rest at night, and when I awake in the morning, I have before my view a statement which comes over the Chamber every time from the Minister, "Do you know that there is a war on?" I am reminded that he has just come out of a rather serious bombardment. I am glad to see that he did not get hurt. There was a war on by some of the soldiers who were fighting most vigorously, and I congratulate the hon. gentleman on his escape. (Laughter.) The hon.

member for Normanby made a very strong point in his speech when he brought before the House the question of leasehold and freehold tenure. He spoke of a period of twenty years, and I understood him to say that an individual would probably be paying £60 under leasehold conditions, whereas under freehold conditions he would be paying £200 per annum, approximately.

Mr. PETERSON: That is what it would take to get the freehold in twenty years.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The total saving, if a man took up leasehold, getting the 5 per cent. interest in the Savings Bank—

Mr. PETERSON: I meant an ordinary bank at fixed deposit.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I thought the hon. member said the Savings Bank.

Mr. PETERSON: I meant an ordinary bank at fixed deposit.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The hon. member said that in that way he would have accumulated £4,270 towards the purchase of some freehold land. I have always understood that, with the exception, perhaps, of some hon. members on the other side who are obtaining freehold properties as fast as they can, the policy of the party opposite was altogether opposed to the acquisition of freehold. Yet the hon. member said that, if a man lived on a leasehold for twenty years, he could save £4,270, with which he could purchase a freehold.

Mr. PETERSON: I did not say that. That is absolutely incorrect.

HON. W. H. BARNES: That was the only conclusion one could come to from the hon. member's argument. However, I accept his statement. Life is too short to quarrel on the floor of this House with any hon. member, and if there is one thing I pride myself on it is that, though I may hit very hard, there is no personal sting in what I say.

Mr. PETERSON: Will you admit that, if a man deposits the difference between what it costs to get a freehold and the rent of a perpetual leasehold, he will have that amount of money accumulated in twenty years?

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am not disputing the accuracy of the hon. member's calculation as to the amount that a man would accumulate in twenty years under the conditions stated by him; they may be right, but I contend that the hon. member was arguing altogether on false premises, because he omitted from his consideration entirely the fact that there will be a reappraisal of the rent during the twenty years; and he also omitted to mention that in the case of the freehold the man would have his freehold at the end of the twenty years, whereas in the case of the leasehold he would be unable to obtain the deeds of his property. We all know that it is the ambition of the Britisher to get something which is his own, and not a leasehold. The leasehold system is not a system which is going to encourage men to settle on the land.

Mr. CARTER: How many Britishers have a freehold?

HON. W. H. BARNES: The hon. member knows of the inducements that are being held out to people to take up leaseholds in preference to freeholds, and he knows what the result has been. Further, I see hon. members on the other side who preach leasehold day in and day out, but, when they have the

*Hon. W. H. Barnes.]*

opportunity of getting hold of a property, it is always a freehold and not a leasehold that they want.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: That is not so.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I think the hon. gentleman himself is very much in the same position as I am with my home at Coorparoo. He is a wise man to desire a home of his own, and that home is a freehold and not a leasehold.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: I could not get a perpetual lease at Coorparoo. I must take what I can get.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It is a good job for the hon. gentleman that he cannot get a leasehold at Coorparoo. I now come to another matter which the hon. member for Normanby introduced. I do not know that he meant to be in any way offensive, but he tried to make out that certain men engaged in a certain line of business were dishonest.

Mr. PETERSON: When did I say that in my speech? I quoted the hon. member for Coorooora, the hon. member for Stanley, and other hon. members opposite. I did not need to bring any evidence of my own when your own side said such things.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Anyone who knows the hon. member for Coorooora knows that he is very guarded in any statement that he makes. It is quite possible that even that hon. member might have been misled; but let me say that I shall be delighted if the hon. member for Normanby and other hon. members opposite will accept the invitation which I now make to them. It will be to me a source of the greatest pleasure if they will come along to my firm's business premises to-morrow morning—because that is a good morning—between half-past 9 and 10 o'clock, and get some idea of how our particular business is conducted. I maintain that it is conducted on just as honourable lines as any other business in this city.

Mr. PETERSON: You should direct those remarks to your own supporters.

HON. W. H. BARNES: They do not fit. If the hon. member will accept my invitation, he will find that those engaged in that business are just as honest as any hon. member of this House.

Mr. BRENNAN: Will you show the profits of your business for 1913 to 1915?

HON. W. H. BARNES: The hon. member would get the greatest surprise of his life if he saw what the balances in the produce business were during that period. They were the smallest on record.

Mr. BRENNAN: The balances of your Warwick business for the years 1913 to 1915?

HON. W. H. BARNES: Hon. members were dealing with the produce business, and saying that there is a ring. Now I say emphatically—and there is no personal feeling in the matter, because the cap does not fit—that, so far as my own name or the firm with which I am associated is concerned, or so far as the men engaged in that class of business are concerned, there is absolutely no justification for such a statement. Take my own name, if you will. In whatever quarter you may seek for information, hon. members will find that I have the reputation of being an honest man. (Hear, hear!) When the inference is thrown across the floor of the House that there is a ring in connection with our line of business, surely one has the right to say that there is no ring. Not

[Hon. W. H. Barnes.]

a single attempt has been made to-day to produce evidence of the existence of such a ring.

Mr. BRENNAN: Will you show your profits?

HON. W. H. BARNES: If the hon. member saw the profits that are made, it would be a big surprise to him, and it would entirely dispel the view that seems to be held on the other side with regard to the whole situation. I wish the State Produce Agency no harm. In any remark I may make I am not dealing with any individual connected with the State Produce Agency. There are some excellent men there, and, if I stood here and traduced those excellent men under the protection of privilege, I would be doing a great wrong. But I say those men are proceeding along the same lines in the conduct of their business as other concerns engaged in the same trade. There is no difference whatever. Stuff is auctioned in the same way; stuff is bought in the same way.

Mr. CARTER: But their profits belong to the people.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The hon. member who interjects shows that he is talking on a subject that he knows nothing whatever about. I sincerely hope that the State Produce Agency, as well as all other State industrial enterprises, will not make a loss upon its transactions at any period; but, whatever business it is, you cannot dissociate the business from the expenses. I pass away from this subject by saying that, having been in the produce business for many years and having grown grey in it, I have never known any attempt to form a ring. Competition is just as keen in that as in any other business. I have never known of any attempt being made to try to "do" the farmer.

Hon. W. N. GILLES: You don't agree with the hon. member for Coorooora?

HON. W. H. BARNES: Not if he says something that I know is not correct. I have documents in my possession which prove absolutely that there never has been a ring in the business, and my experience is only typical of what is happening to other people engaged in the same business.

Mr. PETERSON: What about the statement of the hon. member for Stanley?

HON. W. H. BARNES: I think I have dealt fully with that, and I want now to make some reference to a statement made here to-day that members of the Opposition when they had the power did not assist the sugar industry.

Hon. W. N. GILLES: Assist the sugar-farmers.

HON. W. H. BARNES: May I remind the Assistant Minister for Justice that it was the present Opposition who, when in power, appointed a commission which had to do with finding out the most suitable localities for the establishment of mills? Am I not right in saying that, in addition to that, they let contracts for the erection of mills at Babinda and South Johnstone? In connection with those mills—I may not be quite right as to the exact figures, I have not access to the official records—I think I am correct in saying that those two mills cost, together, probably more than £600,000. But the present Opposition did something more than that. They established in connection with those mills what you might call an absolutely co-operative principle—and I want to say on the floor of this

House that I am an absolute believer in co-operation—they made it possible for the men who contributed cane—there is not a member in this House who can gainsay the statements I am making—from year to year to establish a credit in those mills, so that they would become their property at the end of twenty years, or sooner, if they could manage it. I ask whether that was not truly a co-operative principle. (Hear, hear!) And why hon. members say that nothing was done to help the important sugar industry I cannot understand. That is an answer which no hon. member can gainsay.

HON. W. N. GILLIES: You were opposed to cane prices boards, you know.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Let me deal with one mill I know something about. I had it frequently before me when I was Treasurer. I refer to the Proserpine Mill. When the Government went out of office the debit balance, which had been very considerable, had been reduced to about £40,000. We are told that the cane prices boards have worked wonders for the farmers. Yet, what is the position to-day regarding Proserpine? I am told by a farmer whom I met this week and who lived in the Proserpine district and was interested in it, that the debit has gone up from £40,000 to about £80,000 since we left office. If that is the method by which hon. members opposite are going to help the farmer, it is a very cruel method indeed. I hold that the aim of every Government should be to place these utilities, sugar-mills, etc., in the hands of the farmers who do the work and contribute the cane, because, after all, they are the people who finance the State. I am with the hon. member who last resumed his seat in thinking that the primary producer is absolutely essential to the very life of the State, and one of the things we have to do to-day is to see that we do not do anything which is going to shut out the primary producer, not only from our counsels, but also from the activities of the State, because it would be exceedingly disastrous generally. I do not think I would have risen if it were not that my own close position with certain things had been brought up to-day. One of the remarks made by an hon. member was that they did not support our policy of pulling down. (Hear, hear!) I know a policy—a policy enunciated by Mr. Demaine—to which the Premier gave his blessing. That policy was a policy of pulling down and placing every man on one level.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Nothing of the kind.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It is not encouraging them to get up.

HON. W. N. GILLIES: It is the policy of bringing up.

HON. W. H. BARNES: There has been and there is to-day a big difference between the policy, so far as industry is concerned, of this side of the House and that of the other side of the House, and that difference is that we believe in connection with private industries that every man should be encouraged to get up from the bottom right to the top—that he should be encouraged and paid for his hard work. On the other side, the policy is apparently to bring other men down to a level—(dissent)—and to discourage that which will help him in the days to come.

MR. KIRWAN: We have got the product of your policy in Europe to-day.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Evidently, some of the shots I have made have got home on hon. members opposite.

MR. BEBBINGTON (*Drayton*): I wish to have a few remarks on this matter before it goes through.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the hon. member propose to speak to the amendment?

MR. BEBBINGTON: Yes.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: He will be in order in doing that.

MR. BEBBINGTON: I cannot understand a member representing a farming district where the land is all freehold and where probably 75 per cent. is subject to land tax introducing such an amendment or opposing a motion to reduce the land tax on lands used for dairying and farming purposes.

MR. BRENNAN: Opposing the land tax?

MR. BEBBINGTON: Certainly, he opposes its reduction or its being taken off. He opposes the motion, certainly. This motion did not make any attempt to relieve speculators in the city or large landowners—large business men who stand in a very different position from the farmers, because the land tax on city properties is passed on in the course of business. But the man who tills his land in the country has no chance of passing his land tax on to somebody else.

MR. WINSTANLEY: Nor anybody else.

MR. BEBBINGTON: If the hon. member had any knowledge of farming he would know that usually the price of produce is fixed in London on the world's parity, and the farmer has no chance of altering it. If the hon. member thought he would remember that when the State Produce Agency Bill was going through I brought in an amendment that would allow farmers to form pools or trusts, or whatever else you like to call them, on the lines of the Cheese Manufacturers' Association, which we have at present, and which has increased the number of our factories from something like sixteen to ninety-six. If we can get a principle that has increased our dairy produce to such an extent, that has put so much money into our factories and has increased the earnings not only of the farmers themselves, but also of the workers who work those factories and build them, if we can get a principle that has increased the output of Queensland to such an extent, then why not adopt it? I asked the Minister for Agriculture then to accept that amendment, so as to put the farmer on the same footing as the dairyman to-day as to his cheese factories, and he absolutely refused. The Minister would have nothing but his State Produce Agency. If the agency could work for the same ends, if it could assist the farmer the same as our co-operative methods have done, I would give it my blessing and all the help I possibly could. There is absolutely no chance whatever of the State Produce Agency doing anything of the sort.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member may not speak to the motion again. He will have the right to reply, but I must ask him to confine his present remarks strictly to the amendment.

MR. BEBBINGTON: The amendment is "the policy of the Government." The Produce Agency is part of the policy of the Government.

MR. KIRWAN: What is your policy?

*Mr. Bebbington.]*

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I may tell the hon. member that all my output goes through the co-operative society. If that will satisfy him it is satisfactory to me. The hon. member for Mackay referred to the oversea markets. I asked the hon. member a reasonable question, and he evaded it in every way. I asked him: "Could he produce sugar in Queensland to-day, at the present cost of production, and send the surplus to any market in the world?"

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: We do not supply sufficient for ourselves.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: If there was any surplus to-day there are neither ships nor markets for it.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: Are you aware that we have never had a surplus in Australia?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: We produced a surplus last year, and I know there is a lot of sugar in Melbourne to-day that they would be very glad to send away to make room for the new crop, but there is no possible chance of exporting it. The hon. member for Mackay said—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I would point out that the hon. member for Mackay, not having spoken to the motion, had the right to speak both to the motion and the amendment, but the hon. member who is speaking must confine his remarks strictly to the amendment.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: That is the policy of the Government. That seems rather a difficult thing to follow, because it would be very hard to define at present what the Government's policy is. Again, when we find that the Government's policy is proposed and defined at a very far corner of Australia to-day with closed doors, and when we see that the members of that party, when they left by the train, were given three cheers for a revolution— (Government laughter.) Unfortunately for us, those are the facts as reported in the Press to-day. When we come to define these things, and when we come to look on what has been done within those closed doors and the policy is not allowed to be published—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I must ask the hon. member to resume his seat if he continues on those lines. The hon. member knows just as well as I do that he is not in order in continuing on those lines.

Mr. MACARTNEY: You must not touch the caucus. Be careful!

Mr. CARTER: I rise to a point of order. The leader of the Opposition made a reflection on the Chair. He said, "You must not interfere with the caucus."

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I heard the hon. member make some reference to the caucus, but I did not take it as a reflection on the Chair.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that we have the very highest opinion of you, and would not reflect on you in the slightest. We appreciate your service very highly. If I must confine my comments to the Government's policy, I will deal with land tenure, and that was dealt with by the hon. member for Normanby. He is one of those reasonable men for whom I have very high respect—quite different to some other hon. members on that side of the House. I only wish we could hold them all in the same esteem. In the matter of

[*Mr. Bebbington.*]

tenure, we say that the selector, whoever he is, should have the choice himself. He should be the man to say whether he will have a leasehold or a freehold. The past Government gave him the choice, and as soon as ever we get there again we will give him the choice again. A great deal of land is being taken up under leasehold tenure, because we have made it public that on the first opportunity we get we are going to give these men the right to turn their leaseholds into freeholds if they wish it. Only if they wish it. They talk about leasehold tenure! The leasehold tenure was on the statute-book long before they came into power.

