

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 31 OCTOBER 1919

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ABSENCE OF THE SPEAKER.

When the House met at half-past 3 o'clock p.m.,

The CLERK said: I have to inform the House that the Honourable the Speaker will not be here to-day owing to the death of a member of his family.

Mr. BERTRAM (*Maree*) thereupon took the chair as Deputy Speaker.

DEATH OF MR. C. P. LENNON.

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE.

The PREMIER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*) said: With the permission of the House, I wish to move a motion without notice.

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

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: I beg to move—

“That this House desires to place on record its deep sympathy with the Speaker and the members of his family in the loss they have sustained through the death of his son, Mr. C. P. Lennon, and that it be an instruction to the Clerk to convey this expression of condolence by letter to Mr. Speaker.”

I am sure we all feel great sympathy for the Hon. Mr. Lennon and his wife and family in their recent sad bereavement. (Hear, hear!) I think it is known to most of the Hon. Mr. Lennon's personal friends that he has had more than his share of trouble during the last few months in the way of family sickness and bereavements. (Hear, hear!) This last loss, I think, is the saddest of all—the loss of a devoted and highly-respected son. I think it is only fitting that the House should agree to the motion which I have just submitted.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): On behalf of the members of the Opposition, I desire to support the motion submitted by the Premier, and to extend our sympathy to the Hon. William Lennon and his family in their very sad bereavement.

HON. J. G. APPEL (*Albert*): I desire to add a few words to what has fallen from the Premier and the deputy leader of the Opposition. I likewise join in sympathy and condolence with the Hon. the Speaker. Those who have suffered bereavement appreciate the feelings of those who are undergoing like tribulation; and it is in such bereavements that the common humanity comes out which does and should animate every member of the community. (Hear, hear!)

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Bulimba*): Before the motion is put, I would like to add to the very fitting words that have been spoken by the Premier and by the two hon. members who have spoken from this side of the House. There are times when our purely political differences seem very small things, and this is such a time. I am quite certain that there is not a man in this House who does not extend to the Speaker and to every member of his family his sincere sympathy in this time of very great sorrow.

As the Premier so fittingly said, this sorrow is not the first which has recently fallen upon the Speaker and his family, and for that reason alone, if for no other, every man in this House must, with all his heart, extend to them his deepest sympathy. (Hear, hear!)

Honourable members indicated their support of the motion by rising in their places.

QUESTIONS.

SEED WHEAT.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*) asked the Secretary for Agriculture—

“1. Were any inquiries made by the Wheat Board in South Australia last year, with the Queensland Government, as to whether Queensland would require seed wheat, so that when the stacking was being done different varieties could be kept separate, and the best seed saved?”

“2. Did the Queensland Government reply that none would be required?”

“3. Owing to this fact, when seed was sent for, was it not impossible to secure the varieties applied for?”

“4. Have the South Australian Wheat Board, this year, communicated with the Queensland Government in regard to seed requirements for next year?”

“5. If so, has a reply been given; and to what effect?”

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. W. N. Gillies, *Eacham*) replied—

“1. No.

“2. No; see No. 1.

“3. The department secured the varieties of wheat required.

“4. Yes, in September last.

“5. Yes, to the effect that there is no intention of the Government purchasing seed wheat in South Australia this year.”

LOAN MONEYS RECEIVED SINCE 30TH JUNE, 1919.

HON. W. H. BARNES (*Bulimba*) asked the Treasurer—

“1. Has he since 30th June last received any further amounts of loan money—(a) from the Commissioner of the Savings Bank, (b) from the Commonwealth Government, (c) from any other source?”

“2. If so, will he state the respective amounts obtained, and from whom received?”

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

“1. No.

“2. See answer to No. 1.”

STATE OF LOAN ACCOUNT ON 30TH SEPTEMBER, 1919.

HON. W. H. BARNES asked the Treasurer—

“1. What was the state of the Loan Account on 30th September last?”

“2. What amount of money has been spent from Loan Account since 30th June last to 30th September, 1919?”

“3. How much money has been spent on Loan Account from 1st October to the 29th instant?”

The TREASURER replied—

“1 and 2. The information has already been given in reply to a previous question by the honourable member.

“3. £294,304 18s. 11d.”

LOAN REPAYMENTS BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

HON. W. H. BARNES asked the Treasurer—

“1. What amount of money has he received from the local authorities in Queensland on Loan Account from 1st July to 30th September, 1919?

“2. What amount of money has been advanced by him from Loan Account to local authorities from the 1st July to the 30th September, 1919?”

The TREASURER replied—

“1. £12,614 2s. 1d.

“2. £104,053 1s. 9d.”

ORDERS FOR RAILWAY TARPULINS PLACED IN JAPAN.

HON. W. H. BARNES asked the Secretary for Railways—

“1. Will he inform the House whether his department placed an order for railway tarpaulin covers in Japan; and, if so, what was the amount of same?

“2. Is he aware that some of the railway trucks conveying goods are covered with new tarpaulins upon which the words are written, ‘Made in Japan?’”

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. A. Fihelly, *Puddington*) replied—

“1. No order was placed in Japan for tarpaulins; they are made in the railway shops at Ipswich.

“2. Some canvas for making tarpaulins, which was obtained through a local agent, is branded ‘Made in Japan.’ This had to be purchased because it was not possible at the time to procure British canvas.”

EXPENDITURE ON SCHOOL BUILDINGS.

HON. W. H. BARNES asked the Treasurer—

“1. What amount of money has been spent on school buildings since 1st July, 1919, to the 30th September, 1919?

“2. How much of the amount so spent has come from Loan Account, and how much from revenue?”

The TREASURER replied—

“1. £20,488.

“2. Loan, £15,097 3s. 7d.; revenue, £5,390 16s. 5d.”

INSTITUTION OF LEGAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST STRIKERS IN SUGAR-MILLS.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*) asked the Secretary for Public Works—

“If, in view of the obstruction to the harvesting of our cane crops caused by the strikes constantly occurring in the sugar-mills, he will, in the interests of the public, institute proceedings against all those who strike without first complying with section 65 of the Industrial Arbitration Act?”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. J. Larcombe, *Keppel*) replied—

“I am not aware that strikes are constantly occurring in the sugar-mills.”

Mr. SWAYNE: You should read the newspapers.

STRIKES IN GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED SUGAR-MILLS.

Mr. SWAYNE asked the Treasurer—

“Can he inform the House as to the reason for so many strikes occurring in sugar-mills controlled by the Government?”

The TREASURER replied—

“Strikes are not peculiar to the sugar-mills controlled by the Government, and I presume the same causes are responsible in both Government-controlled and other mills.”

RAILWAY PASSES FOR WIFE AND CHILDREN OF WORKER PROCEEDING TO EMPLOYMENT.

Mr. ROBERTS (*East Toowoomba*) asked the Secretary for Public Works—

“When the Labour Bureau has issued a railway pass to a worker to proceed to employment, will he give instructions to the Director, or his deputy, to issue a pass for the worker’s wife and children, under similar conditions, should the employment appear reasonably permanent?”

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS replied—

“Under the present Government, the Labour Bureau has done splendid work in minimising the effects of unemployment, and it will continue to assist the unemployed worker in the manner it deems advisable. As at present, the Bureau will continue to treat each case on its merits.”

MANY PEAKS-NEW CANNINDAH RAILWAY PROPOSAL.

Mr. CARTER (*Port Curtis*) asked the Secretary for Railways—

“When will the Many Peaks-New Cannindah Railway proposal be introduced?”

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS replied—

“The Commissioner for Railways at the present time is inspecting route preparatory to making his report; when report and plans received, this proposal, in conjunction with other proposals for opening up Burnett lands, will be at once introduced.”

EMPLOYEES UNDER TREASURY DEPARTMENT.

RETURN TO ORDER.

The following paper was laid on the table:—

Return to an order made by the House on the 23rd October, on the motion of Mr. G. P. Barnes, showing the number of persons employed by the Treasury Department, including all institutions under the Treasurer’s control.

LIQUOR ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

THIRD READING.

On the motion of the HOME SECRETARY (Hon. W. McCormack, Cairns), this Bill was read a third time, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council for their concurrence by message in the usual form.

INDUSTRIAL AND PROVIDENT SOCIETIES BILL.

INITIATION.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. J. Lacombe, Keppel), in moving—

“That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to make better provision for industrial and provident societies,”

said: The object of the Bill is to make better provision for industrial and provident societies, and to further encourage co-operative trading in Queensland. When the Bill becomes an Act—which I hope will be soon—a society may register and carry on any trade or business or industry. The interest which any one member may have in that society will be limited to £100. Certain profits will enjoy immunity from income tax. In addition to those provisions, the co-operative societies operating in Queensland to-day will have certain disabilities removed. I am informed that it is impossible for the societies here to trade with registered co-operative societies in other States in Australia. That is a serious disadvantage and this Bill proposes to remove it. I think that brief rough outline of the Bill is all that it is necessary to give at the present stage.

Mr. VOWLES: I am not quite conversant with the subject of this motion, but, as it stands for co-operation—and that is one of the things for which this party stands—it appears to be all right. I do not know what the definition of industrial and provident society may be.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: One engaged in any trade, industry, or business.

Mr. VOWLES: At any rate, I am at one with the principle of co-operation, and I will defer any further remarks upon the matter until the Bill is introduced.

Question put and passed.

GOVERNOR'S SALARY ACT OF 1872 AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(Mr. Smith, Mackay, in the chair.)

The PREMIER, in moving—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Governor's Salary Act of 1872 in a certain particular,”

said: I have already explained the nature of the amendment, and if hon. members desire any further information I can give it.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: You merely said that it was in the direction of not increasing the amount.

The PREMIER: No; it is not increasing it. Of course, everyone knows that the Governor's term expires next year, and the

position will be vacant until the Imperial Government make an appointment of a successor to Sir Hamilton Goold-Adams. During that time, whether it is brief or long—probably it will be a brief period—the Lieutenant-Governor must act. Usually an officer already holding a high position in the State is called upon to assume the duties temporarily. He is designated then Lieutenant-Governor, and under the Act which we propose to amend he is entitled to half the salary which he gets in his present office and half the Governor's salary or allowance. It was thought that, in the circumstances, it would be well that we should amend the Governor's Salary Act with a view to eliminating the obligation to pay half the Governor's salary, so that the position would be that, whatever officer might be called upon to fill the position, he would get whatever salary is now attaching to his position, plus any allowance appropriated for carrying on the establishment. I think on the score of economy the proposal should be agreed to.

Mr. VOWLES: I am very glad to see that, at the eleventh hour, the Government are going to study economy.

The PREMIER: It has been a perpetual policy with us.

Mr. VOWLES: I thought it was not a principle of the Labour party that one man should do two men's jobs and not be paid for it. Is this officer going to do two men's jobs without being paid for it?

The PREMIER: I guarantee he will not be called upon to work more than eight hours. (Laughter.)

Mr. VOWLES: I think that the office entails a certain amount of duties which should have some compensation, for the work or the worry, as the case may be.

The PREMIER: While the officer, whoever he may be, is exercising the functions of Lieutenant-Governor he will not be discharging the functions of his other office.

Mr. VOWLES: He will not be?

The PREMIER: Not usually.

Mr. VOWLES: I understood he did both. Do I understand that the Chief Justice, when he is carrying out the duties of Lieutenant-Governor, does not sit on the bench?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The President of the Upper House does not.

Mr. VOWLES: That is so; but the Chief Justice will probably be Deputy Governor.

The PREMIER: When he is acting as Lieutenant-Governor in the temporary absence of the Governor—when the latter is within the State or absent only for a week—he should discharge both functions, but, certainly, if he is called upon to discharge those duties for a lengthy period—a month or more—he should not discharge both functions.

Mr. VOWLES: Are we to understand that if the Chief Justice becomes the Lieutenant-Governor he is not going to sit on the bench or carry out his functions as Chief Justice?

The PREMIER: I assume so, but I cannot say exactly. I assume he will cease to sit on the bench in the meantime.

Mr. VOWLES: I cannot help thinking there is something more in this Bill than meets the eye. Is this measure intended to eliminate the position of Governor? If it

Mr. Fowles.]

is introduced with a view of economy, the thing is too paltry to take into consideration.

The PREMIER: It has nothing whatever to do with the position of Governor; it is only for economy.