Mr. BRENNAN: Then, why complain?

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The selector had the right to take either. You people who live in the city, who know nothing whatever about land—you could not make a living off the land if you tried—you want to dictate terms to the man who goes on the land.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must address the Chair.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: Under the leasehold tenure these men are compelled to spend £50 or £60 an acre and still the land belongs to the Government. We are told that they prefer a perpetual lease, but anyone who knows anything about the matter knows perfectly well that there is no such thing as a perpetual lease. The lease which is offered to these men as a perpetual lease is merely a lease for fourteen years or until the first reappraisal. I admit the selector has the right to a perpetual lease if he will pay the rent imposed by the present Government.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: No, by the Land Court.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: The Land Court is the Government. At the end of fourteen years—like we have men now crying out for a land tax—we will have the caucus or a set of people crying out for increased rents so as to relieve themselves of taxation. Then reappraisements will come along, and such a rent will be put on these leaseholds that the whole of the value will be taken away and men, after paying the rent, will have nothing left for themselves at the end of the year. Already we know that a Government member is looking for a job on the Land Court. We know they are doing all they can to remove every man out of his job so that they can get in. We know that very well.

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

## LAND ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

### INITIATION.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (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 desirability of introducing a Bill to amend the Land Act of 1910, the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act of 1917, and the Closer Settlement Act Amendment Act of 1917 in certain particulars,"

said: I desire to inform hon. members

that the object of this Bill is, in the main, to make better provision for discharged soldiers, and in addition to make a provision that does not now exist for giving priority to men on active service. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. MACARTNEY: In respect to all forms of tenure?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: In respect to all forms of land settlement, except grazing selections, and pastoral holdings, in the first place we propose to give priority to discharged soldiers; they will get the first priority. After that, the men who are on active service will get priority, and we will obviate the delay that now takes place. In the event of discharged soldiers, or men on active service, making application to the department for blocks of land of a certain portion that is to be thrown open, we will obviate the delay, which now amounts to not less than twenty-eight days, by having to withdraw the land from the original form in which it was thrown open, and set apart a portion of it to be balloted for by discharged soldiers. (Hear, hear!) We also propose to amend it in the direction of automatically extending the licensed term for men who are on active service, equal to the time that they are so engaged on active service. (Hear, hear!) We also propose giving selectors of agricultural farms, the leases of a number of which will expire on the 30th of this month, two alternatives. We realise that a number of them will find it difficult to pay one-half the purchase money in the remaining twelve months, and we propose to give them the right of conversion to a perpetual lease selection, or an extension of ten years in which to pay the balance of the money in ten equal instalments without interest. (Hear, hear!) We also propose to amend the law so as to give trustees of any society, association, unions, religious or charitable bodies, or a joint stock company, an opportunity of obtaining a perpetual lease, whether town, suburban, or country, which they are debarred from doing as the law stands at the present time.

Mr. MACARTNEY: Has this any reference to Jacob's ladder?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No, it has no reference to Jacob's ladder. As a matter of fact, I propose to make it retrospective for a certain time in order that a certain church may get the advantage of it. It has no connection whatever with Jacob's ladder. That is merely an exchange, I understand. This will be a great benefit to a number of institutions, and a number of them are very desirous of taking advantage of it, but are debarred from doing so at the present time. We also propose to set apart for discharged soldiers land purchased under the Closer Settlement Act. (Hear, hear!) So that every opportunity is going to be given to discharged soldiers and men on active service. There are two other small amendments, which are merely for the purpose of bringing the law into conformity with preferential pastoral leases and with grazing farms as they are at the present time. That practically comprises the subject of the Bill.

Mr. MACARTNEY (*Toowong*): So far as the Bill is designed to simplify matters for discharged soldiers or men at the front, I think the hon. gentleman is to be congratulated. Of course, in the absence of the details

one cannot just say that the proposal will be absolutely satisfactory.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The hon. member will find that they all fit in with what I have just said.

Mr. MACARTNEY: There have been difficulties placed in the way of soldiers making application for land—difficulties which, I think, need not have been created—and it will be a matter of gratification if this Bill is found to remove those particular difficulties. It will be best, perhaps, not to discuss the matter at the present stage, but I would like the hon. gentleman, when the Committee stage comes along, to give the House just a little bit fuller information as to the details.

Mr. GRAYSON (*Cunningham*): From what has been said by the Minister for Lands on this particular Bill, it seems to me it will be a measure that will receive support from both sides of the House. (Hear, hear!) I congratulate the Minister for Lands on making provision for returned soldiers. At the same time I think that provision should be made for those soldiers who are now serving at the front.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I propose to do that here.

Mr. GRAYSON: I am very pleased to hear that. I know that there were some blocks of land thrown open in the Warwick district, and only those who had returned could make application for them. There are many soldiers from the Warwick district who are serving at the front, who, I know, would have been only too pleased to have made application through their trustees in Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Don't you know that that was not the fault of the Lands Department? It was the fault of the law.

Mr. GRAYSON: I understand that. I am not finding fault with the Minister or the department. At the same time, I think provision should be made in this Bill so that parents and trustees of those who are now serving at the front can make application for blocks of land that are thrown open. I would like to further congratulate the Minister on the setting apart of certain areas on repurchased estates. I have one estate in my mind—that is the Cecil Plains Estate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. GRAYSON: I think that a certain portion of that estate should be reserved for returned soldiers, as it is eminently suitable for settlement.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I cannot allow the hon. member to proceed on those lines at this stage.

Mr. GRAYSON: Judging from the remarks of the Minister, I think the Bill will not receive any serious opposition from this side of the House.

Mr. SIZER: I wish to congratulate the Minister also on introducing this measure. I made the remark in the course of a speech before I took my seat in the House, at a meeting at which the Minister for Agriculture was present, that I was prepared to support the Government in any measures brought forward which would assist the returned soldiers, and, from what the Minister has said, I believe we shall be able to assist them. It has been a long-standing grievance that men at the front have not been able to

make application through trustees, and the delay which has been mentioned has been a source of inconvenience to men on their return. I am very pleased to hear that the Minister proposed to rectify that matter, and also that he is setting aside lands for closer settlement. I would like to bring under the notice of the Minister the question of allowing those portions of land which he proposed to throw open to returned soldiers to be taken up on freehold tenure. I hope that the Government are going to give some consideration to these returned men.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They are; that is the reason they are giving them perpetual lease.

Mr. SIZER: I have no objection to perpetual lease being in the Bill, but I think that the soldiers should not be debarred from taking the land up as freehold, if they so desire, and I trust that the Minister will give the men the option of doing so.

Mr. GUNN: I gather from the Minister's remarks that he is going to give preference to returned soldiers as far as agricultural lands and perpetual leases are concerned. I would like to know whether any preference is to be given to them with reference to grazing farms? I recognise that the most prosperous industry we have at the present time is the grazing industry. I notice that when the soldiers come back they get preference and assistance to go on to fruit farms, and in other classes of settlement. But there are numbers of men who come from the western districts who know nothing about farming, while they know everything about grazing. While they are away these lands are being cut up, and the people who hold powers of attorney from them have no right, prior to anyone else, to put in an application for them. I hope the Minister will seriously consider the advisability of giving preference to returned soldiers and also soldiers at the front. They have been good enough to fight for this grazing land in the West, and I think they ought to have preference over the men who stop at home.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I would like to ask the Minister a question with reference to the lands at Stanthorpe which are set apart for returned soldiers. There are rumours that the improvements are to be charged on the price of the land as it is thrown open. I believe the owner of the land gave the improvements in on condition that the land was selected by soldiers. I hope the rumour is not correct; I do not think it is.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I call the attention of the hon. member to the fact that his remarks are not relevant to the question before the House.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: I sincerely trust that the Minister will give the soldiers the choice of taking up freehold, if they desire. The men have the right to get the land as their own. I also hope this will apply to sailors. I do not think there should be any difference made between soldiers and sailors.

Hon. J. M. HUNTER: This applies to sailors as well as soldiers.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: We want to make sure, that is all.

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): I am very pleased that the Government intend to remove some of the disabilities which exist under

our Land Act as far as settlement is concerned. But I had hoped that the amendment would fulfil the promise which was made by the Minister's predecessor, just previous to the last election, to certain Jimbour selectors in connection with their lands—more particularly in regard to the revaluation of their lands. As far as I can understand, nothing is going to be done in that respect. The Minister told those men that, if the Government came back to power, they would receive every consideration, and that legislation would be introduced. I suppose that the returned soldiers will have the chance of taking up land which is going to be vacated by settlers on Jimbour, but that land will be valueless to them unless the alteration of the capital value is considered.

Hon. J. M. HUNTER: What are you alluding to?

Mr. VOWLES: A promise which you made to a deputation that when you got back to power you would reconsider the Jimbour question and the revaluation of the land. The Minister made that statement, but I am sorry, as far as those people are concerned, that he is not going to put it into effect.

Mr. CORSER: I think the House is unanimous in its opinion that it is desirable to introduce a Bill to amend the Soldiers' Settlement Act, and we sincerely hope that in amending it the Government will give some consideration to the conditions with regard to residence, and make them more lenient than they are to an ordinary settler, while safeguarding it to the degree that a bona fide returned man must own the land. If the Minister will include an amendment in that direction in the Bill, he will afford a great deal of relief as far as soldier settlement is concerned. As far as the Jimbour land is concerned, the hon. member for Dalby has stated that the settlers there received a promise from the late Minister for Lands that something was to be done for them. The condition of those people at the present time, like those on some of the other repurchased estates, is anything but satisfactory to the State. It is to be hoped that a revaluation will be made, and that the present deplorable state of affairs will be brought to an end. The settlers are really being forced to leave the State and go to other countries.

Mr. CARTER: Nonsense!

Mr. CORSER: I might say that there are men who have come here from New Zealand and taken upon themselves obligations which they cannot carry out, and they are leaving the land and the improvements behind them. If the next man who comes along is a returned soldier, he will be compelled to pay for those improvements, perhaps, 100 per cent. more than their value, and he may not be aware of the great difficulties that beset the previous settler. If the Minister will take into consideration the difficulties of past settlers, it will probably save returned soldiers from falling into the same trap.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I can assure the hon. member that I will not place one returned soldier on the Jimbour repurchased lands at the present price.

Mr. CORSER: I am very glad to have that assurance from the Minister. The Bill should certainly make some improvement in the existing Acts, and I hope it will have the effect of making soldier settlement more pleasant than it is at the present time.

[*Mr. Sizer.*]

HON. J. M. HUNTER (*Maranoa*): One or two misstatements have been made by hon. members opposite to which I wish to refer. The first is a statement that the improvements owned by the late lessee on lands at Stanthorpe now being opened for soldier settlement purposes are being charged to returned soldiers. In the first place, the land referred to is not at Stanthorpe at all, but down at Texas, and the improvements are going to the returned soldier who succeeds at the ballot, free of any charge, having been gifted by the late owner. The second statement is with regard to a promise that I am alleged to have made that something was going to be done in connection with the Jimbour selectors. When I was Secretary for Public Lands I was interviewed on the subject, but I refused to do anything further than promise to have the matter considered, as it was right on the eve of the election, and it is well known that this party is not prepared to buy votes at any price.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear! and OPPOSITION laughter.

HON. J. M. HUNTER: No promise was made by me any more than that the matter would be considered, and I am quite sure that the present Minister will honour that promise.

Mr. VOWLES: I will interview him.

Question put and passed.

#### LAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2).

##### INITIATION.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS, in moving—

“That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirability of introducing a Bill to amend sections 43, 109, and Schedule II. of the Land Act of 1910 in certain particulars, and for other consequential purposes.”

said: It is hardly necessary for me to refer at this stage specifically to the contents of this Bill beyond saying that it is an old acquaintance. It was introduced twice by my predecessor—on the last occasion towards the end of last session—and it was not agreed to by another place. It is desirable, in the opinion of the Government, that it should be reintroduced in order that certain persons who, as the hon. member for Carnarvon said a few minutes ago, are by far the most prosperous class of settlers in Queensland to-day—that is, the grazing community should give an equitable return for what they are receiving from the Crown. It is a very unfair thing that that class should have special concessions granted to them, more especially when we see what they are getting now for their produce as compared with prices in 1910 and in 1905, when these provisions were inserted in our Land Act. It is unfair that the community generally should be deprived of their rights to the extent they have been by these concessions; and the Government are of opinion that this embargo should be removed, and that these people should be placed on the same footing as anyone else who goes before the Land Court, and that that tribunal should be able to say in all cases what is a fair and just rent to be paid by these people to the Treasury.

Mr. MACARTNEY: Are there any other provisions in the Bill?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: There is another provision. When the hon. member sees the Bill, he will admit that it is absolutely fair and aboveboard.

Mr. MACARTNEY: The hon. gentleman is to be congratulated on not including the provisions of this measure in the Bill with which we were dealing previously. It is just as well that this measure should be discussed on its merits separately, and should not be made use of to interfere with the passage of desirable legislation. That was the position last year, when another hon. gentleman was in charge of the Lands Department. I am glad to see that the present Minister takes a different view of things, and treats the House reasonably. There would not be much to say at this stage, but that the Minister has not limited himself altogether to an explanation of the contents of the Bill, but has taken advantage of the opportunity to dilate on the reason for submitting the Bill to the House. No doubt, from his own party point of view, he is quite justified in doing so. It is just as well that we should understand the nature of this Bill, and why there should be any objection to it, either on the part of another place or on the part of other hon. members on this side of the House. In the first instance, when we consider that it is the object of this Bill to take from those classes what was given to them in 1905 by the Labour party, one wonders why the present Labour party should go back on the very provision that they themselves extended to the pastoral lessees and grazing farm lessees. The hon. gentleman knows perfectly well that the underlying principle in the granting of those conditions in 1905 was that the far western country, to which the Act more particularly applied, was more or less useless, without the expenditure of a very large sum of money on improvements, and that, following upon the very severe drought which operated from 1900 to 1904, it was necessary for the settlement of the country to grant the lessees conditions which would enable them to finance the improvements to which I have referred. It is quite true that we are not to-day suffering from the extreme drought conditions which existed between 1902 and 1904; but we never know when the conditions of this country may be those of drought; and the time may yet come when the pastoral lessees and grazing farmers of this State, however prosperous they may be at the present time, may have to revert to financial institutions to get the money that is necessary to enable them to carry on; and, unless there is some reasonable provision included in our land legislation, it is very likely that the same difficulties will crop up again. But that is

[7.30 p.m.] not altogether the objection to the introduction of the Bill. The objection lies more in the absolute breach of contract—a statutory contract as well as a written contract—entered into between the Government of this country and the lessees to whom we have been referring.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: No contract at all.