Mr. VOWLES: It strikes me as rather peculiar that a motion like this should be brought before the House on the ground of economy. I will guarantee that there is a wastage in connection with Government motor-cars used late at nights during the session.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must deal with the question.

Mr. VOWLES: I am dealing with the question—I am dealing with the cost of the motor-cars, and making a comparison, and I submit that I am in order. I say that this is only a circumstance compared with the increasing public expenditure. I do not think the reasons given by the Premier are really sufficient to be taken into consideration by this House; they are too paltry.

Question put and passed.

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

FIRST READING.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the Bill was read a first time; and the second reading was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

DARAJI RAILWAY BRIDGE BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. Smith, Mackay, in the chair.*)

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. A. Fihelly, *Paddington*): I beg to move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to authorise the erection of a bridge over the North Johnstone River at Daraji, in connection with the construction of the North Coast Railway between Innisfail and Mooliba, and for other consequential purposes.”

As I explained yesterday, this Bill is introduced with the object of indemnifying the Commissioner for Railways in any action that may be taken following on some obstruction and damage owing to the erection of the bridge over the North Johnstone River at Daraji. There will be no inconvenience to the few people who use the river. A few ships pass down to the neighbouring mill, but by the alteration of masts and derricks the trouble to such shipping will be quite obviated. The bridge will be 30 feet above high-water mark. To build it at any additional height the expense would really be prohibitive, so there is no course open but to leave it 30 feet above high-water level, and the inconvenience will be little or nothing. People who have these ships occasionally passing to and fro on the river are connected already by railway with Mourilyan. Even at a height of 30 feet the only inconvenience they will be put to will be the alteration of the masts and derricks.

Mr. VOWLES: The Minister has given us the necessary information, and we can only assume that the officers of the department

[*Mr. Vowles.*

are recommending this bridge in the interests of the State. I would like to suggest to the Minister that, at a later stage, he might let us have the recommendations of the department, so that we shall have something to go on.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I will do that.

Question put and passed.

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

FIRST READING.

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS, the Bill was read a first time; and the second reading was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

OFFICIALS IN PARLIAMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

HON. J. MULLAN (*Flinders*), in moving—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to further amend the Constitution of Queensland by amending the Officials in Parliament Act of 1896, in certain particulars.”

said: The object of this Bill is to increase the number of Ministers from eight to nine, and to enable the Governor, by proclamation, to declare the office which each officer shall hold, and to repeal section 4 of

[4 p.m.] the Act. I might relieve the anxiety of hon. members on the other side by mentioning that there is no intention under the Bill to increase the salaries of Ministers. The work of every department, as hon. members must well know, has enormously increased since the Officials in Parliament Act of 1896 was passed. The revenue of the State has also increased. In 1896 the revenue was £3,400,000 odd, while to-day the revenue is £9,400,000 odd, an increase of £6,000,000, or nearly 200 per cent. Then, the population has increased from 472,000 to 694,000, and, as hon. members are aware, several large subdepartments have been created since that time, many of them in consequence of the establishment of State enterprises.

Mr. VOWLES: With expensive Commissioners.

HON. J. MULLAN: Even if you appoint Commissioners, it does not relieve the Ministers of certain increased duties in consequence of the creation of those subdepartments.

Mr. VOWLES: The Minister is only a rubber stamp.

HON. J. MULLAN: By no means. The hon. member may prove himself a rubber stamp if he ever has the privilege of occupying such a position, but he must not think other people are the same.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: There are more live wires over here. (Laughter.)

HON. J. MULLAN: We have established State stations for the production of meat; we have established State butcher shops for the supply of cheap meat to the people of Queensland; we have established a State Produce Agency, State sawmills, State fish supply, and a State Government insurance, which is an enormous department, as hon. members well know. Then, a State Public

Curator's Office has been established which is conferring an enormous benefit on the people of this State, and it naturally involves an enormous increase in the administrative work of the department concerned. We are now establishing State smelters. We have already established a State assay office and State batteries. There is an enormous increase in State activities, and Ministers now perform the work which, at one time, was performed by the Public Service Board. Then, again, scores of Acts have been passed since 1896, all of which enormously increase the administrative duties of the various Ministers. Take, for instance, the Shops and Factories Acts and other industrial legislation. Hon. gentleman must recognise, therefore, that an additional Minister is necessary. Mr. Denham stated in this House some time ago that he thought another Minister was necessary.

HON. W. H. BARNES: When did he say that?

The HOME SECRETARY: He said it in this House. He said there was sufficient work for the Premier without attending to a department at all.

HON. J. MULLAN: Last night the hon. member for Aubigny pointed out that there ought to be a Minister for Health alone, as that is an enormous department. In fact, there are several subdepartments to the Home Department which in themselves provide sufficient work for one Minister. Without going further into the matter at this stage, I think hon. members must recognise the necessity for an additional Minister. On the second reading of the Bill I will go further into details and demonstrate, I think, beyond doubt the necessity for increasing the number of Ministers in this State.

Mr. VOWLES: Hon. members on the Opposition side must be very touched by the urgent appeal by the hon. member for Flinders for authority to appoint himself as a Minister. That is really what the Bill amounts to.

The HOME SECRETARY: Don't you believe in payment for work done?

Mr. VOWLES: The question of the hon. gentleman opens up a very peculiar position. When all is said and done, the whole of the members of the Treasury bench will receive some benefit. I do not think we are of such a parsimonious character as to deny to any man who does the work a proper remuneration for it. If it can be shown that it is necessary that another office should be created, and that remuneration commensurate with the work is desirable, we will support it every time, but I am astonished to find again an hon. Minister admitting that his colleagues and he have been sweating other individuals and doing the work of other boards. I thought it was altogether contrary to their principles. However, when the Bill comes before us, we will be able to deal with it on its merits.

The HOME SECRETARY: Ask the hon. member for Flinders whether he has not enough to do as a Minister.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am quite prepared to admit that the statement made by the Home Secretary is perfectly correct—that there is a good deal of work to be done. I quite remember when I was in the department first that, although the previous occupant was very busy, there was a good deal left to me, and it took a good deal of

time to straighten up. One must recognise there is a growth in the affairs of the State, and I quite recognise that, with the growth there are increasing demands on Ministers, but all the same the growth goes in one direction which it seems to me might be avoided, and that is the State, as the Minister himself pointed out, is dabbling in various enterprises which, by and by, if I mistake not, will have to be discontinued. Some of the ventures which the State are entering upon are ventures which can only lead to disaster to the State.

The HOME SECRETARY: That is a matter of opinion.

HON. W. H. BARNES: We are all entitled to our opinions. Whether it is a matter of opinion or not, it is perfectly certain that if you take the Auditor-General's report that there are some of those enterprises that cannot succeed. I am using that by way of illustration to point out that some of these enterprises are responsible for a motion like this being moved. It will be seen at once that if it were not for those State enterprises there would be no necessity for the appointment of an additional Minister.

The HOME SECRETARY: That is a good enough argument against the policy, but it is not an argument that somebody should do it for nothing.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am sure the Committee would be delighted to have a dissertation from the Home Secretary. He said a while ago we were a very pleasant crowd. I am quite sure the pleasantness of the afternoon would be added to by the hon. member getting up and giving us some ideas of his experience as a Minister in the Home Department. I am quite prepared to say it is not a sinecure.

The HOME SECRETARY: If he could only get a chance to do it. (Laughter.)

HON. W. H. BARNES: The fact remains that the finances are absolutely unsatisfactory. The State is drifting to an alarming extent, and it is apparent that we are going from bad to worse financially. Is it not a time when the members of the Cabinet should feel that if they are pooling their salaries they might pool them a little while longer in order to show that there is a desire to help the State?

Mr. COLLINS: Did you draw your increase the other day?

HON. W. H. BARNES: That, of course, is a horse of another colour. (Laughter.) I can remember, when there was a time of crisis under old Administrations, instead of taking increases, they submitted to a reduction. The deputy leader of this party drew attention to the fact that the Minister himself is concerned in this motion. I do not wish to be personal, but I was going to suggest that he might have his name honoured throughout the community by saying that he would scorn, at a juncture like this, when the State is drifting financially, to be a party to such an alteration.

Mr. MOORE: As I indicated yesterday, if there were going to be a Minister for Local Government and Health, there would be some justification for the motion. But when we see that the late Home Secretary (Mr. Appel) carried on the Home Department and Mines Department, and the hon. member for Balimba carried on the Treasury and

Mr. Moore.]

Works Departments, it looks as though the present Government had not the same capacity for work and ability to carry it out as the late Government had. After all, if Ministers did not travel about the world and go round the country electioneering when there was a Federal election or an election in the Southern States, the probability is they would have sufficient time in their offices to carry on the work allotted to them without appointing an extra Minister.

Mr. PETERSON: Do you object to Ministers travelling round the State and seeing what ought to be done?

Mr. MOORE: I object to Ministers of one State going down to another State electioneering. I object to the Premier going to the Perth conference when there was no reason for him to go, and there were sufficient matters in his own State requiring attention. After all, before we had federation, there was only the same number of Ministers and a vastly greater amount of work had to be carried out. We have a Commissioner to look after the State enterprises. Only the bare administration lies with the Minister. They should not involve such an enormous amount of work as to necessitate the appointment of another Minister.

Mr. PETERSON: What about deputations taking up all the time of Ministers?

Mr. MOORE: Other Ministers had deputations coming to them before this Government came into power.

Mr. PETERSON: Oh, no!

Mr. MOORE: Surely the Administrations must have been very much superior in the past if no deputations had to come to them seeking remedies! It looks rather bad for this to be the only Administration to have that experience.

Mr. PETERSON: Deputations gave it up because they could not get anything out of you.

Mr. MOORE: I do not think any reason has been advanced for the appointment of another Minister. We have a Minister for Justice and an Assistant Minister for Justice. When it comes to administration, we find they are not game to stand up to it. When it comes to administering the Arbitration Act the Government are not game to stand up to it. If it takes two Ministers to administer one Act, and they are not able to carry it out, that is not a reason for appointing a full-salaried Minister, unless they are going to appoint somebody fresh who would have a little more backbone.

Question put and passed.

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

FIRST READING.

On the motion of HON. J. MULLAN, the Bill was read a first time, and the second reading was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

FAIR RENTS BILL.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: In moving the second reading of this Bill I desire to say that it is complementary on the

[Mr. Moore.

Profiteering Prevention Bill. The Profiteering Prevention Bill was designed to give protection in the matter of food to the people of the State, and this Bill is designed with the object of giving the people shelter at a reasonable cost. The economic and social problem of food and rent at a fair price is an urgent as well as a very important one. The Government have a comprehensive, well-defined scheme for dealing with this problem by means of fair rents legislation, unemployment legislation, legislation in regard to workers' homes, improvement of the workers' dwellings provisions of the Government Savings Bank Act, as well as the direct profiteering legislation which was introduced recently. Those measures combined show a statesmanlike conception of the position, and will tremendously improve the position in Queensland industrially and socially when they become law. This Bill is not designed to harass the landlord who is charging only a fair rental on the capital he has invested. It is designed to restrict the operations of the rack-renter. There is no doubt we have the rack-renter in Queensland as well as in the other States of Australia and other parts of the world. I have here a short quotation from the "Daily Mail" of 15th October, which indicates the widespread evil of rack-renting, like the widespread evil of other forms of profiteering. The quotation reads—

"KEY MONEY.

"LANDLORD PROFITEERS.

"London, Monday.

"The scandalous profiteering in connection with houses and flats in London is raising a clamorous demand for legal control, and the question will shortly be raised in Parliament, with a view to the extension of the powers conferred by the Profiteering Act. The public especially resent the landlords demanding high premiums called key money."

Not only are high rents being exacted in London, but bonuses are being demanded, which are known as "key money." All kinds of tricks are being resorted to in England to extort from the people unfair and unreasonable rents. Before I touch upon States in Australia, I would like to make a brief reference to the principle embodied in the Bill. It is the same principle as is contained in the Profiteering Prevention Bill, and is a principle that has been long recognised in the British Empire. I have here a copy of the Irish Landlords Act of 1831, section 8 of which reads—

"The tenant of any present tenancy to which this Act applies, or such tenant and the landlord jointly, or the landlord, after having demanded from such tenant an increase of rent which the tenant has declined to accept, or after the parties have otherwise failed to come to an agreement, may from time to time during the continuance of such tenancy apply to the court to fix the fair rent to be paid by such tenant to the landlord for the holding, and thereupon the court, after hearing the parties, and having regard to the interest of the landlord and tenant respectively, and considering all the circumstances of the case, holding, and district, may determine what is such fair rent."

That Act was passed to deal with the intolerable landlordism and rack-renting that went

on in Ireland in 1881 and previously. The late Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone at first resisted the Bill, but the strong advocacy of the late Charles Stewart Parnell led to the passage of the Act. Although that Act deals with land rents, still the principle is there. Ethically and morally, the principle is the same when applied to house rents. Let me make just one short quotation from the "Scottish Weekly Journal" for 28th June, 1913, to show that the same principle obtains in Scotland—

"The following case was settled in the Scottish Land Court amongst others:—

William Thompson, who was paying £40 per year for his croft, brought the case before the court, and after hearing what the tenant had to say, it (the court) came to the conclusion that the rent was too high, and fixed it at £30 per annum."

I will now come a little nearer home, and refer to Australia. The scarcity of houses in Australia, and particularly in Melbourne and Sydney, has been very noticeable during the last few years. There has been a very marked scarcity, and it has naturally led to great competition for houses, and to the extortion of unfair rents by many who have invested their money in house property. The extraction of these extortionate rents led to the passage of a Bill in New South Wales similar to the one which I am now asking this House to pass, although I contend that it is not nearly as good a Bill as this. I will quote briefly from a speech delivered by the Hon. J. D. Fitzgerald when speaking on the Fair Rents Bill in the Legislative Council of New South Wales—

"A considerable amount of cruelty has followed upon this terrible competition for homes in the city of Sydney. It is for that reason I ask the House to give this Bill not a scanty but a thorough consideration, bearing in mind that there is human flesh and blood and the homes of women and children behind this problem. I ask the House to give it a consideration, I do not say a cordial consideration, because it is a matter on which men may hold strong opinions; but if not a cordial consideration, to give it, at any rate, a warm-hearted consideration in view of the human problem behind it. I appeal to the House to do that."

As the Hon. Mr. Fitzgerald said, it is really a flesh and blood problem—a problem that has a very close relationship to the welfare of women and children in particular. It is the same in Queensland. The New South Wales Act has been severely criticised during the last few years, but strong justification for it rests upon the evidence that has been given before the Interstate Commission, and that evidence entirely justifies the introduction of this measure in Queensland.

Mr. MOORE: What has it done in New South Wales?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Let me quote from a report recently issued on the question by the Interstate Commission—

"The economic importance of this Act is in inverse proportion to its length and to the simplicity of the machinery it sets up. The right of the landowner,

recognised as a cardinal one for many centuries, to get what rental he can for his property, is displaced by a statute of twenty-five sections, while the administration for the whole of the metropolitan area is so simple that one court not sitting continuously has sufficed for the work."

Again, dealing with the figures relating to the appeals to the court for reductions of rent, the Commissioners say—

"These figures give a very imperfect impression of the effect of the Act in keeping down rents during a period of acute scarcity of houses. There has also to be considered the stabilising effect of that section which forbids the raising of rents beyond the January, 1915, standard. The Act has been a formidable bulwark against raising rent where no additional service is given by way of accommodation or equipment, and this deterrent operation of the Act represents its most valuable achievement."

The reply to the hon. member for Aubigny is to be found in this report of the Interstate Commission, which says that the Act has been a "formidable bulwark" against the unfair raising of rents. It is the negative value of the Act rather than its positive value that is its greatest recommendation.

Mr. GUNN: How is it that rents are higher in Sydney now than ever they were?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: If I were to admit that contention, it would prove nothing, because rents are higher in every other State of Australia, as well as in New South Wales, than they were some years ago, and I will proceed to show the cause.

Mr. GUNN: How is it that rents are lower in Queensland than they are in any other State?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I presume the hon. member is thinking now of the Commonwealth Statistician's figures; but I would point out that the basis of comparison adopted by the Commonwealth Statistician is not uniform. That is to say, certain rooms, such as a kitchen and out-houses, are not regarded as rooms in New South Wales, whereas they are counted as rooms in Queensland. One can see, therefore, that the basis of comparison is not sound. However, I want to emphasise the fact that the Interstate Commission—a tribunal of high standing, and specially appointed to investigate this and other problems—considered the operation of the New South Wales Act, and came to the conclusion that the Act has been a "formidable bulwark" against raising rents where no additional services have [4.30 p.m.] been rendered. And they say that is a most valuable achievement. It is quite evident that the real effect of the New South Wales Act, with all its imperfections, is not reflected in the number of applications to the court, or the number of reductions that have been granted.

Mr. ROBERTS: Do you say that it has been a success in New South Wales?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I say that that is the report of the Interstate Commission. It has prevented increases and in many cases brought about reductions, but the number of applications and reductions is not its greatest achievements at all.

Hon. J. Larcombe.]

Its greatest achievement is its negative effect in preventing further increases.

Mr. ROBERTS: There is a shortage of houses there.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: But that does not apply to New South Wales in particular. It is common throughout Australia, and practically throughout the civilised world.

Mr. VOWLES: Will this Bill encourage the construction of houses?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It is not designed for that purpose. Our Workers' Homes Bill and the improved Workers' Dwellings Act are going to relieve the shortage of homes.

Mr. VOWLES: All part of one dream.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: A beautiful dream which will soon be a reality, because we all know that the dream of yesterday is the actuality of to-day. Twenty-five years ago adult suffrage was a dream. A Labour Government in Queensland was a very wild dream twenty-five years ago, but it is a reality—a beautiful reality—to-day. (Hear, hear! and laughter.) Dealing briefly with the argument urged by the hon. member for Warwick, and mentioned a few moments ago by the hon. member for Dalby, that the effect of the Bill will be discouragement of investment in dwelling-houses for letting purposes, I say that the evidence which has been secured by the Interstate Commission does not really justify such a conclusion, and we depend largely upon the results of the investigations of that Commission for our conclusions upon a Bill of this nature. The disinclination to invest in dwelling-houses is common throughout Australia. According to the report of the Interstate Commission the shortage of houses is very marked in Melbourne, and there is no fair rents legislation in Victoria.

Mr. MOORE: And the rents are lower than in Sydney, where there is fair rents legislation.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The rents were also lower before there was any legislation. The hon. member knows that Sydney is a very prosperous city, and rents have been exceptionally high there, and they were higher than in Melbourne before the legislation came into effect, but the proportionate increase in rents would have been much greater had there been no such legislation.

Mr. MOORE: What is the good of talking like that?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: If that is not so the hon. member is beating the air, because, if it does not restrict rents, there is no evil in the Bill from the hon. member's viewpoint.

Mr. GUNN: Is it going to prevent people building houses.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: How can it do that if the rents have gone up after the Bill becomes law? If this Bill is going to lead to no result, if rents are not going to be controlled by it, the investor will receive just as much as he has hitherto.

Mr. MOORE: There was a scarcity, and, consequently, the court put up the rents.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I have already pointed out that two Bills I previously mentioned will provide more

houses. This Bill is not designed to increase the number; it is only designed to give protection to those who are being unfairly treated in the way of rent. As a matter of fact, there has been very little dwelling-house building for investment purposes in Queensland for years past. Nearly all the houses have been erected under the Workers' Dwellings Act.

Mr. ROBERTS: Your proposal is to build houses at 24s. per week.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That sum includes redemption also. I do not intend to make more than general reference to the Workers' Homes Bill, but I am pointing out that those two Bills will provide more houses. In Melbourne there is a shortage of 9,000 houses, and there is no fair rents legislation there. According to the report of the Interstate Commission, there is a shortage in Sydney and in Brisbane.

Mr. ROBERTS: There is a shortage of material on account of the war.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No; the hon. member said that it is on account of fair rents legislation.

Mr. ROBERTS: There has been a general shortage of material.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: There has been a general shortage of houses and material, artificially created, as I will show in a minute. When there is a difference of opinion on a matter like this, surely we can accept the conclusions of the Interstate Commission! I shall give the Interstate Commission's opinion as to the reason for the dearth of dwelling-houses in Australia, but I want to say, before passing on, that this startling shortage of houses in sunny Australia—9,000 houses in Melbourne and a big shortage in Brisbane and Sydney—has resulted in marked discomfort and inconvenience to the community. It is a startling revelation to realise that there is such a shortage of dwelling-houses.

Mr. FOLEY: Several families living in one house!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Yes. Some shocking evidence came before the Commission. The Sydney "Sun," in reporting it, said that there was nothing worse in the history of the world than the absence of shelter that exists in the capital cities—slum conditions, five and six persons living in one room in this country, with all its possibilities, its wealth, and its small population.

Mr. MOORE: It shows bad government.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It shows what shocking government we have had inflicted on us for the last half century, and it is a strong argument for the return of a Labour Government on the 13th December. (Hear, hear!) No doubt, it will take place. The information I have given shows that it is not fair rents legislation that is responsible for the disinclination to invest in dwelling-house investments. It is not Labour government, because there is only one Labour Government in Australia. It is not the Labour question, if we are to accept the conclusions and deductions of the Interstate Commission. The real cause, I think, is fairly obvious. We know that the operations of combinations of various kinds in Australia have been responsible for the artificial shortage of food, and they are responsible for the artificial shortage of

[Hon. J. Larcombe.

shelter, too. A paragraph in the Commission's report says—

“The prime reason assigned for this comparative stoppage of building is the high price of material.”

Now, I want to proceed a step further as to the cause of the high price of material. The Interstate Commission, *inter alia*, say—

“INCREASED COST OF MATERIALS AND LABOUR.

“The following comparison of the total cost of building in 1914 and 1918, and the distribution of that cost into the principal items of material and labour, was supplied by a Sydney builder of wide experience in the class of construction dealt with.

“Brick cottage with five rooms, including kitchen and bath: Labour—1914, £131 6s.; 1918, £146 3s. Materials—1914, £278 17s. 2d.; 1918, £410 18s. 5d.

“The total cost for material and labour is £557 in 1918, as against £410 in 1914, or an increase of 35.85 per cent. If the value of the land be included in the estimate at £50 (and land values have not advanced), the total figure for such a cottage is about £600 in 1918, as against £460 in 1914, excluding builder's profit in each case.

“It will be observed that in 1918 the material alone cost as much as the combined cost of labour and material in 1914. The proportionate cost of labour and material for each of the two years in question was:—Labour—1914, £131 6s.—32 per cent.; 1918, £146 3s.—26½ per cent. Material—1914, £278 17s. 2d.—68 per cent.; 1918, £410 18s. 5d.—73½ per cent.”

It will be observed that the percentage cost of labour decreased between the four years mentioned from 32 per cent. to 26½ per cent.

Mr. MOORE: The cost of material went up.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The cost of material increased at the same time from 68 per cent. to 73½ per cent. What about the argument with regard to high wages?

Mr. ROBERTS: The worker got more for his money.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: But he did not get as much more as those who were selling raw material at an extortionate rate. It shows that the high cost of material is the factor that is determining the restriction in the erection of dwelling-houses.

Mr. MOORE: The high cost of timber.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: This is what the Interstate Commission says as to the reason for the high prices. Dealing with galvanised iron, the report states—

“The price of 26-gauge corrugated iron—the grade most in use—rose from £17 net per ton in 1914 to £45 10s. per ton net in 1917. With the rapid dwindling of stocks there can be no doubt that speculation in this article became rife, and the War Precautions (Prices) Regulation No. 189, which fixed the prices at 7½ per cent. on purchase price from wholesaler to retailer and 10 per cent. retailer to consumer, did not wholly stop the practice.”

Profiteering and speculation in iron were

rife, according to the Interstate Commission, and the War Precautions Regulations did not stop the practice.

Mr. MOORE: You fixed the price, but you could not get it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The report continues—

“The regulation did not apply to second-hand iron, and as a consequence this has been freely bringing more than the price charged for new iron by those merchants who observed the regulation. Sales in 1918 are said to have been made at as high a figure as £85 or £90 per ton.”

The cause of the discouragement of investment in dwelling-house property is reflected in that paragraph in the Interstate Commission's report. Referring to the large profits made by the brick combines not apparent to the public, the report of the Commission further states—

“As already indicated, the explanation is to be found in the inflated figures which appear in the balance-sheets as capital, with the effect, and often with the apparent purpose, of misleading the public as to the real rate of profit. In addition, these brick combines sometimes close works to limit competition, compensating the owners during the period when the works are idle.”