Mr. MACARTNEY: The hon. member calls himself the Secretary for Public Instruction, and he does not seem to know what a contract is.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Neither do you.

*Mr. Macartney.]*

Mr. MACARTNEY: Upon my word, I am astonished at the Minister—I am really astonished at the Minister! It is generally known that when a subject comes up for discussion the hon. member obscures it the moment he touches it. He says there is no contract.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: No; you read section 4 of the Crown Lands Act.

Mr. MACARTNEY: I wonder whether he has read the Act.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Yes; have you?

Mr. MACARTNEY: Of course, I have read it. I am not in the habit of discussing things I do not know something about. The hon. member will find definitely set out in that Act the contract which the Government of the country gave to the lessees, whether pastoralists or grazing farmers, and the hon. member knows that the regulations issued under that Act contain the very form of lease, word for word, to which the pastoral lessees and grazing farmers were entitled. He knows that a lease is issued in a formal way—as a matter of fact, signed by the Governor of the State—and it is set out that it is held subject to all the provisions and conditions of the Act. And those provisions and conditions provide against increasing the rent beyond a limit of 50 per cent. upon that which was payable in the preceding period.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It also provides for amendment.

Mr. MACARTNEY: The hon. member knows that is not so. I had always regarded the hon. member as an honest man, whatever else he was, and if the hon. member says that there is no contract—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: I say it again and again.

Mr. MACARTNEY: Then I begin to wonder, assuming him to be an honest man, what he is. I can only put it that way. I do not like to be offensive to the hon. member, but it is a subject on which he has some mild form of hallucination. We have two ex-Ministers for Lands sitting alongside the actual Minister for Lands, and I believe that the present Minister is the most reasonable man of the three. (Hear, hear! and laughter.) And if the Hon. the Minister for Public Instruction will pay a little attention to that department in which he is as a small grain of sand on the seashore—(laughter)—the business of the House will progress more quickly. I do not propose to say much more; but I do trust that hon. members on the other side will see before we finally deal with this matter that it is to the credit of Queensland—it is in the interests of Queensland—that the Government of the country should adhere to the contracts they make with the people of the country. I trust that that spirit will prevail, and that we will not see this measure pushed to its utmost conclusion. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. CORSER: I am concerned about the explanation of the Minister for Lands, because I find that he has omitted a matter of very great importance which has been promised to the farmers of Queensland by the present Government. I was sincerely hoping that the Government would bring about an amendment in the Land Act of 1910 promised to the settlers right throughout

[*Mr. Macartney.*

the State during the past elections, particularly when the Premier of Queensland said, "We shall watch your votes on the 16th, and by your votes we shall know whether you want these amendments or not." The promise was given to the agricultural settlers that section 99 was to be amended—that agricultural farmers who are to-day called upon to pay one-fortieth of their rents for the first twenty years, and compelled to pay the balance, being 50 per cent., of their rents in the twenty-first year, should have some relief.

The TREASURER: That is being dealt with in the other Bill.

Mr. CORSER: The Minister has not in any way made clear that he is going to obtain that provision to meet the requirements of the settlers and fulfil the promise that was made.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: You could not have been in the Chamber. The Minister made it very clear.

Mr. CORSER: He did not. The Minister only made it clear that in very bad cases where the settler had not been able to pay his rent would any relief be given.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Nothing of the sort. I gave you two alternatives.

Mr. CORSER: Will the Minister say that in all cases of agricultural farm tenure he intends to extend this provision? Has the Minister said that?

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: Yes.

Mr. CORSER: Let the Minister responsible for this Bill speak? Will the Minister say that in all cases of agricultural farm tenure he has promised to extend it for forty years?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member has already dealt with that on another motion.

Mr. CORSER: This is a Bill in which he could make those alterations, and he has not promised to make them under the provisions of the motion.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I have promised to cover the position in more generous fashion than any previous Government.

Mr. CORSER: That does not do. The hon. member has clouded the issue, and that is that section 99 was to be amended to such an extent that the agricultural farmers of the State were to be relieved of the payment of 50 per cent. in the twenty-first year, as is the case at the present time, and the payment would be extended over another twenty years. Then, again, other provisions were promised. In section 156 we have a reference to noxious weeds and the duties of agricultural and pear selectors.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I would point out to the hon. member that he is not speaking to the motion.

Mr. CORSER: I am trying to proceed as broadly as it is possible for me at this stage.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that it is desirable to introduce a Bill to amend certain sections of the Land Act.

Mr. CORSER: Yes, in certain particulars, and for other consequential purposes.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Only those sections.

Mr. CORSER: That is what I am complaining about. I am complaining that the Minister is not including sections 99 and 136.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I am introducing two Bills dealing with the Land Act.

Mr. CORSER: I am complaining that when he proposes to amend sections 43 and 109 and Schedule 2 he should also fulfil his promise and the promise of the Government and include sections 99 and 136. This is the time when we should enter our protest; this is the only time when we can protest against tampering with the Land Act of 1910 for certain political purposes, introducing a contentious measure which the Minister knows has been before us previously and on conscientious grounds must receive a certain amount of opposition. The Minister refuses to introduce those amendments which the people of Queensland have been promised, and so introduce easier conditions, making possible the payment of dues as they come round.

At a quarter to 8 o'clock p.m.,

Mr. SMITH took the chair as Deputy Speaker.

Mr. VOWLES: This is the stage of the measure at which the Opposition have the opportunity of objecting to the desirability of the introduction of legislation.

The TREASURER: What you want to do is to enlarge the order of leave when we go into Committee on Tuesday.

Mr. VOWLES: Thank you! This is the opportunity we have of expressing our views so that we may bring about an alteration by the Minister himself. The object is to amend certain sections of the Land Act which deal particularly with the reassessment of rents and the form of lease and the schedule contained in the Act. It is rather a good thing that this contentious measure is being considered apart from other desirable legislation and that we are not in the position in which we found ourselves last session when we were forced into that position where we had to oppose legislation—part of which we agreed with—because there was attached to it repudiation clauses which we could not consent to, and consequently the whole thing had to go by the board. However, that is not so now. We are simply dealing with what was described in previous debates as repudiation as far as lessees under the Land Act are concerned. I, for one, will not be a party to repudiation, and I do not think it is desirable that we should introduce legislation the effect of which will be the undoing of a contract which was entered into between the Crown and its tenants. Although the Minister took advantage of an admission which was made by a member of the Opposition to the effect that the men doing best in Queensland at the present time were probably those engaged in grazing, that probably is a result of present conditions, and you have to take into consideration a series of years in that class of business. You have to take into consideration the visitation of droughts, and they are unfortunately rather common in the Western districts, to which this legislation will apply; and you have to take into consideration that if you are going to raise the conditions in regard to the payment of rents as far as Crown tenants are concerned—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We are not going to raise them at all. We are going to give the Land Court a free hand.

Mr. VOWLES: You are going to give the Land Court a free hand to go above the 50 per cent. rise, which is now the maximum. It is going to be left an open matter, notwithstanding the fact that when these men selected the land the contract was that if they took that land up and developed the back portions of Queensland, and spent their money on improvements, they were to pay a smaller rental probably than the land was worth, simply because they were going to open up this country. The claim is made that these men should suffer because they are having a good time at present.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No, that the community should not suffer.

Mr. VOWLES: These men, who may be doing well out of grazing, are the men who are paying big income taxes at present, and the community get the benefit in another direction. It is not a fair thing that we should take big income taxes out of them and then turn round and practically cancel a solemn obligation that was entered into between the Crown and its tenants. I do not think it desirable that we should endorse the principle of repudiation under any circumstances at all. I have heard the Minister for Education strain the Land Act and say that no contract was entered into. He said in some peculiar way the Crown reserved the right to vary the land laws.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Hear, hear!

Mr. VOWLES: We may vary the conditions as far as pests are concerned, and in other directions, but where there is a definite promise that the rental shall be a certain sum of money, and, after a term of years, that property is liable to reappraisal, and the reappraisal is definitely fixed at a sum not exceeding 50 per cent. on the previous term, if we attempt to alter that we are interfering with their basis of finance, we are interfering with their private rights, and we are repudiating a covenant.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: You are giving yourself away now when you say it is subject to alteration.

Mr. VOWLES: It is subject to alteration in certain directions. If it is necessary that land should be free from pests for the protection of the adjoining property, or for the protection of Crown lands, we have always said that was reasonable, and that it should be put on the tenant.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Alter the law.

Mr. VOWLES: There is a little trouble going on in Europe over the tearing up of a scrap of paper, and here the hon. gentleman wants to tear up an agreement with people in Queensland, and signed by the Government in the name of the King.

The TREASURER: They might declare war if you do it.

Mr. VOWLES: Probably they would declare war against the hon. gentleman. Any honest man would declare war under the circumstances. I do not consider that legislation of this class is desirable, and it is my intention to resist it and vote against it at every opportunity.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It is just as well to

*Hon. H. F. Hardacre.]*

get this matter settled at the outset. (Hear, hear.) It is quite clear that the Opposition are either showing their utter ignorance—as lawyers they ought to know better—or they are using it for a political purpose on which to base an utter misrepresentation for the purpose of creating an outcry with the public, when there is no justice in the outcry, and no injustice in what we propose to do. (Opposition laughter.) I tried to make the matter clear before—(renewed laughter)—and have shown indisputably that my contention is correct. But because of the usual obtuseness of hon. members opposite—(laughter)—who are worse in seeing the logic of an argument than a Scotchman in seeing a joke, it is necessary to hammer it into them, despite the facts of the case and the clear statement of the law on the matter, and not only the clear statement of our law on the matter, but the absolute clearness and certainty of the British law of eminent domain upon which all our laws are based. The law of eminent domain, as the hon. member ought to know, prevents any contract being made so far as any land is concerned either with regard to conditions or to the giving of it away.

Mr. MACARTNEY: Are you referring to eminent domain in the matter of confiscation?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It is absolutely impossible under the British law to contract away any part of the Empire, or any part of the land of the Empire, or that you can contract away any right without reserving to the Crown the right to amend those conditions when the Crown, in the interests of the general community, thinks it necessary.

Mr. CORSER: What about the Trades Hall site?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: I defy any member of the Opposition to disprove my statement.

Mr. MACARTNEY: Where is your authority for it?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: I have an authority on the subject, and it is proof of what I say that the Crown proceeds on that basis. I have here the Land Act of 1910, which repealed all our Land Acts up to that date, and the very first clause dealing with general provisions says—

“Subject to this Act, the Governor in Council may, in the name of His Majesty, grant—”

Not make a contract. It is a grant, not a contract. It is a holding, or a tenure, under certain conditions, but not a contract at all. It goes on—

“may grant in fee-simple, or demise for a term of years, any Crown land within Queensland.

“The grant or lease shall be made subject—”

Mr. MACARTNEY: “Grant or lease.” Do you suggest that a lease is not a contract when there are mutual obligations?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Of course there are mutual obligations outside of contracts, and every obligation is not a contract. I defy the hon. member, as a lawyer, to say that every obligation is a contract.

Mr. MACARTNEY: If I get you a definition of a contract will you read it?

[Hon. H. F. Hardacre.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Of course I will read it. I want the hon. member to tell me if every obligation is a contract. He knows it is not. He knows a contract is an obligation, but every obligation is not a contract, and here is one where it is a grant under certain conditions, which is not a contract.

Mr. VOWLES: You have not proved anything yet.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The section says—

“The grant or lease shall be made subject to such reservations or conditions as are authorised or prescribed by this Act or any other Act.”

That is not merely any other Act that was in existence then; it is any other Act at any time in existence, any Act that might be brought into existence at a later time. And the hon. member who has just sat down—the hon. member for Dalby—gave the whole case away when he admitted that, notwithstanding the conditions laid down in the lease, we had the right under the law to override that lease and impose other conditions as originally provided in the lease. Now, if we can do it under those conditions, we can do it with regard to anything else. We can do it by law; we can impose new conditions.

Mr. VOWLES: You can do anything by law.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: We can, under the law under which the lease was granted, later on by a new Act impose other conditions without breaking the conditions under which the lease was granted.

Mr. VOWLES: You can confiscate it by law, can't you?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Now, let us argue the question fairly and honestly. We do not want to evade the facts of the case. The hon. member admitted it would not be a breach of contract to impose new conditions. He says it is all right with regard to that. Where can he draw the limit? If we can alter the conditions without breaking the original conditions under which the lease was granted first, then I say he cannot show any limit.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: The conditions of the contract.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It is not a contract. The hon. member says that we can, without violating the original conditions, impose new conditions with regard to pests. If we can do it with regard to pests, we can do it in other things. Hon. members who study the history of Crown legislation in the past ought to know that again and again we imposed new conditions under new legislation without violating the conditions under which the original lease was granted. First of all, take the 1884 Crown Lands Act. There were land boards at that time in existence. We brought in the 1897—I think it was—Crown Lands Act, and we established a new tribunal altogether, called a Land Court—an entirely new Land Court—and gave them powers for the granting, for determining rents, resumption, and all the rest of it, over old leases which were granted originally, wholly determined by the land board.

Mr. VOWLES: But in terms of the lease.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: We gave it in terms of the

lease—yes, under the new Act. We varied terms of lease under new law, and put them under an entirely new tribunal to determine the conditions. Now, besides that, we from time to time altered the Fencing Act conditions with regard to the leases granted under the previous Act. In 1910 we imposed very new and onerous conditions with regard to prickly-pear. Although there were no conditions for clearing of prickly-pear under the old leases, under that new Act we imposed upon the holders very onerous conditions with regard to clearing prickly-pear on their holdings, in addition to the conditions of the original Act.

Mr. VOWLES: That was in 1905.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It was 1910. It doesn't matter when. I say we have from time to time imposed new conditions. Whatever the principle laid down, it is quite clear it is carried out in this law; it is quite clear that land is of such importance to the welfare of the people—it is limited in quantity, and it is absolutely vital to the life of the community, and it therefore is distinct from any other kind of property in existence. You can make more houses and more sheep and more cattle, more warehouses, and more business people, but you cannot make more land.