In addition, these brick combines closed works and eliminated competition. There are the facts with regard to profiteering, and the real cause of increase in rents of dwelling-houses. The brick combines have been getting extortionate profits, and have been limiting production by closing down works. We are told that decreased production is the cause of our trouble.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Where have brick kilns been closed down?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: In New South Wales.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Oh!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I am astonished at the want of—

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Geographical knowledge.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: At the hon. member's want of logical grasp of the subject. Unless you know what is going on in other States you cannot form a sound basis of comparison. You do not know how to deal with the matter in Queensland. In moving the second reading of this Bill it is my duty to show the reasons why the Bill should go through, and reasons can be found in a report framed in Australia bearing upon the position in other States. Unless we know what the position is in other States, we cannot form an idea of what the position is likely to be in Queensland. We require a basis of comparison, and, consequently, the argument of the hon. member for Oxley is not a reasonable one.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Not an argument at all—I asked where you took your illustration from, and as to how it applies to Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I am taking one State at a time. We will know how to legislate in Queensland by getting to know how legislation of a similar nature operates in other parts of Australia. I have heard the hon. member rise frequently

Hon. J. Lacombe.]

and read quotations from authorities who had been dead for centuries. I have heard him give illustrations of what is going on in other parts of the world besides Australia, and that is quite proper, if he can link up his arguments with those authorities. We are endeavouring to link up this pricing-fixing Bill in Queensland with legislation of a similar nature in Australia. First of all, the argument was that the high price of material in Australia was the result of the war. Then, when I show from the Interstate Commission's report that that is due to profiteering, hon. members opposite take up another stand altogether. The Interstate Commission is a competent tribunal, appointed by an anti-Labour Government, and composed of men who are not connected with the Labour movement, and who do not care two straws about Labour economics; and yet they say that the disinclination to invest in dwelling-house property is common throughout Australia, and is caused largely by the high cost of material brought about by iron and brick combine profiteers, who close down other works and limit production to keep up the prices of things—a scandalous state of affairs.

Mr. MOORE: Scandalous, when the iron works had to make munitions instead of galvanised iron.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That is not the explanation at all. The Interstate Commission take all those factories into consideration, and severely criticise those who have been profiteering in the brick and iron industry in Australia. Those facts, to my mind, indicate that fair rents legislation in Queensland would not discourage investment in dwelling-house property. The rental allowed will be reasonable, and, that being so, there will be every inducement for those who do not desire more than a fair return on the money to invest.

Mr. FRY: What do you consider a fair percentage?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I will let the hon. member know when I deal with the Bill proper.

Coming to the provisions of the Bill, I want, first of all, to deal with the constitution of the court. The court is to consist of a police magistrate, to sit at such times and places as the Governor in Council may direct. There will be no lawyers allowed in the court without the consent of both parties. That is something to be thankful for. There will be no costs. Applications can be decided in the course of a half an hour. The Bill is a model of simplicity and efficiency. Any lessor or lessee who has paid and tendered any rents due and payable under his lease may approach the court. The court may take oral evidence or take evidence by statutory declaration. If the worker finds it is inconvenient to attend the court, it will mean a loss of time and money to him, the court can accept his written declaration; but, if the court is dissatisfied with the declaration, it has, of course, the power to call upon any applicant to attend the court.

The court has power to determine what is a fair rent. The method of ascertaining a fair rent is by finding the value of land and the cost of the building to the owner, less depreciation. Those factors will guide the court in arriving at a fair rent. A fair rent shall not exceed 10 per cent. gross of the amount invested in the land

and dwelling. The Federal Government some time ago passed a regulation to protect returned soldiers, and I notice that in that regulation they do not allow as high a gross rent as is contained in this Bill.

Mr. FRY: What do you allow for depreciation?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The gross return shall not exceed 10 per cent., and the landlord has to pay all depreciation. I might explain that if a building was bought at £500 by an owner, and the building had run half its life, 50 per cent. would be deducted from the cost of the building before the court attempted to fix the rent. Any depreciation after that, of course, will be borne by the landlord, because he gets a gross return not exceeding 10 per cent. to cover depreciation, taxation, and all other reasonable business expenses, and profit.

Mr. ROBERTS: On your argument, in time the tenant will get the house free.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Not at all. The hon. gentleman is wrong. Under this Bill a net return of anything from 6 per cent. to 8 per cent. will be guaranteed to the landlord, as the business expenses are usually calculated on a 2 per cent. basis.

Mr. MOORE: Provided he has a tenant the whole year round.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The landlord gets sufficient profit to cover that factor. According to the evidence I have it will more than cover it; it will give the landlord a reasonable return on the money he has invested. The determination of the court is to remain in force for a period of not less than six months, and not more than three years. Of course, if substantial reasons are adduced, the court may shorten the period during which the determination may remain in force.

Mr. GUNN: Would it not be better for him to invest his money in war bonds or Government stock?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Not in this case.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: What interest are you charging the local authorities?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Somewhere about 5½ per cent.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: It is nearer 6 per cent.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It is less than 6 per cent., because when I was in the Justice Department I made inquiries into that matter, and I am quite sure that the rate of interest is less than 6 per cent.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: It is practically a safe investment from the Government point of view, but this is not a safe investment.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: This will show a net return of more than that amount.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: You said 6 per cent. a while ago.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I said a net return of between 6 per cent. and 8 per cent. The gross return shall not exceed 10 per cent., but if the court allows 10 per cent., the landlord will be able to get on his money more than he would get by investing his money in the war loan. Even supposing the investor does not get more under this Bill than he would

[Hon. J. Larcombe.]

get in the war loan, what then? Is he not getting a fair return in the war loan? The determination of the court is to be final. The lessor shall not, without the consent of the court, demand any increased rent, or give any notice or take any proceedings to terminate the tenancy during the pendency of the application nor for six months thereafter. That is a necessary proviso to prevent intimidation. If a landlord was allowed to terminate the tenancy during the currency of an application, or a month afterwards, hundreds of prospective applicants would be terrorised and would not really be able to go to the court. Any attempt to boycott or threaten tenants will be severely dealt with. Any attempt to discourage any applicant from going to the court, or to penalise any applicant who is prosecuting an application before the court, will constitute an offence, and be punished under this Act. Contracting out of the Act will not be permissible. Any contract that purports to contract out of this Act will be null and void. It will be an offence under the Act to accept bonuses in consideration for granting leases. We know that just a few months ago the "Brisbane Courier" contained advertisements offering bonuses to landlords for houses. The position is so acute in Brisbane and in other parts of Australia that those looking for houses are forced to offer bonuses, and a very undesirable practise has grown up. Anything of that nature will not be permitted when this Bill becomes law, because, if it were permitted, it would defeat the object of the Bill.

Mr. MOORE: You will want to have a ballot.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You want a ballot at the present time. I know a good many people in Brisbane are looking out for a decent dwelling-house, and they want more than a ballot; they want about a £10 bonus in order to get a house.

Penalties are provided in the Bill for offences. Anyone who, by any Act or omission, is guilty of any contravention of any of the provisions of the Act, will be liable to a penalty not exceeding £100.

When I was speaking at an earlier stage, someone inquired as to what buildings and what jobs this Bill would create. There will be no new buildings, and no big jobs, and no heavy costs under this Bill. The cost of administration will be almost infinitesimal. In New South Wales, for a period of two and a-half years—from March, 1916, till September, 1918—the administration of the Act only cost £1,690, and that included the salaries of the stipendiary magistrate, and if the courts had not been in operation those salaries would still have had to be paid, so the cost of administering the New South Wales Act has been only nominal. If you deduct from that £1,690 the amount to the magistrates as salaries, there would be very little expenditure to be charged against the Act.

I have briefly outlined what I consider to be the more important principles of the Bill. Hon. members have the Bill before them. I have not gone into every clause, as I presume hon. members have studied the Bill for themselves, and I will content myself now with formally moving that the Bill be read a second time.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MOORE: I did not quite grasp, after all the Minister said, what advantage is

going to be reaped by the persons looking for houses in Queensland when this Bill is passed. He said it is not likely to increase the number of houses—that all it is likely to do is to lower the rents of the houses already built. He said it was complementary to the Profiteering Prevention Bill, but this Bill is not likely to ameliorate the conditions existing in Queensland. We know that in New South Wales the position is considerably worse than it was before the Fair Rents Act came into force.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It would have been worse still if it had not been for that Act.

Mr. MOORE: There is no proof of that. We have this Government getting up and saying that the position in Queensland would have been worse if it was not for the Labour Government. But there is no proof of that. The proof points the other way. Take New South Wales at the present time. After they got their Fair Rents Act this appears in the "Daily Mail"—

"House rents in Sydney 25s. 10d. for the first quarter this year."

It has never been higher.

"House rents in Melbourne, 25s. 8d.; Brisbane, 19s. 8d."

Brisbane is the lowest on the list, except Perth, where it is 18s. 3d., and there is no doubt that the rent in Brisbane is low owing to the Workers' Dwellings Act placed on the statute-book by the late Dr. Kidston. In Western Australia they are certainly 18s. 3d., but they have had a Labour Government for a long time, and nobody over there seems to have any money. The Government [5 p.m.] ment are practically insolvent, as they are here. The community have got into such a position that they have not the money to pay.

Mr. CARTER: It is a Tory Government; that is why.

Mr. MOORE: They are trying to retrieve the awful position into which the State got by previous extravagance. That is what the position of this party will be when they go over to the other side of the House after the next election and try to retrieve the frightful financial muddle the State has got into. The Minister gave us no instance of brickworks being shut down in Queensland, or anything tending to increase the rents. Practically the whole of his argument related to New South Wales. He referred to London, and said the people had to pay key money to get into a house because there was such a great shortage. Does he not realise that in England during the five years of war the whole of the population was engaged in the manufacture of munitions or other work for the Government? The same thing happened in America. Consequently, it was no good fixing the price of iron in Australia, because it was not procurable. Then the Minister said the cost of materials was one of the great factors. He instanced brickworks being closed down in New South Wales. He also said that timber had gone up in Queensland. The chief cause of the rise in timber was the Government. They had their own mill, and they charged the same price as the combine.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It has steadied prices.

Mr. MOORE: They have gone up ever since the Queensland Government started. Directly this Government got into power, the

Mr. Moore.]

price of timber started to go up. Look at the price to-day at the log—15s. 2d.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It would have been higher had it not been for the State sawmill.

Mr. MOORE: You cannot refute an argument like that, because it is not an argument. Anybody could get up and say a thing would have been dearer had something or other not been done. The only guide we have is what existed in the past when a different Government were in power. There is no doubt the cost of building has gone up enormously. The Minister's own figures established that fact. Is a man likely to invest money with all the possibilities of increases in the cost of building? The price of labour has not increased so greatly as has that of material, though it is considerably higher than it was previously.

Mr. W. COOPER: Don't you think the shortage of dwellings has had something to do with the rise in rent?

Mr. MOORE: The rents in Queensland have not risen very much. In 1918 they were 18s. 1d.; in 1911, 15s. 4d.; in 1914, 17s. 8d.

Mr. W. COOPER: What about 1901?

Mr. MOORE: In 1901 they were 9s. 9d. In that year in Melbourne they were 14s. 8d. Timber was sold in Queensland at that time at 1s. per 100 superficial feet.

Mr. W. COOPER: And there were hundreds of houses empty in Brisbane.

Mr. MOORE: Very likely, but that does not alter the fact that there is no profiteering in house rents to-day. The cost here is the lowest of any of the States. I do not think the Minister made out any case at all. If there is a shortage of houses in Brisbane, the thing to do is to encourage the people to build more houses. It has been freely admitted in New South Wales that this legislation does not encourage people to build more houses. When you have investments in the war loan and State securities, being free of income tax and returning equally as much, people will not go in for building houses. I do not think it is a reasonable thing to expect them to engage in house-building. It is no use complaining about not being able to get houses when you are bringing in a Bill which is more likely to restrict than to encourage building. When you want to decrease the price of food you go in for greater production. To make houses more plentiful you want to encourage people to build.

Mr. W. COOPER: Do you think that if the Government reduced the price of timber by 10s. per 100 superficial feet it would reduce the rent?

Mr. MOORE: Most decidedly it would.

Mr. W. COOPER: They would buy cheap timber, put up cheap houses, and charge higher rent.

Mr. MOORE: That idea is absolutely ridiculous. We know that if the price of timber were reduced 50 per cent. the rents also would come down. There would be more houses.

Mr. W. COOPER: No, you cannot show me any instance in which you have had that experience.

Mr. MOORE: When fodder was scarce the price was £20 a ton. As soon as the

green feed began to come in the price dropped by £5 a ton in one week. According to the hon. member for Rosewood, it should have remained at the same price. If during the war material and labour had been available the building of houses would have gone on, because the demand would have required it. Unfortunately, we could not get the material. In Queensland there are very few houses built of brick. Most of the building is done with wood and iron. We know that iron was not imported because it was unprocurable. We know the price of timber rose to a tremendous degree, and, consequently, people stopped building. That was only natural, because the cost was so high, and people imagined that when the war was over the price would begin to come down—as it has done in the case of iron, which has dropped £40 a ton. They decided they would not build when everything was at the highest point. The ordinary man would not think of building when the market was at its top. He would wait a year or two until things came down to normal. What position is this fair rents legislation going to create? If a man built a house when everything was at its very dearest during the war, what will be his position? The court has to take into account the cost of building, labour, and everything in relation to the construction of that house, as well as depreciation. Another man comes along two years after the war is over, when the cost of material has come down 50 per cent. He can build the same house for about 25 per cent. less than that which it cost the other man. What happens? One house is going to carry a considerably higher rent than the other, and on that account that man will be accused of profiteering.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: They would both get a certain return on their money.

Mr. MOORE: The reason for the shortage of houses is not that the rents are too high. It is an uncertain form of investment, and people do not care to go in for it. A Bill like this is not going to make houses more plentiful. It will place a restriction on building, because people are not going to be perpetually hampered in their business. If they have an undesirable tenant they do not want to have to go to the court to show cause why they should get rid of him. The man who has a house to rent is only too pleased to have a tenant remain as long as he likes if he is a good man.

The HOME SECRETARY: And raise the rent every twelve months.

Mr. MOORE: The statistics of Knibbs do not show that they do.

The HOME SECRETARY: It is not statistics I am giving you, but facts.

Mr. MOORE: Perhaps the hon. gentleman is an undesirable tenant. (Laughter.)

The HOME SECRETARY: I was not referring to my own case. (Laughter.)

Mr. MOORE: My experience is that a man who has a house to let wants to get a tenant, and he does not want to put that tenant out unless he is an undesirable one. He also wants to keep the place in repair so that there will not be any depreciation. If he charges too high a rent, and his tenant can get another house that suits him just as well at a lower rent, he is not likely to stay.

[Mr. Moore.]

Mr. W. COOPER: That is so; but if he has a tenant who is paying him 16s. a week and another man is willing to pay 18s., do you think he will keep his tenant? Of course, he won't; he will "chuck" him out

Mr. MOORE: It all depends on what the tenant is like. Is it to be supposed for a moment that a Bill like this is going to overcome the shortage of houses—which is, undoubtedly, the reason for high rents—seeing that the object of this Bill is to see that the landlord in such a case shall not get more than 16s. a week?

Mr. W. COOPER: This is a Fair Rents Bill. It has nothing to do with the shortage of houses.

Mr. MOORE: Well, is the Bill going to improve matters? Presumably what is desired is that there shall not be any shortage of houses, but that every man who wants a house will be able to get one. But the effect of the Bill will be that those who are renting houses at the present time will be able to get them for less rent than they are now paying. In some cases, of course, it will mean that they will have to pay a little more rent. What I want to see is that there shall be a sufficient number of houses built where they are required. It is not a matter of people who are in houses having to pay less rent, but of people who have no houses getting houses to go into. The proper way to bring that about, if we are to judge by this Bill, is to place as many restrictions as possible in the way of a man investing his money in house property, and as many restrictions as possible in the way of getting rid of an undesirable tenant. The Fair Rents Act has had a very fair trial in Sydney, but, so far as one can gather, it has not improved the position at all. When the price of material goes down, it will become profitable to invest in house property again in Sydney, and then the conditions will be ameliorated by the law of supply and demand. The Act in New South Wales does not appear to have provided any more homes for the people, and the position is worse now than ever it was. Queensland is better off than Sydney in that respect.

Mr. COLLINS: It is on account of the Labour Government that Queensland is better off.

Mr. MOORE: The only thing that accounts for it is that a large number of people have left Queensland and gone to New South Wales, where the conditions are better, because there is a Labour Government in this State. I agree that it is advisable to do something to ameliorate existing conditions; but I do not believe that this Bill is likely to induce people to build sufficient houses for those who want them. According to what the Minister has said, the object of the Bill is to reduce the rent of people already occupying houses, and not to encourage the building of houses for those who want them. What is the use of bringing in a Bill that will only do that? It cannot be claimed that the Act has been a success in New South Wales when you find that rents are at a higher level in Sydney now than ever they were before.

Mr. CARTER: The cost of material is higher now than it ever was before.

Mr. W. COOPER: You know there has been a wheat scandal in Sydney, and there has been no wheat scandal in Queensland.

Mr. MOORE: There has been no wheat in Queensland. (Loud laughter.)

The PREMIER: At any rate, we have had sugar in Queensland, and there have been no sugar scandals here.

Mr. MOORE: The only cause the Minister mentioned to account for high rents in Sydney was the high price of material; but he did not attempt to show that there was any profiteering or anything of that kind to account for the high cost of material. And he did not say anything about Queensland. He quoted instances in New South Wales where brickworks were shut down to keep up the price of bricks.

The HOME SECRETARY: Do you know that there are houses in Brisbane that cost £400 for which a rent of 30s. a week is being paid?

Mr. MOORE: If that is so, in all probability it is because of the shortage of houses.

Mr. MORGAN: What is the value of such a house to-day?

The HOME SECRETARY: I admit that the same house would cost £1,000 to build to-day.

The PREMIER: Are the owners to get the unearned increment, and then to charge rent on that unearned increment?

Mr. MOORE: A person who built a house during the war, when everything was at its highest level, will require to be paid for his investment, and the person who built prior to the war will only get the same return on his investment. If you are going to take the cost of the house into account, the latter will get very little rent. I am in hopes that the cost of material will go down, and people will be encouraged to build more houses; but, certainly, rents will not go down so long as any restriction is placed on the building of houses.

The HOME SECRETARY: When a man has to pay £300 for an allotment, there is not much inducement to build.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Allotments can be got for very much less than £300.

Mr. MOORE: I thought that what we were worrying about was the cost of building. If the Bill would have the effect of ameliorating conditions in that respect, it would be a good thing. The fact of land costing £300 will not cause any more or any less houses to be built.

The HOME SECRETARY: The high price of land is the chief trouble.

Mr. MOORE: Houses, and particularly wooden houses, deteriorate and in the course of time become untenable, and unless others are built to take their place rents will go up higher still.

Mr. PETERSON: Brick houses in Sydney go to pieces in time, too.

Mr. MOORE: Wooden houses, especially in the Queensland climate, deteriorate considerably. Under a Bill like this, a man will require to have his house let all the time if he is to get a reasonable return on his money. He has to take the risk of not being able to keep the place constantly occupied, and he runs a considerable risk of having an undesirable tenant. The Bill is not likely to ameliorate existing conditions, and I do not think it is a fair Bill to bring in at the present time. There would have been more justification for introducing the measure if

Mr. Moore.]

the Minister had given us some proof that it would be likely to alter existing conditions and would ensure the building of houses for all who want them. The hon. gentleman went to London; he went to Ireland; he went all over the place—everywhere but Queensland. He did not go to France, where so many houses have been wiped out of existence altogether.

The HOME SECRETARY: He does not need to go outside our own State to prove the necessity for the Bill.

Mr. MOORE: I quite admit that the Home Secretary does not want to go outside Brisbane. Unfortunately, the Minister did not refer to our State at all.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The need for the Bill here is too obvious.

Mr. MOORE: If it is so obvious, I am astonished that the hon. gentleman did not give us some illustrations. I do not think the Bill will have much effect in the country districts. My experience is that there are a large number of empty houses there, because of the large number of people who are leaving the country and flocking into the towns.

Mr. PETERSON: Do you think that a tenant should be compensated if his landlord sells the house over his head and dumps him out? Should he be compensated for removal charges?

Mr. MOORE: Surely, if a man wants to sell a house, he should be entitled to sell it!

Mr. PETERSON: He makes a convenience of the tenant to sell his house.

Mr. MOORE: The tenant gets the house while he pays rent for it. If an owner puts his money into a house there is no earthly reason why he should not sell it just as he sells a war bond. Under this Bill a man will not be able to get rid of an undesirable tenant without a great deal of trouble, and that is a great objection to the Bill. I do not think the Bill is going to have the effect that the Minister thinks. He did not specify the effect it was going to have except that it would affect the existing conditions to-day. It is only aimed at a few people who are charging more rent than they should.

Mr. CARTER: Do you not think 10 per cent. on the cost of a building is a fair thing?

Mr. MOORE: The Minister anticipated that the returns would be only $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., taking everything into consideration, in the most favourable light in which he could put the question. At any rate, I do not think that the Bill is going to be passed, and so it is not worth while showing objections to it. It is only being brought in as a sop just before they go out into the country, so that they can tell the people that they are going to give them cheap homes. It is one of the well-known political tricks of the Government. (Government interjection.)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. MOORE: They go in for all sorts of tactics if they think they are going to have the desired effect, but I do not think this Bill is going to do any good.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE (*Oxley*): Personally, I see no great objection to this Bill. It seems to me that there is nothing contentious in this measure at all, but the one point that I think is open to criticism is the effect

[*Mr. Moore.*

that the Bill is supposed to have on the community generally. The Minister is naturally hopeful that it is going to have the effect of reducing rents generally. He is prompted by the fact that he has a large body of supporters who are continually agitating for a reduction of rents, who think that the houseowner is charging rents which are exorbitant. This Bill is introduced obviously with the intention of bringing about some improvement, but in my opinion his case is a very weak one, and I think he has demonstrated that himself by not giving one single instance applying to Queensland where more than 10 per cent. on capital value is being charged for a house. I think I am fairly correct in saying that the average property-owner would be very glad if he got an average 10 per cent. gross return for his property. Personally, I know some who are getting very far from that, and I think if we look for any great redress in the matter of rents as a result of this Bill we are going to have one more disappointment. The experience in New South Wales has been advanced in support of this measure. If my information, and the result of my inquiries, are correct, I believe that it has been a failure in the effect that it was supposed to have on the amount of rents.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: This is a better Bill.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: It may be. There have been cases in New South Wales where rents have been reduced per medium of the measure there, but they are so few—and the general experience is that there has been no necessity for the operations of the Act or the court controlling it—that the measure is more or less inoperative. I think you will find that in very few, if any, cases are applications now put before the court for the reduction of rents. The whole question, as the hon. member for Aubigny has just mentioned, is what effect the Bill is going to have on building generally. If 10 per cent. is a reasonable return to a landlord, then, of course, it is not going to have any adverse effect. If, on the other hand, it is going to be harsh—it will have the effect of stopping building and defeating the object we have in view. The Home Secretary interjected just now in reference to the cost of land as being one of the main factors which affect rents in Queensland, and I think he said that there was no land within reasonable access of the city that could be purchased cheaply and admit of reasonable rents being charged. I know land within $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles of the city.

The HOME SECRETARY: Within the ambit of the tram system?

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Yes, within five or seven minutes' walk of the tram, and two or three minutes' walk of the railway—certainly within seven or eight minutes' walk of the tram, and that land can be bought for from £30 to £35 an allotment. That is for a 16-perch or 18-perch allotment. That is to say, for two allotments—which is a reasonable building site—£70 or £80 would be the cost of the ground. It must be admitted that that is not going to have any material effect on the rent. It is a very small outlay for land within reasonable access of Brisbane on which to build a house. Of course, we know that there are illustrations of very valuable land occupied by dwellings which should make room for something more pretentious and

commodious. But that position will not be improved by this measure, because the Bill states that the unimproved value of the land shall be taken into consideration, and, therefore, if you have valuable land with an antiquated building, the value of the land, which may be several times the value of the building, will be taken into consideration in determining the rent to be charged.