Mr. FRY: You can. You can clear the land of prickly-pear.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: You cannot make more land. Land was never made: it is part of the bounty of Nature given by the Creator, and, therefore, it is entirely distinct from any other kind of property in existence. Because of the fundamental principle that is laid down in the British law everywhere, that you cannot contract away land upon which the community must live, neither can you contract the conditions of tenure away which are necessary to the welfare of the community generally. Why, hon. members ought to know that even what is called "freehold"—absolutely the most unrestricted kind of tenure—is not freehold at all. It is still a holding, a tenure under the British Crown, and the British Crown, under the rights of eminent domain, have the right to take it away at any moment in the interests of the community.

Mr. MACARTNEY: That is confiscation.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It is not confiscation at all. It is a right which British law gives to the Crown to take away from the individual that tenure if it is not in the interests of the community.

Mr. VOWLES: There must be compensation.

Mr. SIZER: They pay the full value of it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Not necessarily at all.

Mr. MACARTNEY: What is your Public Works Resumption Act?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: That is another Act, under which we specially provide that, under certain conditions, we will take and give certain compensation. In this Crown Lands Act I have spoken of, it lays it down specifically that by any new legislation we can impose

new conditions on the old leases without violating the original conditions under which they were granted.

Mr. MACARTNEY: Why do you specify in that Act that you may resume on compensation?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Proceeding under the powers that the Crown Law Act has given, we are introducing a new Bill to impose new conditions. If those conditions were unfair, hon. gentlemen might well oppose them on the ground that they are a breach of the original conditions; but there is no breach of the original conditions; there are new conditions which we contend we have power to impose, and which are not unfair. Why are they not unfair? They are not unfair because the community has a right to get its true rental value from the land of this country. Since the original leases were given we know that, in consequence of the tremendous increase in the price of cattle, of sheep, of wool, of hides, and tallow, the profits of the tenants have gone up enormously; that the land to-day is worth far more to the tenant than it was when he got it. Therefore, we have a right to say to a judicial tribunal, "You take the power to assess fairly and accurately and with justice the true rentals those tenants ought to pay to the rest of the community for the benefit the tenants get. We will give you that power. It is not unjust to give you that power; it is merely restoring to the community the rights they ought to have, in the interest of the community." We are not ourselves imposing conditions, but are leaving it to the judicial tribunal to do the fair thing. That is the only thing which hon. members opposite could possibly object to—that it might be unfair. It is not unfair, because we ourselves do not propose to assess the amount; we place that in the hands of a tribunal, which is protected, like the judges are protected, against the power of any party, Government, or House of Parliament. They cannot be removed except by both Houses of Parliament, and should do justice, generally speaking; certainly they do in intention, though, perhaps, sometimes they may make a mistake like any judge. They are sworn to do justice by the position they occupy. I, therefore, say that there is nothing unfair in the matter. We are only exercising powers granted to us by the Crown Lands Act, and are not overriding any other provisions. (Opposition interjections.)

Mr. GUNN: After the most extraordinary speech I have just listened to, I am just about as wise as I was when the Minister started. I have never heard such camouflage in a speech since I have been in this House. (Laughter.) It is camouflage from beginning to end. (Renewed laughter.) To say that repudiation is not repudiation, because the Government do it! Is the Government's word not to be a pattern for other people? Supposing I let a house to the Minister for Public Instruction.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is a different thing.

Mr. GUNN: The contract was £1 per week; and everything flourished in the district, and other houses alongside were being let for £5 per week; and I went to him and said, "That contract of yours is not a contract at all. You will have to give the market value of that bit of land. It will

*Mr. Gunn.]*

have to be £2 10s. per week for that, the same as your neighbour." Would he think that was a just and right action for me to take? It would be repudiation if I, as his landlord, raised his rent when he had a contract. I am one of the grazing farmers who took up land under the pro-

[8 p.m.] visions of that Act. I took up land at the time of the very serious drought. I was one of the grazing farmers whose conditions the Act was passed to alleviate at the time. I had a few sheep, and only got a mere pittance for their wool. I had better conditions in my lease, and the consequence was that I was able to take that lease to my bankers and get financial assistance to carry me over a very serious time, otherwise I would have lost all I had. That lease is now in the possession of my banker, and I have an overdraft against it. The lease distinctly specifies that the rent shall not be increased at any one period more than 50 per cent.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Except by Act of Parliament.

Mr. GUNN: There is no exception at all.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: That is what it says.

Mr. GUNN: Let me give the meaning of "contract" from the dictionary, which I have here—

"Contract.—A drawing together; a coming together; to make an agreement; an agreement or covenant; a bargain; a compact, betrothment; stipulation; bond; obligation; the writing which contains stipulations or terms of a bargain."

That contains "stipulations, or terms of a bargain." A lease is a contract. It is all very well for the Secretary for Public Instruction to go on and explain matters as he generally does, and get the House worse befogged than ever. (Laughter.) But a man's honour is the greatest thing that he has, and the honour of the Government of the country ought to be priceless. It ought to be valued more than anything else, and if this Government values their honour at the breaking of a contract, I do not think much of the honour of the Government which allowed it. For me it is a deplorable thing to see anyone getting up on the floor of this House and advocating the breaking of a contract because the Government may get a little more revenue in. There are other ways of getting revenue out of the people if they are making money—by income tax, and all sorts of ways. You can put a tax on the cattle. But to repudiate a contract is above all a despicable way of governing a country.

Then, with reference to having it specified in one Act, mixed up with a lot of other conditions, I congratulate the introducer of this measure that he has got it concisely expressed. We know what it is—it is repudiation from beginning to end—and it is one or two clauses. We are simply going to vote away our character if we vote for this Bill. I am very glad that the Minister has thought fit to leave out all other references to the amendment of the old Act and to have this standing alone. I will also read the definition of "lease"—

"Lease.—A letting or demise of land, tenements, or hereditaments to another for life, for a term of years, or at will, for a rent or compensation reserved; also, the contract for such letting; any

tenure by grant or permission; to demise; to grant, as the temporary possessor of lands, tenements, or hereditaments to another for a rent reserved."

And so on. There is no doubt that a lease is a contract. I was just saying that I am very glad that the Minister has seen fit to bring in a Bill founded only on those two clauses. My opponent at election time, and the members of the Government generally, went out in the country, and said, "See what the squatters are getting. Why should they have all the increased advantage of this cheap land when the grazing farmers are having to pay so much?" That is another way of camouflage, because there are twice as many grazing farmers under the provisions of the Act as there are pastoral lessees, and yet they gammon that it only refers to the big men. I had a case the other day of a small farmer. He came to me and said, "I have got a bill for seven years' back rent under the provisions of the Act." His rent was raised for seven years back, because the Government was wanting to get this Bill through so as to get rid of their contracts. They got tired of waiting and put the seven years' rent into one. The Lands Department were good enough to spread it over a term, I am glad to say. I have nothing to say against the administration of the Lands Department under the present Minister. I am quite convinced that if he had his way, and did what he thought was right, this Bill would never be before the House; but another Parliament sitting on the top of the ridge in Turbot street initiated this measure, and told their servants that they have to put the rubber stamp on it, and that is what it is here for.

Mr. MOORE: I also wish to enter a protest against the introduction of this Bill, which will be very detrimental to future settlement in Queensland. The people took up the land, under certain conditions, because there had been heavy droughts. They have been able to get financial assistance to tide them over a bad time, and, naturally, if that contract is going to be broken now, it will be difficult for future settlers to get sufficient money from the banks. What is the position of the Government going to be when they come to borrow money to develop Queensland? Will it not be brought up against them that they broke a contract with the people in their own State? Is it likely that people are going to lend their money to Queensland when an agreement is broken in that way? This is going to be a bad thing for future settlement. We know that the normal condition is drought in many parts of Queensland, and it will be impossible for the people to carry on unless they have some safe form of tenure under which they can borrow money to stock their properties and improve them. If a Government repudiates an agreement just because the season happens to be favourable at the time, it will bring about a want of confidence in Queensland. Financial institutions are not likely to lend money to people to develop the country under conditions such as that.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. SIZER: I am very much surprised that the Minister should even suggest anything in the way of repudiation, and I am more surprised that he even tries to repudiate the lease under a contract. I am quite sure that, if he were under the

[Mr. Gunn.]

conditions suggested by the hon. member for Carnarvon, he would soon make it clear that in his mind his lease was a contract. The whole principle of repudiation is wrong. There is an old saying that "Once bitten, twice shy," and if you once destroy the confidence of a section of people in Queensland they will be shy in the future. I do not think that any slight pecuniary benefit we might derive in the immediate present from that course of action would compensate us for the big loss later on. I would remind hon. members opposite that this terrible war that is now raging is all over the repudiation of "a scrap of paper." I certainly protest most strongly against any attempt to repudiate any existing contract.

Mr. WARREN (*Murrumba*): I rise to protest against the act of the Government. I consider this is an act of repudiation. At present men are making a good thing out of pastoral leases; I hope that they are, at any rate. I am not in sympathy with the squatter; my sympathy is always with the small man. At the same time I know from experience that many station-owners are very heavily involved with the banks, and, if they are getting clear of their responsibilities to the commercial institutions, I am very pleased both for them and for Queensland. It is rather an advantage to Queensland than otherwise. But this is a distinct act of repudiation. If, in the individual, repudiation is a crime, it is no less a crime in the State Government. It is just as much a crime as it was for the German Hun to invade Belgium, and I rise to protest, not for the sake of the pastoralist but for the honour of this House.

\* Mr. ELPHINSTONE (*Oxley*): It seems to me that this is really a business contract which has been entered into with regard to these leases some years back. Now, because the conditions are favourable, the Government propose to come in and cancel that contract and impose a fresh burden. I wonder what the position would be if the conditions now were worse than they were when the leases were given and the grazier should come to the Government and ask for a reduction in his rent.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: That is what he did.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I have no doubt the Government would have pointed out to the pastoral lessee that he was bound by a contract under which he was obliged to pay a certain rent. This is a matter of principle; and the point I would like to emphasise to the Government is that the time is coming when the financial obligations of this State will have to be faced, and that that is a very serious time, which hon. members opposite do not seem to have sufficient appreciation of. If we are going to create a reputation for repudiation, for breaking contracts, and for generally disregarding the claims of honour, then I contend we are going to make our position a very serious one indeed. I just make these few remarks because it seems to me high time that we appreciated that honour is necessary where financial matters are involved. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windor*): I would like to join in the protest that hon. members on this side have voiced in connection with this proposed legislation. The Secretary for Public Instruction said that the Crown had certain rights in connection with all kinds of contracts and all classes of agreements.

No doubt they have; but is there not some other way out of the difficulty which the Government claim has arisen than by breaking a contract which has been entered into, and which should be honourably kept by the Government and by the State of Queensland? As the hon. member for Carnarvon pointed out, if it is increased revenue that is wanted—and I suppose that is what the Government want—surely they can get that revenue in some other way. As the hon. member for Oxley has just stated, had the State passed through a series of disastrous seasons, instead of a series of good ones, would there have been any talk of such legislation or of breaking these contracts? I do hope, for the honour of the Government and for the honour of Queensland, that this proposed legislation will not be proceeded with by the Government in its present form, but that they will recognise that there is something even more important than the raising of money to carry on the government of Queensland at the present time, and that is the honour of this country and the honour of the Government. (Hear, hear!)

Question put and passed.

## VALUATION OF LAND BILL.

### SECOND READING.

The TREASURER: The Valuation of Land Bill is also a Bill which is not a stranger to the Assembly, having been twice passed here, and generally, I think, approved so far as this Chamber is concerned. Unfortunately, together with other useful measures, it met an undeserved fate in another place. At present there is no uniformity either in Queensland or throughout the Commonwealth with regard to the system of land valuation. The Bill seeks to establish a system with regard to freehold land which will lay down uniformity of principle in arriving at the value of land, and making the valuations available to all the rating and taxing authorities who have to use such valuations. At present there is very much overlapping in arriving at the valuation of land in this State and in all the other States. At present the obligation is upon some authority or other to make a valuation of the unimproved value of land for Commonwealth land tax purposes and Commonwealth estate duty purposes. The obligation is upon the State to make valuations of land for land tax purposes and Commonwealth estate duty purposes. The obligation is upon the State to make valuations of land for land tax purposes, for succession and probate duty purposes, for stamp purposes, for the purposes of the Real Property Act, for the purpose of resumption in certain cases, and also for the purpose of the Public Curator in certain cases; and the Commissioner of the Government Savings Bank also makes valuations. Those valuations are at present made by different authorities, pursuing different systems, and using different principles, and consequently there is much chaos in regard to the matter.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: This Bill does not say that all Government officers must use these valuations.

The TREASURER: I shall deal with that later. It is optional with the Commissioner of the Savings Bank whether he shall use these valuations, but I have no doubt that, when the value of the system is thoroughly established, he will make use of them, because it would be utterly ridiculous for him

*Hon. E. G. Theodore.]*

to have a staff of valuers going over the ground that has already been gone over in connection with the administration of the Act. Once the values are established and found to be reliable, it is natural to expect that all authorities will use them. At any rate, they will be compulsory upon all rating and taxing authorities within the State, and they may be used by the Public Curator or the Commissioner of the Government Savings Bank.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: It is not compulsory for the Commissioner of the Government Savings Bank to use them.

The TREASURER: I have already said that these valuations must be used by the Government for taxing purposes, for probate and succession duty purposes, for stamp purposes, for the purposes of the Real Property Act—in fact, by all rating and taxing authorities. It is very necessary to have a correct basis to arrive at the valuation of land in order that the greatest use may be made of the valuations when they are established. It is hoped that both the Commonwealth and the State, and all other public authorities, will use the valuations as established under this scheme. We are proceeding upon a principle established now in the Commonwealth Land Tax Act, and ratified in the conference of taxation commissioners held in Melbourne in the early part of last year, which went thoroughly into this question. We are following the definitions laid down there with regard to the unimproved value of land, the improved value of land, and the value of improvements. I may point out to hon. members that these are really the essence of the Bill so far as the basis of valuation is concerned. Once these definitions are accepted by the Commonwealth and the State, both those authorities can make use of the valuations arrived at in accordance with the definitions, and those are found not only to be practicable but the wisest definitions of their kind, and are now and have been recognised for some years in regard to the Commonwealth Land Tax Act. The "improved value of land" is defined as—

"The capital sum which the fee-simple of the land, with all improvements thereon, might be expected to realise if offered for sale on such reasonable terms and conditions as a bonâ fide seller would require."