Reverting to the cost of erection, we are very apt to be entirely unmindful of the fact that materials have gone up very much in the course of the last few years, and it is impossible to erect buildings at anything like the cost that was possible a few years ago. Who are the great offenders in that particular regard? As I have pointed out on more than one occasion, the present prices of timber in Queensland are absolutely controlled by this Government, and the prices have increased to such an extent that whereas a small dwelling would cost £400, say, five years ago, to-day—purely on account of the increased cost of timber—that dwelling is now costing £550. That is the main factor which is influencing rents—you cannot erect a house at anything like the figure that was possible even three years ago—and the chief offenders are the very Government who are now seeking some means of reducing the cost of rents.

Another cause to be considered is that during the past week the cost of bricks and pipes in Queensland has been increased 15 per cent. That has been entirely due, I have been led to believe, to the increased cost of wages and material. One important feature about the matter is that quite a considerable percentage of that increase is due to the fact that the output of the workers has been reduced in proportion to the wages paid, as compared with some few years ago. That is to say, the brickworks are not [5.30 p.m.] getting the same amount of return per head of the men employed as they did some four or five years ago, with the result that a certain percentage has to be added for that reduction of output. All these factors are having an important bearing on the question of the cost of building, and so long as the Government are unmindful of that fact, and look for some redress in the matter of getting the rents down per medium of penalising the landlord, then I am quite sure we are not going to get that improvement in conditions which we look for. With regard to the Workers' Homes Bill, which is looked for as a panacea for this trouble, anyone who has carefully studied the charges which were to be made in that regard will probably find that 10 per cent. on capital outlay is even less than the Government itself is charging. If I remember correctly, on a house which was going to cost about £500, the weekly payment which the worker had to make was something in the neighbourhood of £1 13s. or £1 14s. per week.

The HOME SECRETARY interjected.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: That is my calculation, as compared with yours, and I am still unconvinced in regard to your contention. But I am quite sure that, under the Workers' Homes Bill, which is looked on as being the remedy for high rents, we are not going to have any improvement in the rents in that regard as compared with what exists at the present moment. In conclusion, if the people of Queensland generally are

going to get any satisfaction from having a court to which their complaints can be taken, and by which the rent is to be fixed at a maximum of 10 per cent., by all means have it. But, if any general reduction in the matter of rents is expected by this measure, I once more say that I think we are going to be disappointed. I am quite satisfied that the average landlord would be quite satisfied to get a gross return of 10 per cent. on his property, and that is what is allowed under this Bill.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Before the second reading goes through, I would like to remind the Minister of another fact. I take it that, at present, the value of money outside would probably, at a low estimate, be 6 per cent. Possibly I would be right in saying that the Government themselves would be glad to get money at 6 per cent. What is the position with regard to houses generally? In connection with a wooden house the chances are that in a little while it becomes a sort of a cock-shy for almost every person who passes by, and a building of that kind very quickly, no matter how good it may be, soon goes to pieces. I venture to say that the ordinary person would be very much better pleased to accept 6 per cent. for his money, invested in bank stock or other securities, than to have the trouble and worry of going to the court and being directed as to what the court may think fit to allow. Then, there are tenants and tenants, just as there are landlords and landlords. I am quite prepared to admit that there are landlords in the community who, probably, if a man improved the place by making a garden, would raise the rent. It is very regrettable that that happens. But while that is so, we frequently find that there are tenants who are regardless of their obligations with respect to the premises they occupy.

Mr. CARTER: Unfortunately.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Unfortunately, that is so; there are tenants of that kind.

Mr. GUNN: And the rent has to come down.

HON. W. H. BARNES: And the rent has to come down. I fear that the effect of the Bill is not going to be as the Minister suggested. Let us analyse the Bill. A gross rental of 10 per cent., he says, may be allowed under the Bill. In connection with most buildings there is a good deal of expense in collecting money. In many cases the rents are collected by agents—

Mr. CARTER: Who charge about 2½ per cent.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The fact remains that these people are employed, and the responsibility of getting the rent rests upon them. Then we are assuming that probably the houses are going to be constantly occupied. I do not think it can be reasonably assumed that such is the case.

Mr. SMITH: That is the position with regard to most of the houses in Queensland at the present time.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I fear that the effect of the Bill will not be to encourage people to build homes, but rather to invest their money in other directions. It must be admitted by anyone who knows the city of Brisbane and suburbs—I am speaking more particularly of the suburbs—that there is not a plethora of houses. I think that, generally speaking, it will be admitted that

Hon. W. H. Barnes.

people have to go about week after week trying to get a house, as there is such a shortage of homes in the community; and, therefore, if this Bill is going to operate in the direction of preventing people from embarking in the erection of houses, it is going to be disastrous to the community. I was very glad the hon. member for Oxley referred to the interjection of the Home Secretary, and he also mentioned land in his neighbourhood. Take land at the Coorparoo tram terminus, for instance. Recently some of the finest allotments it was possible to buy, up beyond the Hon. Mr. Brentnall's residence, only went for £50 or £60 an allotment.

Mr. CARTER: That is more than 3 miles out.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It is 3 miles out, at the Coorparoo tram terminus. At Norman Park, on the railway line, within fairly easy reach of the trams, and with a good train service, you can get good 16-perch allotments at £60 each. In connection with workers' dwellings, is it not a fact that the value of the land is taken to be the value which the local authority places upon it, which is then confirmed, or otherwise, by the Government. People who want to erect a house costing £300 or £400 have to supplement the amount, because they find they have not sufficient value in the land. That explodes the argument which, by interjection, was used by the Home Secretary. According to "Knibbs," it will be found that rents in Brisbane are a long way cheaper than in any of the other States.

Mr. SMITH: It is a different class of house.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am prepared to admit that a wooden house would not cost the same as a brick house.

Mr. SMITH: You have to take that fact into consideration in connection with teachers' houses.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I went to the Education Department the other day, and the Under Secretary, who is very sympathetic in anything which has to do with education, drew my attention to the fact that it required to-day twice as much money to erect a home for a teacher as it did two years ago.

Mr. SMITH: The building is a better class of house under this Government.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Any argument will do. The hon. member for Mackay tells us, first of all, that wooden buildings are not as costly as brick buildings, and almost in the next breath he says that they are building a better class of house, and that this accounts for their being double the price.

Mr. SMITH: So they are; double lining, and so on.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I am prepared to admit that in the suburbs of Sydney there are quite a number of brick buildings, but there are also a good few wooden buildings. What does "Knibbs" say? These are his figures up to June, 1919, which is very late indeed. He says the average rent for a house of four rooms in Sydney is 15s. 8d., Melbourne 14s. 6d., Brisbane 9s. 8d., Adelaide 12s. 11d., and Perth 12s. 1d.

The PREMIER: You are constantly saying that rents are higher in Queensland than elsewhere.

HON. W. H. BARNES: As a matter of fact we say that as a result of that splendid

[Hon. W. H. Barnes.

measure, the Workers' Dwellings Act, rents are cheaper.

The PREMIER: They do not pay rent.

HON. W. H. BARNES: They have their influence upon the prices charged. Then, take a five-roomed house. According to the same table, the rent in Brisbane is 12s. 4d., and the next nearest is Perth where it is 15s., and it reaches 18s. 10d. in Sydney. Then, for a six-roomed house, the rent in Brisbane is 16s. 6d., the highest being 22s. 2d. in Sydney; and then for a seven-roomed house the figures for Brisbane are 19s. 9d., and the highest are 26s. 4d. for Melbourne. So it is perfectly certain that the Minister is not able to show by any figures he has been able to quote that there are reasons for this Bill because of exorbitant rents being charged in Brisbane. After all, his arguments have been in reference to London or some other place out of this State. He says, "It is obvious; you can see it." We cannot see it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You don't want to see it.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It is the easiest thing in the world to get up and make assertions, but the hon. gentleman has not quoted any case at all. He says it is obvious, and that is the kind of reason that a Minister of the Crown gives us in introducing a Bill. What I am concerned with in the development of this capital and its suburbs is that we should not do something, presumably in the direction of assisting those who require homes, while practically doing something which is going to hinder and block the erection of homes, and I think it is fair for us to point these things out on the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. SMITH: As the Minister rightly pointed out, this Bill is supplementary to the Profiteering Prevention Bill which went through Committee the other evening. We all know that the question of house rent is a very important one at the present time, particularly to the low-paid worker. We know that the house rent is the highest charge against the worker's wages, and at the present time we find, on a general average, that the workers of Queensland are paying one-third of their wages by way of rent. We know that the President of the Arbitration Court recently, in fixing the wages of the railway men, laid it down that £3 7s. 6d. was to be the minimum wage in the railway service, and we know that a worker in Brisbane, if he is a married man with a family, has to pay one-third of that amount by way of rent. It is idle for the hon. member for Bulimba to endeavour to prove that rents have not increased in Brisbane or elsewhere in Queensland. We know his argument was largely confined to what is taking place in Brisbane, and the hon. member, who has been a Minister in past Governments, apparently regards Brisbane as being Queensland, but, speaking as a Northern member, I protest against that opinion. We know that house rents, particularly in the North, have increased enormously in late years. I remember when I started renting a house myself in the North that a worker could get a pretty fair house for 8s. or 9s. a week, and I know that the house for which I paid 8s. a week rent in Mackay is now being rented at 15s. a week. If anything, that house has depreciated in value since that time. It means with the increased prosperity in the district owing to

Labour Administration that the landlord has stepped in and is receiving what can be justly described as unearned increment. The increased rent is due not to anything that the landlord has done in the way of providing better accommodation for the tenant or improving the house in any way, but simply owing to the increased needs of the community the landlord is able to step in and levy a charge on the industry of the people by increasing rents. We know that rent bears a very important relation to wages. I remember when Goschen was a Minister in the British Cabinet that he produced in the House of Commons a very interesting set of figures. At that time the workers in the Woolwich Arsenal had approached the Government with a view to an increase in wages, and Goschen, who was in charge of the department, was able to show conclusively that for a period of twenty years the increases that had taken place in wages had been absorbed in rents. That means that instead of the workers receiving a benefit owing to the increased wages, the landlords and other classes of profiteers were able to step in and charge increased rents, and, therefore, the worker was not receiving any direct benefit at all. We know at the present time that high rents are due largely to inflated land values. We know that speculation in town allotments in every city in Queensland has gone on to a considerable extent, and we know that as a result of these enhanced land values—the chief reason for the increase is the increased activity—the landlord has stepped in and taken from the community the value which the community have created. We know the value of land is determined largely by the needs of the people. If the population of Brisbane were to decrease by half, the land values in Brisbane would fall enormously. If the population were to increase by 50 per cent., land values would also increase, because of the needs of the community. The landlord steps in and reaps for himself that unearned increment, and the workers have to pay increased rent. I have here some interesting tables bearing upon house rents in Brisbane—that place which the hon. member for Bulimba appears to consider as being Queensland—and I will quote from the evidence given before the Brisbane Printing Trade Board of 16th July, 1913. W. G. Ewart, who was examined, stated that he was a clerk in Isles, Love, and Co., and he is apparently in charge of the house-renting department of Isles, Love, and Co., Brisbane. He gives the rent of a four-roomed house in 1912 as 9s.; of a five-roomed house as 12s. 6d.; of a six-roomed house as 17s. 6d.; and of a seven-roomed house as 22s. 6d. He goes on to state—

“Houses cannot be obtained at these rates now—in fact, houses are almost unprocurable at the present time. We have, at the present time, agencies embracing about 600 tenancies. There would be 65 per cent. or 70 per cent. of the total houses of those up to 22s. 6d. per week. We have only one four-roomed house now to let. We have none under four rooms. I got 9s. the other day for a house in Union street, Spring Hill, and was offered, a little later, 10s. per week.”

We see here what the position is. We know that houses throughout the State are very scarce at the present time, and we find that one of the reasons for increased house rent is

the fact that, owing to the scarcity of houses, a person who is desirous of having a home—as is pointed out by Mr. Ewart—offers more than the present tenant is paying. Under this measure, that will be an offence which will carry fairly far-reaching punishment. That is a very important provision in this Bill. The Bill makes it a punishable offence for anyone to offer, and the landlord to accept, anything in excess of the fixed price. Therefore we will find that rents will be stabilised and landlords will not be able to take advantage of the scarcity which, in many places, undoubtedly exists. The hon. member for Bulimba stated in his speech there was no profiteering in house rent at the present time. The same witness also gives the following information:—

“The houses at Kangaroo Point now let for 14s. were, two years ago, let at 10s.”

That is an increase of 4s. over a period of two years, and represents an increase of 40 per cent. He goes on—

“They have not been repaired or improved during the past two years. In Harcourt street, New Farm, six-roomed house let at 14s. in 1909 is now 18s. The rise has been gradual. In none of the instances I have mentioned have tenants been given additional convenience.”

Here we see that, owing to the development of the community, house rent has been steadily increasing in Brisbane, according to this witness, to a very considerable extent indeed. We see that these landlords are levying a tax, really, on the industry of the community. Land values, which are an important factor in determining rent, have been inflated, and those values are the result of the activities of the community. The landlord, therefore, is levying what, in an economic sense, is an illegitimate tax upon the community. He is demanding from the community something that he has never created. This witness states clearly before the Printing Trade Board that it is owing to nothing that the landlords have done. They have not improved the houses in any way whatsoever. Yet, in a period of two years, they increased the rent of certain houses at Kangaroo Point by 40 per cent. So we find that profiteering does go on in this respect. The hon. member for Bulimba and others who have spoken referred again to that specious law of theirs—the law of supply and demand. We know how unctuous the hon. member for Bulimba is in referring to that. It is a sweet morsel in his mouth, and he never fails to refer to it when profiteering is being dealt with in this House. This Bill will determine what is a fair rent. It is provided in the measure that the unimproved value of the land, plus the actual cost, will be taken into consideration in determining the rent. That is a fair and a legitimate basis, and landlords, in future, will not be able to take advantage of the needs of the community. We know that houses are very scarce at the present time. In the Mackay electorate, owing, of course, to the increased prosperity of that district, the demand for houses has considerably increased during the past few years. Also, many houses were destroyed during the recent cyclone. At the present time houses are almost unprocurable there, to rent. The result is that those who have houses to let are demanding the highest possible rent for them, and are demanding a rent which the workers are not able to

Mr. Smith.]

pay. A third of a worker's income going away in rent leaves him very little indeed upon which to live. As a matter of fact, I do not know how the worker can live at the present time in decency and comfort when, after having paid rent, he has only about £2 7s. or £2 10s. on which to maintain his wife and family. That is the position which exists. Of course, the other measures which have preceded this Bill—the Workers' Homes Bill and the amendment of the Savings Bank Act in connection with workers' dwellings—will, to a large extent, do away with the scarcity of homes. Under those measures more houses will be built, with the result that people will have an opportunity of living in homes which are built properly, and living in surroundings which people have a right to expect and demand. The Bill will have a very good effect upon the community. It will prevent profiteering in the way of workers' homes. It will see that the worker is protected. The rent that he will be asked to pay will be fixed by a court and will not be subject to any profiteering on the part of the landlord interested in Brisbane or Queensland.

Mr. FRY (*Kurilpa*): The Bill, in my opinion, is well intentioned, but I fail to see how it is going to accomplish what is aimed at, without the assistance of the Workers' Homes Bill. The period required to get a court properly working will be too long to enable any benefit to be felt by the public. But, if the Government were to bring into operation as quickly as possible the Workers' Homes Bill, or stimulate the building of houses throughout the district, you would find that the rents would come down. I admit that, at the present time, rents are high. I also admit that, in many cases, the rents are high because of the shortage of houses and the competition between the various people who want a house in which to live.

Mr. SMITH: Landlords exploiting the needs of the community.

Mr. FRY: The hon. member for Mackay, just before he sat down, was telling us that it is the supply and demand which gives the opportunity. That is what I am saying here. He says that when development is increasing, the prices go up; when development goes down, the prices of houses go down. The hon. member for Rosewood supported that and supplied, in my opinion, the best argument in support of what I am saying. He said that when the house rents were low in Brisbane there were hundreds of empty houses. That is quite true. He points to the fact that the demand for houses was not so great at that time and consequently the rents came down. Now, at this time the demand for houses is so great that houses are not available; consequently, they are bidding one against another to get the house. I would say that, if we are going to get any benefit from this Bill, we will have to act quickly in building houses. So far as my own electorate is concerned, I know of cases in which people are bartering for houses. They are trying to get a house and they cannot. But my electorate is a penny section from town. The man who goes out further pays about £7 a year more for his place.

(*Sitting suspended from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.*)

Mr. FRY (continuing): The electorate which I represent is situated so close to the city

[*Mr. Smith.*

that the residents can walk into town, or, if they ride, it costs them no more than 1s. a week or thereabouts. But, when you are further afield, the cost of travelling into the city is 2s. or 3s. a week. That must be added to the rent of a dwelling-house; and the only way in which we can relieve the congestion in city electorates is to build more houses on the outskirts of the city. I admit that rents are very high, but I am afraid that the only result of this Bill will be that if anyone owns more than one house he will be obliged to sell all but the one in which he resides to someone who does not own a house and intends to occupy it. Another argument in favour of the construction of more houses is that the provision in the Health Act which is designed to prevent overcrowding is being defeated, because, with the shortage of houses, people must live somewhere; you cannot turn them out into the streets. The only solution is to construct more dwelling-houses on the outskirts of the city. My contention is that this Bill should be supplementary to the Workers' Homes Bill.

Mr. SMITH: So it is.

Mr. FRY: I believe the Bill is well-intentioned, but, without a rigid and very earnest attempt on the part of those in authority to construct more houses and to encourage the building of houses, the housing problem cannot be solved. I intend to support the Bill.

Mr. GUNN: The Bill does not affect the country districts very much, because most people in the country live in their own houses and do not have to rent houses. I have had a little experience of city houses, being the trustee in an estate; and my experience is that the sooner you get rid of your houses the better; they are the worst investment you can have. I remember a house at Kangaroo Point that my father bought some fifty years ago for £2,500. We never got the rates and taxes in rent, and we had to sell it for £1,600. My experience is that, if you have trust moneys to invest, it is advisable not to build or buy houses with it. What is the good of bringing in a Bill to provide cheap rents and fair rents if you have no house to live in? There are not enough houses to go round, not only in Queensland, but in all the States. One reason for that is that there is no inducement to build houses for letting, as tenants do not take good care of the houses; they let them go to rack and ruin.

Mr. SMITH: Another plea for the landlord.

Mr. GUNN: There are very few landlords in Brisbane; most people own their own houses. The Bill will not do away with landlords; but people who have money to invest will not invest it in house property. They are very easily frightened. The position is the same as with regard to the high rate of wages. What is the good of high wages if you cannot get a job? And what is the good of low rents if you cannot get a house? I am afraid that the Bill will frighten away people who have money and prevent them from investing it in houses. They will prefer to invest it in Government securities, or in scrip of some kind or another—in fact, in anything sooner than invest it in house property. I am afraid that the passage of the Bill is likely to make the shortage of houses problem more acute than it is at the present time.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put and passed.

The consideration of the Bill in Committee was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT SAVINGS BANK ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

(*Mr. Smith, Mackay, in the chair.*)

New clause to follow clause 2—“*Amendment of section 16 of principal Act*”—

The TREASURER: The Legislative Council have inserted a new clause for the purpose of making certain alterations in section 16 of the principal Act. There may be some argument in favour of that; but I am inclined to think that it will be necessary next session to introduce a general amendment of the Act, and this amendment can then be considered. I am informed by the Commissioner that the carrying of this amendment will involve a vast amount of labour without accomplishing any particular good. It will mean the putting on of two clerks for six months to make a complete list of the depositors with under £3 who have unclaimed deposits in the bank, in several instances for a number of years. The research involved is very great. Further, it can be seen that the amendment invades the privileges of the Assembly, inasmuch as it seeks to deal with a financial matter, with which we contend the Legislative Council have no power to deal. Therefore, on those grounds—first of all, that the amendment goes outside of the scope of the Bill, as it was introduced and passed by this House; secondly, that we have had no time to consider whether it would be advisable or wise to have an amendment—and, at any rate, it is no use considering an amendment of the Savings Bank Act in this form; and thirdly, that it is an invasion of the rights of the Assembly—I move that the amendment be disagreed with.

Question put and passed.

The TREASURER: I beg to move—

“That the amendment in the title be disagreed with.”

Question put and passed.

The House resumed. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee disagreed with the Council's amendments. The report was adopted.

MESSAGE TO COUNCIL.

On the motion of the TREASURER, the Bill was ordered to be returned to the Legislative Council with the following message:—

“Mr. President,—

“The Legislative Assembly having had under consideration the Legislative Council's amendments in the Queensland Government Savings Bank Act Amendment Bill, beg now to intimate that they—

“Disagree to the proposed new clause to follow clause 1—

“Because the present limit of £3 was determined upon after full consideration of all the circumstances, the cost of the work entailed, and interest earned by the unclaimed deposits, and the use anticipated to be made of the published information.

“This proposal, if given effect to, would entail considerable needless expense of obtaining supplies of lists, forwarding same to depositors, and of postage thereof; whereas it is safe to say that most of such lists would not reach the persons to whom they were addressed by reason of change of addresses.

“The distribution broadcast of notices forwarded to depositors unknown at the addresses quoted would have a tendency to increase the liability to fraud through the same coming into the hands of unauthorised persons of similar names.

“The lists published in the ‘Gazette’ are also distributed for exhibiting at the 500 branches and agencies of the bank throughout the State.

“Although the Savings Bank Act provides for unclaimed deposits becoming the property of the bank after being inoperative for fourteen years, the amount is still available to the rightful owner at any time on production of satisfactory proof of identity; and

“Disagree to the amended title.”

“Legislative Assembly Chamber,

“Brisbane, 31st October, 1919.”

PORT DUES REVISION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

The TREASURER: I beg to move—That the Bill be now read a second time. Official notification has been received from the Federal Government of their intention to take the necessary measures to proclaim the Commonwealth Navigation Act, and it is expected that early action in that direction will be taken. That necessitates the taking over by the Commonwealth of the pilotage services in the State, and, as a consequence of that action on the part of the Commonwealth, further necessitates the division of pilotage dues from port dues. In Queensland we have carried on a somewhat different system from that which is carried on in the other States, inasmuch as all the dues are collected as pilotage dues and are not separated. As the pilot service will be handed over to the Commonwealth, they will be entitled to collect pilotage dues, but we shall be liable to carry out certain duties as to lights, beacons, and navigation facilities generally, and, unless we make some provision, we shall have the duties without any revenue to defray the cost of discharging them. The Bill, therefore, makes an allocation of the revenues collected as pilotage and port dues. It will not in any way prejudicially affect the Commonwealth, for the reason that they are not bound to adopt the pilotage dues that we impose. If they think that they are too small they may increase them. At the present time, with the exception of interstate and intrastate vessels commanded by exempt masters, the whole of the port dues are collected as pilotage, as will be seen from section 33 of the Navigation Act and section 4 of the Port Dues Revision Act. In all other States, the different services are clearly defined and are charged for under distinct headings, and unless the necessary alteration is made by amending the existing legislation, all pilotage revenue will revert to the Commonwealth.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Will the Commonwealth collect the charges for pilotage?

Hon. E. G. Theodore. }

The TREASURER: Presumably so. I do not know how their Navigation Act applies.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Will this be additional taxation?

The TREASURER: No. At the present time the dues cover pilotage and the cost of upkeep of navigation facilities generally. We intend to revise and alter the charges so as to allocate a certain amount for pilotage and a certain amount as port dues. In every other State, that allocation is already made. They make what is called in some cases a port dues charge, and in other cases a harbour dues charge, separately from the pilotage charge. We propose to alter our law so that we will not be entirely bereft of revenue when the pilotage service passes to the Commonwealth.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: Are the Commonwealth likely to reduce charges for pilotage?

The TREASURER: I have no possible means of ascertaining their intentions. They must carry on an efficient pilotage service. They will take over the service, and, presumably, the plant, such as the steamers, and, if they intend to defray the cost—which would only be reasonable—they must charge an adequate sum. It might not be much in the case of each vessel, but it will be the same practice as the State adopts.

There is another feature in this Bill to which attention should be drawn. We desire to amend the existing legislation in consequence of the ambiguity of some of the pilotage sections, and particularly the loose wording of section 5 of the Port Dues Revision Act, which is the root of some difficulty. The section was specially introduced some years ago with a view to encouraging vessels to come to Queensland ports which cleared from other ports outside the State and were passing beyond the State. It certainly had the effect of encouraging those vessels to come here, but the interpretation of the section has been such as to deprive the State almost entirely of revenue from them, notwithstanding the fact that they get considerable services—pilotage services, the use of the channels, harbour lights, navigation marks, and other facilities—for which they pay practically nothing. I give a few examples of how it works. I think the vessels in this list all cleared from Queensland ports in the last twelve months—“Wonganella,” 2,583 tons, 1s. 6d.; “Merinda,” 1,091 tons, 3s., 5s. 8d.; “Changsha,” 1,463 tons, 9s., 15s. 4d., 15s. 4d., 18s. 4d.; “Mindini,” 1,303 tons, 9s. 2d.; “Matunga,” 1,013 tons, 6s. 11d.; “Uganda,” 3,498 tons, £3 1s. 6d.; “Houtman,” 3,161 tons, £4 6s. 9d.; “Tasman,” 3,334 tons, £4 3s. 7d.