Since this Bill was drafted I have had several consultations with the Parliamentary Draftsman and the Commissioner of Taxation in this State, and we find it necessary to omit from the definition just read one or two words which do not make any difference, according to the draftsman, in the principle of that definition as compared with the Commonwealth definition, but in order that it cannot be possibly considered as having a different meaning we are going to adopt word for word the Commonwealth definition with regard to the capital value of land. The "unimproved value of land" is defined as—

"The capital sum which the fee-simple of the land might be expected to realise if offered for sale on such reasonable terms and conditions as a bonâ fide seller would require, assuming that the improvements (if any) thereon or appertaining thereto and made or acquired by the owner or his predecessor in title had not been made."

Mr. MACARTNEY: That includes the amendment made last year?

[Hon. E. G. Theodore.

The TREASURER: Yes, and makes it conform exactly to the definition in the Commonwealth Act and the definition agreed to by the six States in conference to which I have referred. The definition of "value of improvements" is also on the exact lines of the Commonwealth definition and the principle agreed to by the taxation commissioners. It reads—

"The added value which the improvements give to the land at the date of valuation irrespective of the cost of the improvements:

"Provided that the added value shall in no case exceed the amount that should reasonably be involved in bringing the unimproved value of the land to its improved value as at the date of valuation."

In regard to all these definitions, legal decisions have been given in connection with the valuation of land for Commonwealth purposes, and, consequently, the law in regard to those matters is now established, and it is convenient for us, I think, to follow those definitions. They serve our purpose entirely and seem to be satisfactory in every way.

The Bill requires that a valuation roll shall be compiled. It will be the duty of the State Government to appoint a valuer-general, who shall proceed to compile the roll. The valuation roll will comprise all lands, other than Crown lands, within the State and such Crown lands as it is thought desirable to include for any purpose, and shall also include all interests of lessees and otherwise in connection with the land embraced in the roll for valuation purposes. The owners of all land in the State will be expected to furnish returns setting forth sufficient information enabling the roll to be compiled. The roll itself will contain certain particulars, such as the name and address of the owner and his occupation, the location and description of the land, the nature of the improvements on the land, the unimproved value of the land, the improved value of the land, and other information it is thought desirable from time to time to have.

Now, the right is given to the owner, considering that he has a great interest in the matter, to object to the valuation. He lodges an objection and pays a small fee. The valuer-general may review a valuation on receiving the objection, but if he does not review the valuation the matter must be referred to the valuation court. I must say at this stage that not only the owner has the right to object to the valuation, but also any rating or taxing authorities, because both parties are concerned in having a correct valuation, and if they feel aggrieved they may object. The matter may ultimately go to the valuation court, which consists of a District Court judge, who hears the matter and gives a decision.

Mr. VOWLES: There is no appeal from him?

The TREASURER: There is no appeal from that court. The grounds upon which an objection may be lodged are set out in the Bill. The only grounds on which objection may be taken are—

"(a) That the values assigned are too high or too low;

"(b) That the interests held by various persons in the land have not been correctly apportioned;

"(c) That the apportionment of the valuations is not correct;

"(d) That lands which should be included in one valuation have been valued separately;

"(e) That lands which should be valued separately have been included in one valuation;

"(f) That the person named in the notice is not the owner, occupier, or lessee of the land."

Mr. MACARTNEY: There could not well be any other.

The TREASURER: I think we have pretty well covered the whole range of the objections, and I mention that to show how thoroughly the matter has been gone into and on what a fair basis the Bill has been drafted.

Mr. VOWLES: One clause does not do that. Did you not take it all from the New South Wales Act?

The TREASURER: No. In this measure, as in most other measures submitted in this and in past sessions by this Government, we have benefited by past experience gained in other countries as well as this State, and adopted the best provisions we could find on the statute-books of any country, and, therefore, our legislation is calculated to be most up to date, the most practicable, the most wisely thought out, and probably the most successful in the future.

Mr. MACARTNEY: Including all the unreasonable amendments you refuse?

The TREASURER: All reasonable amendments will receive consideration, but, unfortunately for us, they are not too many. It is important that hon. members will understand the desirability of having a thoroughly correct and full valuation roll. It must be used by all local authorities, the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board, the Registrar of Titles and his deputies, the Stamp Commissioners, and the Commissioner of Taxes. In addition to that, other authorities which may be proclaimed by Order in Council from time to time as authorities compelled to use these valuations. It is optional, as already remarked, for the Commissioner of the Savings Bank to use them, and I think the necessity for the exception in that case can be easily understood. It is a question in most of these cases I have referred to of assessing the value of land for rating or taxing purposes, but the Commissioner of the Savings Bank uses the valuations for a totally different purpose—for the purpose of advancing money upon that land, and consequently, in that case, there comes into the matter the consideration of the safety of the security.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: What about any other public office or department?

The TREASURER: They may be brought in by proclamation. I say that the Commissioner of the Savings Bank requires the valuations for a totally different purpose from the purposes for which a rating or taxing authority would use them. His valuations must necessarily be more correct, and he must necessarily have more confidence in them than a taxing commissioner need have in his, for instance, because the safety of his investment depends upon the valuation of the land which is to be used as security. Therefore it will be unwise for us to compel

him to use the valuation until such time as we have demonstrated that the valuations are thoroughly reliable.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: In other words, where you are receiving money you want a high valuation, and where you are lending money you want a low valuation.

The TREASURER: No. As a matter of fact, the paramount necessity in this case for excluding the Commissioner is that the valuation placed upon the land may be too high, and the margin of his security therefore may be at the vanishing point. Of course, ample provision is given to any man to object to his valuation, but it will be obviously unwise at the outset to compel the Commissioner to accept the valuations.

Mr. MACARTNEY: What is the meaning of paragraph (a) of subclause (4) of clause 30, on page 12?

The TREASURER: That relates to the valuation for resumption purposes. The clause reads—

"Nothing in this section shall—

(a) Affect the amount of compensation which under the clause in force relating to the leasing of Crown land is or may be payable on the resumption of such lease or part thereof."

We are not going to lay down an arbitrary valuation and thus affect the amount of compensation which may be paid under the laws in force. To pursue it a little further—

"Nothing in this section shall—

(b) Prevent a court—

(i) From excluding from such value or amount any added value accrued to the land from the construction or proposed construction of any public works."

We are not by this Bill going to abrogate every other Act that is on the statute-book relating to valuations for the purpose of compensation that might be payable for land resumed for the purposes of a certain Act.

Mr. MACARTNEY: However it hits other people, it is not going to hit the Crown.

The TREASURER: This is simply protecting the landowners. Take the case of land to be resumed under the Sugar Works Act. We do not want to arbitrarily lay down a valuation here which will [3.30 p.m.] establish the amount of compensation that might be payable, regardless of the fact that the matter is arranged specifically under the Sugar Works Act, and I have no doubt in regard to the Public Works Land Resumption Act the same principle will apply. It is therefore provided that—

"Nothing in this section shall—

(b) Prevent a court—

(ii) From having regard to any damage caused by severance; or

(iii) From having regard to the enhancement in value of other land by the construction or proposed construction of any public work."

Those several provisions are very necessary in the interests of the Crown on the one hand and in the interests of the landowner on the other hand. I point out these matters to show that due regard is given to all persons interested in regard to the matter that is made the subject of this Bill. The Bill has not been hastily devised or constructed regardless of all possible consequence. Every possible consequence has been taken into consideration. The obligation is

*Hon. E. G. Theodore.]*

on the valuer-general of making a valuation once every three years, and furnishing the valuation to the local authority. He may make valuations more frequently. Indeed, he is compelled to make valuations more frequently, if demanded to do so by the authority in question. The authority will be asked to pay for the valuation. The department, I take it, will be almost self-supporting. I do not expect that it will be a revenue-earning department, but it will be almost self-supporting, as there are so many uses to which valuations may be put.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: It will lead to more billets.

The TREASURER: There will be fewer billets. The hon. member made that interjection at the initiatory stage, when he said the main purpose of the Bill was to create more billets. He seems to me to overlook the fact that at the present time the obligation is on the Government, under an Act on the statute-book, of having a valuation of land made for land tax purposes, and that valuation is now taking place. There is a certain number of valuers out in the country now valuating estates for land tax purposes. In addition to that, valuations have frequently to be made for the purpose of stamp duty, for the purpose of succession and probate duty, for the purposes of the Real Property Act, and for local authority purposes. Practically every piece of freehold land in the State is valued for local authority purposes. We are going to do away with all that duplication and overlapping. We are going to economise by concentrating the work under one department. The local authorities, of course, must accept the valuations. They have certain remedies, but once the valuation is arrived at they must accept it. That is very necessary in order that we should have uniformity. I have already remarked that the valuations are going on now. These are rendered necessary by the Land Tax Act, which will be saved under this system. There will be no duplication when this system is established. At the present time we have five valuers going round the country valuing land and hearing objections against values placed on land by the Commissioner of Taxes. These valuers have been out for a year, and have made over 5,000 valuations. The valuations already made will form a basis of the valuation roll under this Bill, if it becomes law. If it can be arranged—and no doubt it will be arranged—we shall take the valuations already made on behalf of the Commonwealth Government for the purposes of this valuation roll. Those valuations have been made on the principles embodied in this Bill, and there is no reason why they should not be accepted. They have valued all the freehold land in Queensland, and a good deal of the leasehold land of an unimproved value of £3,000 and over, and there is no reason why we should not accept those valuations, and confine ourselves in future to all land of a less value than £3,000 or £5,000—wherever it is decided as the starting point. An arrangement will probably be made that the valuations of the State will be used by the Commonwealth, and the Commonwealth valuations will be used for State purposes. As a matter of fact, the Commonwealth valuations are now used for State purposes. The Commissioner accepts the Commonwealth valuations in all cases for the purposes of taxation. This Bill will, therefore, lead to a good deal of economy in this matter. Certainly it will

lead to the appointment of a valuer-general, a man thoroughly competent to get together and organise a competent staff of land valuers, but the salary of his staff will be saved many times over by having one valuer, seeing that there is a multiplicity of authorities who make use of valuations, and we shall have then complete order in regard to land valuation, where nothing but chaos exists at the present time. In order to show the necessity of having uniform valuation, perhaps I might mention this case: There is a local authority in Queensland at the present time who are so haphazard in their method of valuing, although the obligation is on them to truly and accurately value all unimproved land in their area, that they have simply placed a uniform value on all land within the local authority area and given all the land there one value. In one case I know of the local authority has assessed all land in one of its areas at a value of £6 an acre.

Mr. BEBBINGTON: They must be waybacks.

The TREASURER: They are located not very far from Brisbane. Some of this land is immensely rich, and some of it is inaccessible. Some of it is absolutely useless, and yet all the land within that area is valued at £6 an acre. It is not only absurd, but unfair.

Mr. VOWLES: Why don't they appeal?

The TREASURER: I do not know why they do not appeal. That is the fact. The unfortunate man who is the owner of the inaccessible land in that area for poor land is paying as much rate per acre as the man who occupies land most conveniently situated and the highest-priced land in the area.

Mr. MACARTNEY: Is that Maroochy?

The TREASURER: It is within that area.

Mr. VOWLES: Why should you not have an appeal to a magistrate?

The TREASURER: Why should we have? The valuation court in this case is an exceedingly important tribunal, upon whose decision may depend what compensation is payable, say, in the case of resumption; or upon whose decision may depend very important matters. There is no reason why we should not get the most competent tribunal for that purpose, and I do not think a court of a lesser status than a District Court or an official of a less standing than a District Court judge should constitute that court.

Mr. VOWLES: Local knowledge is a very important consideration.

The TREASURER: You cannot expect to have a valuation court consisting of men who themselves are expert in land valuation. If we resorted to police magistrates in that case it is obvious that we would get a disparity in valuation.

Mr. VOWLES: Won't you get that with judges?

The TREASURER: No, because there are fewer judges, and a District Court judge who constitutes the valuation court may hear the whole of the appeals. He may be allocated to that particular work if there are a number of appeals to be heard. In New Zealand the practice which we are adopting here is the practice which is in operation. The county court judge constitutes the valuation court, and I understand that the system, which has been in operation for some years, gives complete satisfaction there. This principle is in

[Hon. E. G. Theodore.]

operation also in New South Wales, though the valuation roll has not been completed. The Act was only passed early last year. The valuer-general has been appointed; he is a very competent man, I believe, and he is now getting his staff together. They expect to derive much benefit from the Act, and the local authorities there are looking forward to the use of these valuations with a good deal of expectation. I have no doubt that the local authorities in Queensland, when they thoroughly understand the purport of this measure—the time, money, and trouble it will save—will also welcome the valuation. It is certainly going to save them much difficulty and expense. What do we find existing now in regard to certain local authority districts? The local authorities, in certain cases, are afraid to revise their valuations, because they might incur the displeasure of ratepayers, and may be thrown out of office. That fact exists, and I think it exists in the knowledge of certain members sitting on the Opposition side.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Their needs are such that they have to revalue.

THE TREASURER: In some cases, even where their needs are great and where there are defaulters to the Treasury to the extent of thousands of pounds, they won't increase their rates nor revise their valuations. The position is very unsatisfactory. At any rate, this Bill will help them out of some of their troubles by furnishing them with accurate valuation, which they must accept no matter what local authority members are in office, and their rating must be fixed accordingly. I beg to move—That the Bill be now read a second time. (Hear, hear!)

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Bulimba*): The Minister who has just resumed his seat has done what he always does—he has very carefully and fully gone into the provisions of the Bill. I want, first of all, to take this opportunity of expressing the appreciation which I am sure the Opposition feel, that the good sense of the Government has prevailed in connection with some of those most useful amendments that were suggested last Parliament when this Bill was before it.

THE TREASURER: We are a very reasonable Government.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It is pleasing to see that the Government are making use of the brains of the Opposition in that particular regard.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. W. H. BARNES: I want especially to congratulate the hon. member for Drayton upon the fact that last year an amendment which he suggested is included in this Bill.

THE TREASURER: I think he suggested it the year before last, and it was in the Bill last year.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It does not matter; he has been successful in getting it into the Bill. It makes provision that will prevent people who are living near to the city and are using land for certain purposes, which are not building purposes, being rated at a different rate than if they were using it for buildings. I think the hon. member for Drayton is to be very much congratulated in that particular regard, and for the wisdom and the foresight he showed in pressing upon the Government that most necessary amendment. I am glad the Treasurer has seen his way clear to accept it and embody it in the Bill. Now, I followed the Treasurer—

and I am sure every member of the House did so—very closely. I might say that prior to coming to the House I took the opportunity of going into some of the speeches that were made last year in connection with this particular Bill, and I recognise that the Bill is not exactly the same as it was last year. Now, the question that arises to my mind to ask first is what really were the arguments which to-night, and which last year, were used in connection with the introduction of this Bill? I find that last year the Minister for Public Instruction had a cut in, and he used one argument which struck me as being, perhaps, not a very forcible argument. It is only right that the Minister for Public Instruction should always lead the way in connection with this Parliament, and direct the course which we should follow. One of the arguments that he used was that it was working well in New Zealand and in New South Wales. I presume that during some of those official trips that he has been taking he very carefully went into it; and we know how clearly he is able always to get right to the very "innards" of the thing and then explain it afterwards. The hon. member was able to pass on information to the Cabinet, and as the result of that here it is embodied in this Bill. At any rate, that is one of the arguments that was adduced, and it is apparent right through the Bill very largely. The Treasurer says, "We are always prepared to take that which is good from somewhere else." It is very patent that, as a matter of fact, the bulk of the Bill has been copied from our neighbours, either in New South Wales or in New Zealand. Then, I notice another statement made was that it was desirable to get on the tracks of the unscrupulous landowner. I suspect that, boiled down, the real object of this Bill—and I think the Treasurer really gave it away in his speech—is to carry out the policy which the Premier at one juncture said he was out to carry out—that was, to make certain people in the community squeal.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: He never said that.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The Treasurer to-night has made it perfectly clear that really the underlying principle of this Bill is the desire to raise values as far as the landowners in the State are concerned, but not to raise values when the Savings Bank or any other public offices are out to lend money upon valuations. It seems to me that what may be a fair valuation for taxation purposes, in other directions is not going to be a fair valuation in the eyes of the Government in other directions. Now, it would strike me that that is absolutely unfair. If the Bill is right, if the principles of the Bill are good, then I ask with all reason: Should they not apply equally to the Government of the day as well as to other parties who are amenable to the laws of the land?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: We must have fixed values.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am glad to see that the Secretary for Public Instruction is a convert to my view, because he says we must have a fixed valuation for all purposes.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: I did not say that. I said we must have fixed values.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I notice, too, a principal argument used—and it seemed

*Hon. W. H. Barnes.]*

almost contradictory—was that it had done elsewhere such a great deal for the farmers that it had reduced values. On that point, perhaps unconsciously, some of us this afternoon had something to say in connection with another matter which was before this House. I know there is a feeling on the part of some hon. members, at least on the other side—probably it is the desire of the majority of hon. members on the other side—that there should be a reduction in some directions in land values. They say—particularly in connection with large estates—that they want to burst them up; and that they have been successful in doing that. That is one of the arguments that was used. It is somewhat contradictory in the face of what the Treasurer said to-night, because the undercurrent of his speech was an indication that there was to be a raising of land values for the purpose practically of taxation. This Government, which all the time has been squeezing and squeezing, is now seeking another means by which they are going to attempt to get more revenue out of the pockets of the people. I am afraid that by and by they will “kill the goose that laid the golden eggs.” (Government laughter.) My friend the hon. member for Brisbane might be squeezed a little to no personal disadvantage; I think he would stand it remarkably well. (Renewed laughter.) The Minister laid special emphasis on the fact that there was going to be uniformity in regard to valuation; that this Bill was going to do away with all those difficulties and disabilities under which we are labouring to-day. He referred to some district not very far removed from Brisbane, where apparently an easy valuation had been adopted by a certain local authority. I say that the methods of valuation adopted by local authorities to-day are in general exceedingly satisfactory. Their valuations are obtained not by novices—by men who are receiving £1,000 a year in their offices—but by men who know every detail of the various districts in which they live.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Very often the clerk of the local authority.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Why not, if the clerk of the local authority is a competent man? Surely the Minister does not suggest that the clerk of the local authority is not a competent man!

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Very often he is not.

HON. W. H. BARNES: If he is not, I am afraid he has been in the same school as the Minister. As far as I can gather, the clerks of local authorities are men who are trained men.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Not always.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I say that the majority are trained men—I would not say everyone—who are quite capable of carrying out the duties imposed on them. Then, they are men, too, who understand local conditions. Does anyone presume to say that the man who is taken from outside and put into a district understands that district and its varying conditions as well as the men who are inside? I do not think that anyone will contend that. The knowledge which the clerk possesses is a big asset in making valuations.

MR. McLACHLAN: Will the Succession Office take his valuation?

[Hon. W. H. Barnes.]

HON. W. H. BARNES: I do not know. I presume they make a valuation of their own. In any case, the parties concerned who are responsible have to pay for that valuation. I am not aware that there has been any cry for this amending legislation. Indeed, I think I shall be able to show that there are very grave reasons why we should not at this particular juncture depart from the present methods which are being adopted by local authorities, and for reasons which are absolutely important from the State point of view. Then, the method of the appeal to-day is really a very simple method, and one which is exceedingly satisfactory. A court of appeal is arranged, and is presided over by a police magistrate. It is possible under the law to make a request that police magistrates only should preside, and I think that is a preferable method, and the result in every local authority is that an officer of the court sitting in that way knows the local conditions, and is well able to sit on the appeal. As far as I know, appeals are few and far between.

MR. BRENNAN: They compromise 80 per cent. of them.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The hon. member must not tell me that. If there are compromises made, they are probably 1 or 2 per cent. of the ratepayers; that would be outside the usual compromises which are made. If you can make compromises in that way, is it not very much better than adopting the method proposed in this Bill? I hope my legal friends on this side and the other will not take exception to my statement; but it seems to me that some of the members of the Government have recently been urging against having anything to do with those who have to do with law, and yet this Bill is practically encouraging people to go in for litigation.

MR. KIRWAN: I thought you would have had no money to spend in litigation, as this Government is taking it all.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The grinding system is going on to such an extent that even the Government may have a difficulty in paying parliamentary allowances. Then, I want to ask another question: Whom is the Bill going to affect most?

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: The lawyers.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Yes, no doubt, it is going to help them very materially. It is going to affect landowners. There is a feeling sometimes expressed by hon. members opposite that the men who are going to have the burdens placed on them are only men who are in receipt of large incomes or who have large properties. As a matter of fact, the taxation which has been introduced in the past, and, no doubt, the taxation under cover of this Bill, is going to get at the small man as well as at the other fellow. It is a delusion and a snare to think that this kind of thing is going to miss the man who is in a small way. The returns in regard to income tax, and in other directions, would possibly be a surprise even to the Secretary for Public Instruction in regard to the amount which is paid by small people. Again, this Bill is going to have the effect, as far as financial institutions are concerned, of making them very chary about advancing money to assist men to embark on enterprises in connection with the land. I hold that the safety and prosperity of a community depend very largely indeed upon the success of men who are engaged in primary

industries, and we should not do anything to block those men. After all, how often have advances made to men who have been struggling, though they have been a burden in some directions, been their salvation. Anything we do in the direction of blocking enterprise is going to be a disaster to the State. I say emphatically that this Bill, perhaps unconsciously, is going to hurt the small farmer. Then, we are going to still further add to the land taxation of the State. It is becoming a harvest of taxation which the Government are taking. If anyone took the trouble to see what the taxation was before the Ryan Government took office, and find out what the taxation is to-day, they would find a great difference. The taxation would have been very much greater even to-day if it had not been for the action of another place, which has said, "We are not going to allow further burdens to be placed upon the people." If it had not been for the action of another place certain things would have happened. We are in the position in Queensland of having taxation increased by 14s. 7d. per head, the next highest in any other State of the Commonwealth being South Australia, with 5s. 3d. per head.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: That sort of talk is no argument. (Opposition laughter.)

HON. W. H. BARNES: Perhaps the hon. gentleman is dense. Somehow or other, I am never capable of understanding his arguments. I think I am not dense and that he is.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It must be you. (Laughter.)

HON. W. H. BARNES: Supposing I reciprocate, and say that probably it may be the hon. gentleman, who has been too busy studying since he got into the Education Department, and has forgotten how to

[9 p.m.] express himself lucidly. Another question I would like to ask is whether it should not be the policy of the Government to encourage development at this particular juncture. They certainly should not introduce legislation that is going to be a hindrance to development.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: That is what we all say.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I wish the hon. gentleman would get the Cabinet to practise that, instead of introducing legislation that is going to be a barrier and a hindrance to settlement.

Mr. McLACHLAN: How is this going to be a barrier to development?

At a quarter past 9 o'clock p.m.,

The DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the chair.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It is going to impose upon the man on the land an additional burden in the direction of filling in returns. It seems to me that the returns required by the Federal and State Governments are increasing to such an extent that people are getting heartily sick of it all. I have nothing to say against eight hours a day; I believe in a reasonable day's work, and eight hours a day is reasonable; but here we are going to compel the man who works from daylight to dark not only to spend more time in preparing returns, but in finding money to pay assessments when those returns are sent in. This and other pieces of legislation introduced by the Government are all in the direction of making it more difficult for the primary producer to

make a living. Surely we should prevent that kind of thing!

Mr. WHITFORD: It is the middleman who sweats the producer.

HON. W. H. BARNES: That is the old gag. The biggest middleman in the community sits on that side of the House. With all deference to the legal profession, I would ask if the Premier is not the biggest middleman in Queensland, judging by the fees he receives.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must confine himself to the Bill.

HON. W. H. BARNES: These unruly interjections sometimes draw one off the subject. The greatest need of the world at the present time is increased production. All over the world there is a growing cry, "Encourage your people to produce more." Are we not told that the needs of the world from the grain standpoint are going to be even more acute in the immediate future than they are at present? Is it not up to all of us to rise to the occasion and endeavour to make every provision by giving increased facilities to the man on the land, and by giving him every encouragement rather than bring in legislation which is going to drive men off the land? That is what is going to happen if the Government persist in passing legislation of this kind. The Treasurer took exception to an interjection I made to the effect that this was going to make more billets. Is that an untrue statement? Does the Bill not provide that there shall be a valuer-general appointed at a salary of £1,000 per annum? Does it not provide that he is to hold that position for seven years? Are we not going to make quite a number of billets by this Bill? The whole trend of the legislation of the present Government apparently is to see how many departments they can create. I may be wrong, but I verily believe that the idea of creating so many new departments is to make billets for political friends. It looks as if the Government are proceeding on the principle of "spoil the victors."

Mr. WHITFORD: You practised it for many years.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The hon. member knows that is not correct. There is no question that this Bill will have the effect of creating billets. I go further, and say that in connection with some appointments that have been made within the last twelve months the wisest discrimination has not always been shown. I am not making any reference to any recent appointment; but, if you go carefully through the appointments that were made twelve months ago, it will be found that my statement is justified.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

HON. W. H. BARNES: I regard this Bill as another means for making appointments of the same kind. At the present moment people are being worried to death with the returns they have to make. There are returns for everything. It seems to me that before very long we shall have to make a return of when we go to sleep or when we rise in the morning, when we have a cup of coffee, and even when we take a dose of physic. All these returns have to be made, or else one renders himself liable to all kinds of pains and penalties. Another feature in connection with a good deal of the legislation of the Government is that one

*Hon. W. H. Barnes.]*

of its objects appears to be to pry into the affairs of people. I am very sorry to say that I believe sometimes returns that have been made have not had that privacy which they should have had. I take it that when returns are sent in they should be of a confidential nature, and not made use of by other people and for other purposes. I do not think anyone will argue that in Queensland, at any rate, very few returns have to be made out so far as the various forms are concerned in connection with industries, and yet this Bill is going to add to them and add to the labour which is bound to follow. Another question arises: Is the new department going to pay? I do not think it is.

Mr. WILSON: If it is as successful as it is in New Zealand, it will.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am very glad of that interjection. It does not pay in New Zealand. I notice from "Hansard," from which I have been reading the last debate, that it cost £42,000 to collect £24,000. The hon. member for the Valley is a business man, and he knows that that kind of thing does not pay.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Under what Act?

HON. W. H. BARNES: A similar Act in New Zealand.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: That is valuation for rating purposes, not for State purposes.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Here the hon. member is sidetracking again. As a matter of fact, a similar Act in its operation does apply in New Zealand, because, after all, a number of the clauses of this Bill are taken from the New Zealand Act. Is the hon. member saying that such is not the case where it is the case? What is the difference between New Zealand and Queensland? The difference is very great. New Zealand, comparatively speaking, is a compact place. Queensland, with its immense seaboard and its wide areas, is not to be compared with it. The point I want to make is that if in New Zealand—where a similar Act is in force—it does not pay, how on earth is it going to pay in Queensland?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It will pay indirectly.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I suppose that is the way we shall be told that some of the State enterprises which are showing great debit balances are going to pay; and I say that if you are going to go on in that way for any considerable time you will be at the end of your tether. I want to ask, too, whether it would pay from the point of view of settlement? Let me stress that point, because, after all, the great point which we, as legislators, have to consider is to do everything to induce settlement. Will it pay from the point of view of settlement? I do not think it will. Then, I am quite certain that it will give more work to local authorities. I speak as a local authority man. What has been the tendency of legislation of late years? The tendency has been to add burdens to local authorities and increase their labour.

Mr. WILSON: My experience has been that they keep valuations down and raise rates.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Probably they knew the hon. member had a lot of property, and they quietly considered him. My experience is that they have done the just thing.

[Hon. W. H. Barnes.]

However, I am very glad to hear that the hon. member for Fortitude Valley is an advocate of raising the valuations, but I think that if I know anything of North Brisbane they have raised the valuations pretty well lately.

Mr. WILSON: They get it out of suburban property-owners by an increased rate—the small man is going to be hit up.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The hon. member for Fortitude Valley has evidently failed to look at some of the city valuations for this year.

Mr. WILSON: I will give you some.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I will give you some, too. The Bill will only give more work to local authorities, and the tendency right through has been to add burdens to men who are doing voluntary work in a most excellent way. I am sure no member on the other side will doubt the statement that local authorities are doing their work in an excellent way.

But there is another point I wish specially to bring before the House. Is this the time when there should be placed on the people additional burdens? I do not know how other members feel on this subject, but I venture to say that Queensland in particular is making one of the greatest mistakes it is possible for any State to make in attempting to place greater burdens on the community. I say that advisedly, because I believe that it is one of the mistakes Queensland is making at the present juncture.

Mr. WHITFORD: You believe in the old stagnation policy?

HON. W. H. BARNES: No; the party I belong to were always those who believed in doing the best for the State generally, and did it. But evidently the hon. member who interjects fails to see or read the signs of the times. What are the signs of the times? The Federal Treasurer said the other day that, of necessity, we must again increase our taxation. Why? Because it was necessary for war purposes, and there is not a man, I hope, in this House who does not think it is the duty of every loyal citizen—even if it means the selling of his coat—to do what he can to assist in winning the war. But I do ask whether it is a right thing for the State Government, who have been warned to do nothing at this juncture which is going to add to the burden of the people, to do anything in the direction of creating a department that is not urgent. The Treasurer mentioned that there was a desire for uniformity. The only other State that has done anything in this way in New South Wales. At this juncture would it not be well at any rate to wait until the Commonwealth made some move and there was uniformity in that particular direction?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The Commonwealth have asked for it.