To such an extent is this section availed of, that 70 per cent. of overseas vessels coming to Queensland are entered and cleared thereunder. I want to mention, first of all, that the section was intended only to apply to vessels engaged in the Eastern trade, which otherwise would have had no inducement to come to Queensland, and probably no intention of coming, and a special concession was made that such vessels should not pay any pilotage dues, but should be liable to pay the sum of 1s. 6d. for each passenger landed. That was for the service of the pilot on entering and leaving port and the use of all the navigation marks. Although they got that service by calling at the port, if they landed only one passenger they paid

only 1s. 6d., for two passengers 3s., and so on. It will be seen that there was no reason why some vessels should be mulcted in pilotage and port dues, while oversea vessels getting an equal advantage should be let off very lightly. I want to mention that under the Bill a schedule of charges is provided, which hon. members will, no doubt, consider very fair. It may be said that the pilotage charge is high in comparison with other States, but the pilotage service in Queensland is singular in many respects, and it extends to all the ports in Queensland, which are more numerous than those in any of the other States. In New South Wales there are only two ports where the Government provide pilotage service, and in Victoria only one port—I am not sure whether pilotage is provided at Geelong. Therefore, those States can run a big pilotage service at a much less cost than we can here. Besides Brisbane, we have many ports—Gladstone, Port Alma, Bowen, Townsville, and Cairns—with pilotage services established, and the payment of pilotage dues under this Bill will entitle vessels to make use of the pilotage service on their trips to Queensland in all the ports without further payment. Queensland has a very extensive coastline—covering 2,080 miles—to overlook; there are fifteen ports at which pilotage stations are established. We are obliged to maintain the necessary navigation marks, and there is the maintenance of pilots, pilot stations, and crews, the cost of upkeep of vessels, and other things to be taken into account. In other States, pilotage, port dues, harbour and light dues, and tonnage dues, are levied for the upkeep of staffs, lights, etc., whereas, in Queensland, only pilotage or tonnage dues are charged on oversea shipping. Although since 1915 the Commonwealth has taken over ocean lights, buoys, beacons, etc., this State still controls 180 lights—including harbour lights, river leads, etc., etc., 170 buoys—eight of which are lighted—and 40 beacons of varying sizes. Two hundred persons are employed in the Marine Department, including head office officials, pilots, masters of vessels, light-keepers, seamen, and firemen, so that, notwithstanding that the Commonwealth has taken over the control indicated, there are still very important duties to be carried out by the Marine Department. Those are the services rendered to shipping people, and some contribution should be made for it. It might be considered by some that it should be a charge upon revenue, but charges are made in respect of other services which the State provides, and this is just as much a service for a particular industry or business—that is, shipping—as any of the other services, and these port charges should, I think, be contributed.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: What is it likely to produce?

The TREASURER: I could not say off-hand, but I will endeavour to get the information for the hon. gentleman when we are considering the Bill in Committee. I think that I have fully explained the necessity for the measure; and, if it is to be of any benefit, it must be passed this session, in order that it may come into force before the Commonwealth Government has framed its Navigation Act.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: The Treasurer has made the position perfectly clear in connection with this Bill. I think none of us

[Hon. E. G. Theodore.

can argue that it is right that vessels should avail themselves—some of them. I judge from the names, perhaps, two of them, refer to Dutch vessels more particularly—

The TREASURER: Yes.

HON. W. H. BARNES: They come right up to the wharf—usually to the South Brisbane wharf. I think the other boats the Treasurer has referred to more frequently come to Pinkenba. I do not think any of us could say that £4 in one case, and in other cases—

The TREASURER: Down to as low as ls. 6d.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Is a fair charge to pay for services rendered. We all know that for some years the question of buoys, lights, and so forth, has been in the control of the Commonwealth Government, and it has been anticipated that certain charges would be made. The point I wish to make is that the extra charge provided in the Bill—ls. 6d. a passenger—simply means that there is going to be an extra burden placed upon the community. It may be necessary from the financial side—I cannot say whether it is or not—but one thing is certain: I do not think the Commonwealth or the Treasurer will be able to render the services in connection with pilotage, etc., at a less rate than is now being charged. The Treasurer said he had no information on the matter that he could furnish to the House.

MR. SMITH: We have no control over the Commonwealth.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I recognise that the Treasurer has no control over the Commonwealth. In the past it has been necessary to make a certain charge, and that charge will have to be continued. But it seems to me that, notwithstanding that fact, the Treasurer is seizing the opportunity of getting a little more revenue from the commercial community, which, after all, will come upon the consumer, as it is always passed on.

MR. HARTLEY: It is an optional charge. They can pay it on the other schedule if they like.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It is an optional charge; but, in whatever way the charge is made, it is bound to come out of the consumer's pocket. I trust that nothing will be done to interfere with the commercial side of Brisbane, because, if that is done, it will be a serious drawback to us in Brisbane. The Treasurer has promised that when the Bill gets into Committee he will furnish us with information as to the approximate amount of revenue which will be obtained under this Bill.

MR. HARTLEY: The shipping companies will pay for services rendered.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I do not know what the experience of other hon. members is with regard to shipping companies; but one thing is certain—if they have to pay more, I can imagine it is going to be passed on in some way. This is largely a Committee Bill, and, as the Treasurer has promised to furnish us with further information, I am quite sure he will carry out his promise.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put and passed.

The consideration of the Bill in Committee was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

STOCK FOODS BILL.

CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

(Mr. Smith, Muckay, in the chair.)

Clause 3—

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE, in moving—

“That the Committee disagree to the Legislative Council's amendment in clause 3, page 3, line 17,”

said: This amendment will limit the operation of the Act so far as by-products are concerned—bran, pollard, etc.—and I hardly think the members of the Council quite saw the effect of the amendment when they proposed it.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE, the Legislative Council's other amendments in clause 3, and the amendments in clauses 5, 13, 14, and 16 were agreed to; and the Council's amendments in clauses 6 and 7 were disagreed to.

The House resumed. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had agreed to some of the Legislative Council's amendments and disagreed to others; and the report was adopted.

The Bill was ordered to be returned to the Legislative Council with the following message:—

“Mr. President,—

“The Legislative Assembly having had under consideration the amendments of the Legislative Council in the Stock Foods Bill, beg now to intimate that they—

“Disagree to the amendment in clause 3, page 3, line 17—

“Because if these words are omitted, the operation of the Act with respect to by-products such as bran, pollard, etc., might be prevented, as they are not mixed concentrated foods.

“Disagree to the amendments in clause 6, page 5, lines 2, 4, and 7—

“Because the clause is intended to apply to any stock food, and the amendment would limit it to a certain class of stock food.

“Disagree to the amendment in clause 7, page 5, lines 13 and 14—

“Because it would limit the operations of the Bill to mixed concentrated foods only, and its retention would, in reality, make clause 8 inoperative; and

“Agree to the other amendments in the Bill.”

“Legislative Assembly Chamber,

“Brisbane, 31st October, 1919.”

FIRE BRIGADES BILL.

SECOND READING.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. W. McCormack, Cairns): I beg to move—That this Bill be now read a second time. It is largely a Committee Bill, composed of machinery clauses, and, of course, it does not lend itself to discussion on the second reading. I will therefore briefly outline its principal provisions. It repeals the Fire Brigades Acts of 1881 to 1902 and continues all existing districts and existing fire brigade boards. There will be no alteration so far as the

Hon. W. McCormack.]

present boards are concerned—they will be constituted new boards under the new Act. The Governor in Council is empowered by Order in Council to alter the boundaries of any district. A district may comprise the whole of the area of a local authority, any division of the area of a local authority, half the area of a local authority, the whole of the area of several local authorities, any division of the area of several local authorities, and parts of the areas of several local authorities. The board shall be a body corporate, and will be empowered to take any land required for the purposes of the Act under the Public Works Land Resumption Act of 1906. The new constitution of the board is to be of seven members, two of whom will be appointed by the Governor in Council, three elected by the contributory companies, and two by the local authorities. The basis of this representation is really that of taxation; because a later clause in the Bill provides that the payment by the different bodies—the Government, the local authorities, and the contributory companies—shall be in the proportion of two-sevenths by the Government, two-sevenths by the local authorities, and three-sevenths by the contributory companies. The schedules are pretty large, but they really contain a good deal of the machinery necessary for working the fire brigades. Schedule 1 provides for the method of election of members by the insurance companies. Schedule 2 provides for the election of members by the groups of local authorities. Volunteer fire brigade boards are continued under this Bill, and provision is made in the Bill so that the chief officer of the main brigade operating in the area may pay the members of volunteer brigades when they attend fires. This is a very necessary thing in some districts. When there is not sufficient money available in the contributions for the purpose of establishing a board in some district, it is very handy to have a local volunteer fire brigade existing which will act in conjunction with the central brigade at a fire. It is only fair that those men should be paid, even though they are volunteers, for their services at the fire.

Mr. GUNN: Are they to be paid on any particular scale?

The HOME SECRETARY: Provision is laid down in the schedule. The chief officer of that particular district has complete power in that regard. The board, at its first meeting in each year, will prepare an estimate of the probable expenditure for the year. This really is an important departure under the Bill. Under the old Fire Brigades Act it was found almost impossible to carry on. That is one of the real reasons for the introduction of the Bill. There was no provision for securing further money to extend the operations or improve the equipment of the fire brigades. The boards now will have the power to form their estimates early in the year, and will tax the contributory companies—the Government and the local authorities—in such a way that their estimate may be met. The amount of expenditure, no doubt, will be increased in different districts after this Act comes into operation. The trouble to-day is lack of finance. They are limited under the old Act. The local authority could contribute from 2 per cent. to 8 per cent. of the total general rates received in the preceding year, and whatever amount was decided upon up to 4 per cent. of such rates, the Government

and the insurance companies must contribute a like amount. Consequently, the amount of finance available was limited, and the result has been disastrous to fire brigades throughout Queensland. The new provision will enable the fire brigade boards to pay their men a living wage. One of the things with which the firemen were faced in approaching the Industrial Court was the limitation of means. I think Judge Macnaughton said he could not consider a two-shift day for firemen until the Act was altered to provide the necessary finance. The firemen now have one shift. It is all day, and they are liable to be called upon at any time during the twenty-four hours. Many of them have to put in the whole of their time almost upon the premises. This will enable the boards to have a sufficient income to give a two-shift system to the firemen. In almost all the cities of the old world, and in America, they have advanced in this matter, even to giving a three-shift day to the firemen. That should be done here.

Mr. ELPHINSTONE: Two shifts of twelve hours each?

The HOME SECRETARY: Of course, it will be at the discretion of the judge. They asked for a two-shift day, and he refused it on the ground that if he made a two-shift day the fire brigades would not be able to meet the expense. The boards will now have power to estimate their expenditure, and knowing they will be able to find sufficient money, they will be able to meet this demand. It is a very reasonable demand. They will frame their estimate accordingly, and will levy upon the contributing sources. The amount is not limited to any definite sum. I do not think there is any more I need explain in the Bill. A good many questions may be asked, and answered, probably in Committee. I move the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): 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.

ADJOURNMENT.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I beg to move—That this House do now adjourn. The first business on Tuesday next will be the Main Roads Bill, to be followed by the Governor's Salary Act of 1872 Amendment Bill, and the rest of the business as it appears on the business-paper.

HON. W. H. BARNES: I would like to ask the deputy leader of the Government if he has any information with which to furnish the House with regard to the Financial Statement—as to when it is going to be delivered. Is it going to be delivered before the House adjourns this year, or is it going to be deferred until next year?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is a question upon which I cannot give a very definite answer just now. No doubt, if the question were addressed to the Treasurer without notice on Tuesday, the hon. gentleman would get a suitable reply—the fullest information.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at ten minutes to 8 o'clock p.m.

[*Hon. W. McCormack.*]