HON. W. H. BARNES: We have that on the word of the Minister for Public Instruction. There is another point to be considered at this juncture. Every pound taken from the community means, not only less for men to give to help to win the war, but also a pound less for some person to spend. I notice that one or two members, who are evidently not seized with the gravity of the situation, are smiling. The fact remains that we are up against it from a taxation point of view. We have got to carry extra burdens,

and those extra burdens should not be added to by legislation of this particular kind, no matter how necessary it may be under ordinary conditions. The people affected will be the workers. (Government laughter.) Hon. members opposite smile, but if you reduce income of course you must affect the worker, and I say that it will have that effect. I would like to say, before I sit down, that this is one of those Bills which could very well be put on one side just now, no matter how necessary it may be under ordinary circumstances. I shall take the opportunity in Committee of trying to improve this Bill, but I do think the Government would be acting wisely—bearing in mind the conditions of the world generally and the conditions of the Commonwealth, and the fact that the Government themselves will need money to carry on their own enterprises—they will not be able to continue taking trust funds—if they did not bring in any measure which means increased expenditure at this particular period.

Mr. MOORE: The Treasurer, in introducing this Bill, reminded me of—

“The young man with the cape  
Who always wore trousers of crepe,  
When asked, ‘Can’t they tear?’  
He replied, ‘Here and there,’  
But aren’t they a beautiful shape.”

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: The new poet. (Laughter.)

Mr. MOORE: That young man was prepared to sacrifice utility, economy, and even decency for appearances, and, as far as I can see, with this Bill the Treasurer is prepared to sacrifice economy, suitability, utility, and even decency for the sake of uniformity—(laughter)—a uniformity which depends on five other States coming into line, and a uniformity which depends on the Commonwealth accepting the valuations, and we have no guarantee that this is going to happen. I do not think this Bill is going to help local authorities at all. It does not go into the question of perpetual leaseholds and other forms of Crown tenure, and these in many parts of the State are what we have to value mostly, and this is one of the most difficult problems facing valuers to-day. At the last conference of local authorities, held last year, there was a recommendation to the executive of the local authorities to endeavour to find a better system of valuation of Crown leaseholds than there is at the present time.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: This Bill provides the improvement. The present system is a rule of thumb.

Mr. MOORE: This Bill only provides for the valuing of freeholds. The Treasurer stated that it was only going to be used for freeholds, except in special cases where the valuer-general was asked to value leasehold for a particular purpose. In my opinion, the valuations for local authority purposes should be totally different to the valuations for taxation purposes. Take Crown lessees: for every local authority rate he gets a direct benefit, but for the taxation he has only a small indirect benefit. I wish here to quote what Sir Samuel Griffith said in 1902, when he brought in an amendment of the Local Authorities Act. He said—

“With regard to grazing farms and land held for pastoral purposes, it is proposed that the capital value shall be taken to be twenty times the annual rent

payable under the lease. I do not think anyone can say that it is too much. It may be objected to as being too small. It will be, apparently, placing an unduly small value upon our pastoral lands; but, after all, it is only fixed for the purpose of local taxation. At any rate, we shall get more from it than is obtained under the present system, which takes the annual rent to be equal to the annual value.”

When that system was brought in it was only initiated for the purpose of local taxation, and had nothing to do with succession duties, stamp duties, or land tax. It was recognised that the local authorities could get their requirements by putting on a rate to suit, but later on we come to the same difficulty again. In 1906 there was a local government commission appointed by this House to go into the same question, but they did not come to any final decision. I would like to quote the following sections of the report of the commission dealing with the basis of valuation. They say—

“18. The basis of the valuation of land for the purpose of rating received our careful attention.

“19. It was shown by members, and also by evidence, that the present basis—which is fixed by a periodical valuation of freeholds, subject to revision by the appeal court, and of leaseholds, by statute, at twenty times the annual rent—is often inequitable and unjust.”

At the present time we have also got perpetual leases, which has complicated matters still further. They are valued at twenty times the annual rental, and the position brought about in these cases is sometimes absurd. We have perpetual leaseholds in some parts paying about ten times as much rates as the freehold alongside. In other cases you have the perpetual leasehold paying about one-tenth of what the freehold alongside is paying, and this Bill is not going to make any provision for the valuing of those lands. The report goes on to say—

“Sometimes country lands of a similar quality, used for the same purpose, and even adjoining each other, are necessarily valued for rating purposes on capital valuations ranging from 10d. per acre to 7s. 4d. per acre in the case of pastoral leases and grazing farms up to 10s. per acre in the case of freeholds and agricultural farms, and up to 26s. per acre in the case of unconditional selections. Thus, in some cases the amount of local rates per acre levied upon one piece of land actually exceeds the Crown rent per acre of another piece of land of the same intrinsic value in the same area.

“20. Various propositions for correcting this inequality were made. One proposal was to adopt the method of valuing all land for rating purposes at its fair capital value without regard to tenure, but having regard to the use to which the land is put, its situation, and all other circumstances. Another proposal was somewhat similar: but allowed for a reduction of one-third or one-fourth of such value in the case of land held under lease, in recognition of the inferior tenure. A further proposal was to estimate the capital value of land held under pastoral lease or license at twenty times the annual rent; of grazing

Mr. Moore.]

farms and grazing homesteads at fifteen times the annual rent; and of agricultural farms at ten times the annual rent. Again, certain members expressed the opinion that the present basis of estimating the capital value of land held under pastoral lease or license is inequitable by reason of its being fixed at too low a multiple of the annual rent.

"21. Although several members supported each of the foregoing proposals, we could not by a majority agree to the adoption of any of them. Some members, deeming their knowledge insufficient to warrant them in exerting any influence on the subject, refrained from voting, while others voted for a re-enactment of the existing law rather than risk an alteration the effect of which was, in their opinion, doubtful. We are not, therefore, in a position to recommend any change in the present mode of valuing land held under the Crown Lands Acts."

Then, there were three other members who added riders. Mr. George Phillips said—

"22. In my opinion, the present statutory method of fixing the rateable value of pastoral leaseholds of different tenures at twenty times the annual rent paid to the Crown in each case is essentially inequitable in its incidence, inasmuch as the rents vary from one-tenth of a penny per acre per annum in the case of certain pastoral lands held under occupation license to 6d. per acre per annum in the case of other pastoral lands thrown open to selection in comparatively small areas as agricultural farms, but which in many, perhaps in the majority of, instances are not at all suitable for cultivation, and I regret that the commission has not been able to recommend such a modification of the present arbitrary system of valuing pastoral leaseholds as would have the effect of bringing the different classes of pastoral leaseholds more into line for rating purposes, and I think that the recommendation of the subcommittee appointed to consider this question was worthy of more consideration than it received."

That committee was absolutely unable to come to any decision. Each of the men who gave in a minority report suggested a different principle, and they were not able to come to a decision, with the result that the same principle was adopted as before. It is recognised to be inequitable, and there is no method under this Bill by which it is going to be improved. If the Treasurer adopted some system by which local authorities were going to be relieved of the duty of valuing leaseholds, and perpetual leaseholds, and occupation licenses, it certainly would relieve them of a great deal of responsibility and a great deal of difficulty. I do not think they have much difficulty or much trouble in valuing freeholds. As a matter of fact, most of the valuers that go round to the local authority office and get the information there; and I know that the Land Tax Office, in nine cases out of ten, in the district where I live, take the local authority valuation as a basis. When the valuer was up the other day valuing in certain districts on the Downs, his dictum was that, instead of being undervalued, most of the lands he could see under present conditions were over-valued. Under this Bill we are going to have uniformity.

[Mr. Moore.

It states expressly in the Bill that notice is to be taken of sales, and when a piece of land is sold it is to be notified to the Commissioner, and a fresh valuation made. That is one of the greatest difficulties local authorities have at the present time—the want of uniformity. The people do not mind paying the rate for the special benefit they get out of it; but the man who has his land in one place objects to paying more rates than the one alongside him. If you are going to have notice taken of sales on the occasion of every sale, you are not going to have uniformity at all, but further trouble than we have now. I think that this Bill is not going to prove the benefit that the Treasurer anticipates. The local authority certainly does not want it, and I am quite certain the landowner does not want it. I do not think the increased revenue that is going to come out of revaluing the land by a commissioner is going to come anywhere near his expectations.

I notice in the Bill that there is practically a provision for political appointments. They are going to appoint men to value all the land; and then the next part says that in special cases the valuer-general can employ an expert. So it looks as if the ordinary valuer will be anybody who is picked up. I do not see where economy is going to come in when you are going to have valuers sent up to value small portions of land.

Mr. WHITFORD: You know what local authorities are.

Mr. MOORE: I have an idea what local authorities are.

Mr. WHITFORD: I know of one instance where one man ran the whole thing; he was the council "on his own."

Mr. MOORE: It might be a very good thing, in some instances, if one man did run the whole thing. I have known local authorities where it would be a very good job. Now, as we know, there is only a very small proportion of the land in Queensland that is freehold. What is going to be the advantage to a local authority to have a valuer sent up from here by the valuer-general to value a small portion of their land? The leasehold is not going to be valued. They still will have to keep their valuer, or do it by the clerk.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Straighten them up, and make them do a fair thing.

Mr. MOORE: It is not straightening them up at all. If you have an equitable way in regard to leaseholds and perpetual leases, there would be some sense in it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: That is in the Local Authorities Act.

Mr. MOORE: If you are going to value land in Queensland to-day, it should be in a valuation Bill, not in the Local Authority Act. Everybody is at sixes and sevens with regard to perpetual leases and leaseholds. The present system, everybody will admit, is most inequitable. Some pay far more than they ought, and some far less than they ought. The system of valuation of local authority work should be on an entirely different basis to that of succession and stamp duties. Under this system you will be getting two values for much of the land. If we are going to have a valuation of land Bill, it should cover the value of all these lands on a basis which is fair and equitable. If the Treasurer is unable to do that—until he

is in a position for giving us a basis for valuing those lands—it should be left alone. At the present time there is nothing but dissatisfaction.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Read clause 6; it provides for the valuation also of Crown lands.

Mr. MOORE: That is for special purposes, as the Minister stated. The Treasurer himself, when he was introducing the Bill this time, and last time, said it was for freehold land. I cannot see where the economy is going to come in. As for giving as an argument that a local authority valued all its land at the same price, I cannot see that there is anything in that. The people who are rated have the chance of appeal if they want to.

Mr. WHITFORD: What hope have they got in their appeals?

Mr. MOORE: They have every hope in the world. They have to go before a police magistrate. Surely he is competent to hear evidence! How many appeals do you see where the valuation is upheld? They are nearly always reduced. The man shows what the land is valued at, and, if he can, he shows it is too highly valued, and his appeal is granted. I have seen them reduced 50 per cent.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: That is all the trouble—an inequitable valuation.

Mr. MOORE: Surely a police magistrate is competent to weigh evidence! When you go into a court on an appeal in respect of your land, you bring evidence to show that it should be reduced. The council appears and tries to show that the valuation is all right. Does the Minister for Education mean to say that the police magistrate is so stupid that he cannot give an equitable value in cases like that?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: I say the court is not a competent court of jurisdiction.

Mr. MOORE: I think, if the police magistrate is not competent to weigh evidence in a valuation case, he is not competent to weigh evidence in any other case, because it is put before him on both sides. There need not be a lawyer in the case at all. The men can appear themselves and bring their evidence. I have appeared thousands of times in the court, and I cannot say I have seen a case of a police magistrate giving inequitable decisions. He bases his valuation on the evidence put before him.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: He does not get the evidence.

Mr. MOORE: Surely when a man is appealing he will bring the evidence that is most suitable to his case, and put it before the judge! And the local authority will endeavour to uphold their valuation. Is it going to be any different under a District Court judge? Is he to direct the putting in of any evidence he would not get otherwise? Is the judge going to have wider powers and say what evidence shall be brought? This is one of the things in the Bill that I strongly object to, because it is going to make it very hard for the small farmer to get an appeal. It is going to cost too much. The Treasurer himself last year stated he wanted to discourage appeals.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: What makes you think the valuation will be too high?

Mr. MOORE: I am quite sure this Bill is not for the purpose of lowering it. When a new valuation is made under present conditions, there is always a large crop of appeals; and I think that under this Bill—with different values on a new basis of valuation—there is going to be a large crop of appeals. Undoubtedly, it should be made as simple as possible for a man who has his land valued to go to a court and get a hearing of his case. Under this Bill it is not going to be made easy; it is going to be made an expensive matter. I think it is a wrong principle in the Bill, because I think a man who has a small holding should be entitled to every consideration. He should have the court held as handy to his property as he possibly can, instead of having to go, in many cases, long distances, as he will under this Bill. It should be made as easy as possible for him to get justice. Surely it is not that the Crown wants to put a valuation on which will bluff the man! Under present conditions land fluctuates very much in value. You see properties which were worth £4 or £5 an acre a few years ago being sold now for £2 an acre.

Mr. FOLEY: Where?

Mr. MOORE: I could take you to some on the Downs, near my own place. One property there was offered at £6 5s. 8d. an acre four years ago, and last week it was sold for £2 2s. 8d. an acre.

Hon. W. N. GILLIES: What is the correct valuation?

Mr. MOORE: That is the question. Who is to decide it? The Bill says that the valuer-general is to give a revaluation when sales take place. Where is the uniformity going to come in? The present system is more uniform than the system under this Bill will be, as it will only affect a small section of the land. If the whole of the land was going to be valued it would be much better. A double staff will have to be kept up. For that reason, I am not going to support the Bill. I do not see that the local authorities are going to get any advantage out of it. The difficulty in connection with local authorities is not touched in this Bill. The Government should have endeavoured to find some uniform system of valuation, especially in regard to perpetual leases. Under the policy of the Government more perpetual leases are going to be taken up, and yet there is no system by which they can be properly valued. There should be some uniform system for valuing—I do not say for stamp and succession duty purposes—but for local authority work, where people who live on perpetual leases are practically in the same position as the freeholder. At the present time we value those leases at twenty times the annual rent, and it is a perfect absurdity in many cases. In some of the coastal towns the absurdity is a laughing stock. You see people paying high prices for perpetual lease blocks, about ten times the rate that the freeholder alongside of them has paid. The Bill gives the valuer-general the discretion, but the Treasurer, in introducing the Bill, said that it was only going to be used in certain cases for resumption purposes, or in certain cases in which we require to value, and where is the benefit going to come in? Great stress was laid upon the fact that we are going to have uniform values, but I think we are not going to have uniform values at all. The

*Mr. Moore.]*

uniformity which we have partially at the present time is going to be destroyed. When a fresh valuation has to be made every time a sale takes place, what uniformity can there be, as lands fluctuate in value all the time. I know the difficulties valuers are having in the country at present, as they do not know what basis to value on. In one case I know of they based their valuation on the selling value, but the Commissioner said that was absurd. I know a case where a block of land was sold for £330, with the house. The valuer valued the house at £400, and the unimproved value of the land at £150. The Commissioner of Taxes asked what the land was valued at by the council, and found it was £25 an acre for 640 acres. He said, "Put the valuation up to that." The valuer appointed by the Government fixed his value, but the Commissioner of Taxes took no notice of it, and arbitrarily put his own value on the property. It is going to be more unreliable if this Bill is passed.

Mr. WHITFORD: It is impossible to be worse than it is at the present time.

Mr. MOORE: I think it is going to be worse under this Bill.

Mr. WHITFORD: Do you say we have uniformity now?

Mr. MOORE: We have considerable uniformity in a number of shires. I know that lately, when the valuer is sent up by the taxing officer, sometimes his valuation is under that of the council. The Treasurer is going to get a surprise when he finds out the true value of land in Queensland at the present time.

Mr. VOWLES: The Treasurer in introducing this measure told us that the object of it was to bring about uniformity of valuation. That is all very well in its way. I have had a good deal of experience in connection with local authority matters, both as a member of a council and as a solicitor acting for shires. I have a little inside knowledge of the working of valuation in country districts, more particularly where there are varying classes of tenure. I am in sympathy with the hon. member for Aubigny in his remarks as regards the troubles of shires, particularly with regard to their valuations in determining an equitable valuation under existing conditions. This measure will not permit of that at all. It does not go down to the basis of valuation contained in the Local Authorities Act. There are lopsided valuations. Consider the basis of valuation of perpetual leases and other classes of tenure. One of the greatest troubles we have is the valuation of prickly-pear lands which are valued by the Crown at nil. You can imagine that it is a difficult thing to value those lands. For many years it was a well-known provision that a minimum value had to be placed upon them. A man has to contend with pests in the form of prickly-pear, and he is bound by the conditions of purchase to continue eradicating that pest until such time as he gets rid of it, with the consequence that it is enhancing the value of his land and the taxable value all the time. The original basis set down for that land might be right at the time, but it will afterwards be most inequitable, because he gets the land at a nominal value for the purpose of clearing it and when the conditions are performed, after five or ten years the land may be equal to the best of freehold land of the same quality in the same neighbourhood, but

[Mr. Moore.

he continues on under the old basis of a minimum of 5s. In cases like that, the land will be exempted from the provisions of this Bill. It is land that may or may not be valued by the valuer-general, according to the wishes of the department. We always understood that the object of this Bill was more particularly in connection with freehold property, because that is the only property that has to go into the official valuation. So far as that is concerned, there have been numerous appeal courts, and the appeals have been determined on some reasonable basis. Every year a revaluation is made—every third year under the Local Authorities Act, and, if there have been any cases of over-valuation, they can be reduced by the Appeal Court. The local authorities, having gone to all the expense of determining those valuations, paying valuers whose valuations have given satisfaction to the persons who are interested and have to pay the rates, what is the necessity for all this? In my district nobody can say that the valuations have been too low. The complaint has always been that they are far too high. It must be remembered that not only is it a question of rates, but death duties and other taxes are involved, and the valuations, if not too high, are nearly always up to the full value of the land. It is the money of the ratepayers that has to pay for the valuations, and yet they are to be asked to have all the land revalued and reclassified, again at their expense. Then the question arises as to the competency of the valuers who will be appointed. Of course the valuer-general, who is simply going to be an organiser, will sit in his office in Brisbane and direct proceedings. His subordinates are the men who are to do the good or the harm, as the case may be, resulting from the valuations, and I ask who are the men who are going to be appointed to do this work? If the appointments are going to be made on the same lines as the appointments made by this Government in other departments, they will not be men who are appointed on account of their skill as valuers. They will be appointed for other purposes altogether.

Mr. HARTLEY: That is what your Government did.

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. member, for instance, might be competent to value the land in his own district, but would he be competent to value lands in other localities? The valuers should be men who have a knowledge of local values. You cannot expect men with only city experience to go and value country lands all over Queensland. I have seen cases in various departments, more especially in the Succession Department, where men have been sent into the country to question valuations made by local valuers. Some of the valuations made by those men, who are supposed to be skilled valuers, have been absolutely absurd. I have a case now under consideration in the Succession Department where a freehold property was valued at £2 per acre unimproved. The departmental valuer valued it at £3 10s. per acre. When certain things were pointed out to the department they realised the absurdity of their valuation, and cut it down to £2 7s. 6d. per acre in one jump. If that is the class of individual who is going to be given the power to make these valuations in the future, then it must be obvious that the whole object of this legislation is, not so much to ascertain

whether valuations are correct in any district, as to squeeze as much money as possible out of landowners in the way of taxation. Then as to the method to be adopted. Clause 6 provides that—

“The valuer-general shall cause to be made a valuation of the unimproved and improved value of all lands other than lands of the Crown, and of such lands of the Crown as he thinks proper to so value.”

When that is done by the subordinates in the department, notice is to be given to the owner, and provision is made for a court of appeal. At present the method of appeal is a very easy one. Appeals are heard by a police magistrate. The system has existed for a great number of years, and everyone is familiar with the procedure. They know that the cost of the appeals is very small, and there is very little need for them to be represented by a member of the legal profession. An appellant can go in person and submit his evidence, which consists in most cases of recent land sales in the locality in which the property is situated. That is all that is wanted, because that establishes the value of the land. Now you are going to supersede the jurisdiction of the police magistrate and take appeals to a district court. That court is presided over by a judge, with all the formalities which attach to a court of the kind. It will be a court which will sit, not in the interests of the individual, but in the interests of the department. The department will be represented by counsel, I presume, instructed by Crown Law Officers. People who wish to appeal will not be in the same happy circumstances as at present. They will not have the same feeling of security as they would in appearing before their own police magistrates. They will have to appear before strangers, and be subjected to the cross-examination of highly-skilled lawyers, coming probably from the metropolis. They will feel that they must go to the expense of employing legal talent to meet the talent on the other side, and in many cases they will decide that the game is not worth the candle on account of the expense, and will let the valuation go and pay the higher taxation. It would be much simpler to adhere to the present practice of hearing appeals before police magistrates. I know from experience that the result of this system will be to increase valuations. That would naturally increase tremendously the number of appellants. Well, what time will our district court judges have to inquire into individual cases? What time are those cases going to take, and how long will it be before you can get an appeal before the court? I have at present in my office a number of appeals which I cannot get determined by the Government—appeals under the Land Act, appeals under the Income Tax Act. You cannot get any satisfaction. You give notice of objection and ask them to consider that as an appeal, or you start at the beginning and

[10 p.m.] appeal, and say you do not want to put in an objection, but you want the appeal right away. In one case I know the Commissioner has arbitrarily called upon a man to pay £160 in income tax, a man who never paid more than £20 in his life. That man had to pay that £160, and then he has to fight to see whether he is only liable to pay £20. He cannot get his money back, in order to enable him to fight it, and he cannot get his appeal

determined. That is the spirit of the department—once they get hold of your money you cannot get it out.

When the appeal is determined, and the value is arrived at, you get a certificate, which will hold good for all transactions with Government departments, except when you want to borrow money. So long as you are doing the paying your valuations are high, and they will accept your taxation readily—the Stamp Office, the Succession Duties Office, the Real Property Office, so far as their assurance fund is concerned—but if you want to go along to their financial institutions—the Government Savings Bank or the Public Curator—the officers commanding those departments have the right to say they will not accept that value, and they can have a revaluation made. And the remarkable thing about it is that, notwithstanding that you hold the certificate of their skilled valuer, if they ask for a revaluation you have to pay for it, whether the value is increased or decreased. That appears to me to be unjust, because a man who holds that certificate has already paid for it, because his taxes pay portion of the salary of the valuer who arrived at the valuation. Here is another point. If you get a transfer you pay ad valorem duty. If the amount realised for the land is over the value of the certificate you pay ad valorem duty on the excess; but if the amount happens to be less you have got to pay on the value on the certificate. If that is not absurd and lopsided, I cannot imagine anything which is.

The Minister, in dealing with the Bill, spoke about appeals to the District Court. He said that, in his opinion, it was undesirable that the system of appeals to police magistrates should be continued. Now, I ask you: What general knowledge would a judge have of the various localities? You just put a District Court judge, or any other man of the same capacity, in any country district and ask him to value the land. Take, for instance: Ask him to value the Jimbour lands according to the evidence placed before him. What will you have? You will have what I have brought down to this House or to the Government on many occasions. You will have the practical side of the question—the settler will say what he paid, what he spent on it in seven years in labour, improvements, ploughing, and seeding, and in the purchase of stock. He will tell you how much money he has taken out of it, and how much it took to keep his family, and how much in every instance he is behind. On the other hand, you will have the Crown bringing up experts from Brisbane, and telling you what the possibilities of the land are, what it ought to produce, and what the corresponding value ought to be. You cannot get evidence of sales—it is a novel tenure, perpetual lease—and under those circumstances I ask how anybody is going to determine what the value of that land is, unless you are going to create under the Bill a new basis for valuing all these classes of land other than freehold. Has there been a sale of Jimbour land? If there has, it has been at tremendous loss. When the Government considered the value of those lands quite recently they decided that, as a perpetual lease, they would alter it under the Closer Settlement Act to what it is under ordinary conditions. I think that for the suburban lands the basis is 3 per cent., and for the town lands 5 per cent. What did

*Mr. Vowles.*]

they do in this case, the case of land which they knew was overvalued. Instead of sticking to 3 per cent., as it should be for suburban lands, they added another 10 per cent. on the capital, and then asked the selector to pay by way of rent an amount equal to the interest on the money borrowed for the purpose of buying that property. That is the basis which I can imagine has been suggested by some person who would be selected to fill the position of valuer-general. That would be his idea of a reasonable value of that land. How does it work out in practice? Many of the holdings are being surrendered. The men cannot pay the rent. The men are paying up to 7s. an acre for pastoral land, the price that would be paid for the highest class of agricultural lands in an area where the rainfall was good.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Nobody is paying 7s. to the Crown.

Mr. VOWLES: They are asked to pay it. I think that the hon. member, as a Minister, ought to know and appreciate what happens under the scheme that was passed last session.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Do you mean under the perpetual lease system?

Mr. VOWLES: Yes. That land has never produced anything more than a shilling an acre, and I ask you how any person who has no knowledge of local conditions is going to make a valuation of such land unless he takes into consideration local knowledge as well as the evidence placed before him. I think that this Bill, if brought into operation, will simply be the means of creating billets. It is going to take a number of years to value even portion of the freehold land in the State with a limited staff.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: A great deal of them are done already.

Mr. VOWLES: By whom?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: By the Federal or the State department.

Mr. VOWLES: Are you going to accept their valuations?

Mr. MULLAN: Yes.

Mr. VOWLES: The State is loafing on them now, so far as some of their valuations are concerned. Under the State Land Tax Act how many valuers have been appointed, and how many properties have been valued during the year and a-half that they have been at work? You hear constant complaints from all directions. People are waiting for valuations to be made. Their valuations disagree with the valuations of the department, and they have to wait for these valuers to come along, with the result that they are in a position of insecurity because they do not know what amount of tax they will eventually have to pay. In some cases there are a few years of these payments in arrear. They have paid the first one under protest, and they have refused to pay any more until such time as the matter is determined. The Crown is standing out of its money and the taxpayer will eventually have to pay 10 per cent. on the tax when the amount is determined. The whole trouble is that they are hanging back waiting for that department to be sufficiently manned with a suitable staff so that these cases can be brought to a conclusion. Instead of bringing about uniformity, it strikes

[Mr. Vowles.

me we are going to bring about chaos. We have heard cases quoted; and the funny thing about it, it seems to me, is that the exception is always taken hold of by the department to prove the rule. The Treasurer tells us of a case where there is a uniform value of £6 an acre throughout one shire. If some of the land is worth less than £6 an acre and some of it is worth up to £60 an acre, then they must be a peculiar lot of ratepayers if they stand back and allow that condition of affairs. They surely must know that they have the right of appeal. If that exists in one shire it certainly does not exist in any town or shire I have a knowledge of.

The TREASURER: Most shire council values are too low.

Mr. VOWLES: It is a very hard thing to-day to know what is the value of land, particularly land in the country. In country towns and in good country districts there has been an undoubted depreciation of anything from 33 per cent. to 50 per cent. in land values during the last four years. I admit the war has got something to do with it, but one of the causes is that there has been such an increase in taxation. You have only to reason as the hon. member for Drayton reasons—that you must capitalise the tax. You must take the value for sale yourself. and if a man has to pay £100 in taxes that represents £2,000 at 5 per cent, and if £100 more has to be taken out of the land than three years ago the purchaser takes that into consideration and knocks off £2,000. Our friends say the land is not less productive, but the fact remains that the selling value has decreased and will be decreased, and I have that on the authority of no less a person than the ex-Minister for Lands, Mr. Hunter, who stated in my district that the object of their legislation was to kill the value of freehold land. If the values of land are decreasing at this rate, what is the good of saying lands are under-valued? The hon. member for Toowoomba must know that in his district there has been a very big falling-off in values. I know in valuations that have been placed before Government departments by me during the last couple of years it has been admitted as a fact, by the Succession Department particularly, that there has been a 25 per cent. to 33 per cent. decrease in values during the last couple of years and they have accepted those values.

Mr. BRENNAN: What has brought that about? The drought.

Mr. VOWLES: Has there been a drought during the last two years?

Mr. BRENNAN: What about Jimbour?

Mr. VOWLES: We have already done with Jimbour, and Jimbour contains no freehold land. That is one of the problems that the unfortunate valuer will have to face. As it is getting late, I will stop, as I will probably have an opportunity of dealing with many matters I am referring to now when the Committee stage is reached.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: I beg to move the adjournment of the debate.

Question put and passed.

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

The House adjourned at fifteen minutes past 10 o'clock p.m.